

# Vernacular for Use of the Lawyer Who Practises in the District and Municipal Court

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action on such a bond. Under such a bond the surety was held liable to a blacksmith who sharpened tools and implements used in the work of construction<sup>11</sup> and also to persons furnishing coal.<sup>12</sup> Bonds as usually executed by bonding companies are broad enough to come within the rule just stated, and afford ample protection to anyone furnishing material or performing work of any kind under the building contract.

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DR. M. I. CLEAR'S COLUMN

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VERNACULAR FOR USE OF THE LAWYER WHO  
PRACTISES IN THE DISTRICT AND  
MUNICIPAL COURT

CHAS. C. BENSON,

*Clerk in Municipal Court of Milwaukee County.*

Slang we are told is "low or vulgar language or such language that is not recognized in polite or serious literature." It is said to have been originally the Gypsy term for the secret language of Gypsies, thieves and tramps, though some etymologists connect it with the verb "to sling," as being abusive language "slung" at a person.

Slang permeates all classes, and belongs to all trades and professions. Through custom and usage some slang words have become recognized as perfectly good English "as she is spoke."

Many of our ordinary every-day slang expressions are the coinage of crooks or corruptions of the criminal dialect. The writer during his several years' experience as clerk in the criminal courts of this county has compiled a criminal dictionary of the vernacular of the underworld comprising several hundred

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11. *French v. Powell*, 135 Cal. 636; 68 Pac. 92.

12. *City Trust, S. D. & Surety Co. v. United States*, 77 C. C. A. 397, 147 Fed. 155.

words and expressions contributed to by many crooks of high and low degree.

The magistrate before whom the "dip" (pick-pocket) is arraigned is known to the professionals as a "beak"; the lawyer who defends him carries the title of "swell-mouthpiece," while the lawyer who manufactures criminal defenses but rarely appears in court draws the euphonious name of "low ghost."

A "Yegg" (safe-blower) "breaks a leg" (gets arrested) by a "Dick" (detective) and goes to the "dump" (police station) in a "pie van" (patrol). He is taken before the "high front" (Capt. Sullivan) who "calls the turn" (knows his record) and he gets a "buff" as "vag." "A ready-made with a sign out gets heeled from the jug, he is in bloom and the gun reefs a britch kick and gets a poke." Translated this means: "A man with his wallet in his hip pocket unprotected by flaps is followed from a bank, he is in summer toggery and the pick-pocket picks his pocket and gets his purse."

Among the long termers in the prisons the "cant" is the rule. The prison where they are confined is a "stir" and the unfortunate convict who becomes insane as the result of long confinement contracts "stir-simple." The turnkey is dubbed the "screw"—even the food that is served comes in for its share, "steamed grub" is a general term for prison fare, "Java" is coffee, and cream used in coffee is "whitewash"; occasionally they are served "little girls in tights" which is bacon. Beans are "cherries" while "a little old woman in a bonnet" is meat stew.

Prison authorities were for a long time unable to account for the manner in which convicts transferred articles from one cell to another, it was done by means of a string called a "trolley."

Here are a few more expressive terms from the lingo:

"Shovel-flirt"—A porter in a saloon.

"Pearl diver"—Dishwasher.

"Poke out"—Food handed out at the back door.

"Set down"—Food set at the table.

"John O'Brien"—Freight train; named after "Nosey" John O'Brien a notorious pick-pocket who always traveled that way.

"Mission stiffs"—People who come to the prisons to conduct religious services.

"Bunk a mark for a light piece to buy a shuper." To tell a false story to a kind-hearted person to get money to buy beer.

"Blowed in the glass stiff"—A trustworthy friend.

"Jersey lightning"—Poor whiskey.

"Fly a kite"—Write a letter.

"Hand-painted shoe string"—Cheap crook.

"Ice-tong doctor"—Illegal practitioner of medicine.

"Title tapper"—One who raises money on forged deeds.

"Third rails"—Pick-pockets on railroad trains.

The criminal vocabulary embraces many hundreds of words and professional criminals can carry on a conversation that is unintelligible to those unfamiliar with the jargon.

It is not the purpose of this article to compile all the slang but merely to acquaint a young lawyer who will defend criminals, with the fact that there is a language he must learn before he can intelligently converse with his client.

#### FUTILE EFFORT.

"The will was probably drawn by testatrix, a woman apparently of considerable acquisitiveness and versatility, who owned real estate, a stock of liquors and cigars, letters patent for an invention of hers, the copyright of a song, a theatrical wardrobe, paintings, shares of stock, jewelry, a diary containing 'valuable ideas for patents and inventions,' musical instruments and a revolver. The will presents a queer compound of legal and epistolary expressions. The testatrix therein provided for a tombstone to be placed at her grave with the inscription, "Who tried to succeed," which might represent her efforts at will-making as well as her life work, and the "touch of nature" is found in the request that she be buried at Waukesha, Wisconsin, cemetery as near her mother as possible."—Timlin, J., in *Will of Adelman*, 138 Wis. 120.

MEMORIES.

"Stick your foot in a pail of sand; it can't be done."

"Unravel from the middle out."

PIGS IS PIGS.

"The raising of pigs is a perfectly lawful and respectable business. Doubtless it will remain so as long as the human palate craves the thin cut of juicy ham and the crisp slice of breakfast bacon. With all the marvelous advances in the science of animal husbandry which has taken place in recent years, we have not yet produced the odorless pig. He may come at some future time, in company with the voiceless cat and the flealess dog; but he is not yet in sight. Whenever he comes he will be welcome; but in the meantime pigs will be pigs, and we must put up as best we may with the odorous pig and his still more odorous pen."—Winslow, C. J., in *Clark vs. Wambold*, 160. N. W. 1039.

WHAT'S YOUR FEE, BILL?

Attention is directed to Pearson's Magazine for April, 1917. Two leading articles are lauded in this manner:

BILLY SUNDAY

Who Makes Religion Pay.

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The Price I Paid.

By Upton Sinclair.

RES IPSA LOQUITUR.

*Sees Jilted Bird Hang Itself With Horsehair.*

La Crosse, Wis., March 22.—C. H. Schweizer, local attorney, on Thursday said that he saw a sparrow commit suicide in an office building in this city by hanging itself with a horsehair. He said the bird apparently lost its mate to another sparrow.—*Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 23, 1917.