

**A CLASSICAL  
DICTIONARY OF THE  
VULGAR TONGUE**

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A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue by Francis Grose

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**FRANCIS GROSE**

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By  
*Francis Grose, Esq.*

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THE SECOND EDITION,  
CORRECTED AND ENLARGED.

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A C A

**A**BBESS, or LADY ABBESS. A bawd, the mistress of a brothel.

**ABEL-WACKETS.** Blows given on the palm of the hand with a twisted handkerchief, instead of a ferula; a jocular punishment among seamen, who sometimes play at cards for wackets, the loser suffering as many strokes as he has lost games.

**ABIGAIL.** A lady's waiting-maid.

**ABRAM.** Naked. *Cant.*

**ABRAM COVE.** A cant word among thieves, signifying a naked or poor man; also a lusty, strong rogue.

**ABRAM MEN.** Pretended mad men.

**TO SHAM ABRAM.** To pretend sickness.

**ACADEMY, or PUSHING SCHOOL.** A brothel.—The Floating Academy; the lighters on board of which those persons are confined, who by a late regulation are condemned to hard labour, instead of transportation.—Campbell's Academy; the

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same, from a gentleman of that name, who had the contract for finding and victualling the hulks or lighters.

**ACCOUNTS.** To cast up one's accounts; to vomit.

**ACORN.** You will ride a horse foaled by an acorn; i. e. the gallows, called also the Wooden and Three-legged Mare. You will be hanged.—See **THREE LEGGED MARE.**

**ACT OF PARLIAMENT.** A military term for small beer, five pints of which, by an act of parliament, a landlord was formerly obliged to give to each soldier gratis.

**ACTEON.** A cuckold, from the horns planted on the head of Acteon by Diana.

**ADAM'S ALE.** Water.

**ADAM TILER.** A pickpocket's associate, who receives the stolen goods, and runs off with them. *Cont.*

**ADAMS.** The most ancient, honourable, and venerable society of the name of Adams, A. D. 1750, held their meetings at the Royal Swan, Kingland Road, kept by George Adams.

**ADDLE PATE.** An inconsiderate foolish fellow.

**ADDLE PLOT.** A spoil-sport, a mar-all.

**ADMIRAL OF THE BLUE,** who carries his flag on the main-mast. A landlord or publican wearing a blue apron, as was formerly the custom among gentlemen of that vocation.

**ADMIRAL OF THE NARROW SEAS.** One who from drunkenness vomits into the lap of the person sitting opposite to him. *Sea phrase.*

**ADRIFT.** Loose, turned adrift, discharged. *Sea phrase.*

**AFFIDAVIT MEN.** Knights of the post, or false witnesses, said to attend Westminster Hall, and other courts of justice, ready to swear any thing for hire; distinguished by having straw stuck in the heels of their shoes.

**AFTER-CLAP.** A demand after the first given-in has been discharged, a charge for-pretended omissions.

**AGAINST THE GRAIN.** Unwilling. It went much against the grain with him, i. e. it was much against his inclination, or against his pluck.

**AGOG, ALL-A-GOG.** Anxious, eager, impatient: from the Italian *agogare*, to desire eagerly.

**AGROUND.** Stuck fast, stopped, at a loss, ruined; like a boat or vessel aground.

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- AIR AND EXERCISE.** He has had air and exercise, i. e. he has been whipped at the cart's tail; or, as it is generally, though more vulgarly, expressed, at the cart's a—se.
- ALDERMAN.** A roasted turkey garnished with saufages; the latter are supposed to represent the gold chain worn by those magistrates.
- ALE DRAPER.** An alehouse keeper.
- ALE POST.** A may-pole.
- ALL-A-MORT.** Struck dumb, confounded.
- ALGATE.** A draught on the pump at Algate; a bad bill of exchange, drawn on persons who have no effects of the drawer.
- ALL HOLIDAY.** It is all holiday at Peckham, or it is all holiday with him; a saying signifying that it is all over with the business or person spoken of or alluded to.
- ALL HOLLOW.** He was beat all hollow, i. e. he had no chance of conquering; it was all hollow, or a hollow thing; it was a decided thing from the beginning. See **HOLLOW.**
- ALL NATIONS.** A composition of all the different spirits sold in a dram shop, collected in a vessel, into which the drainings of the bottles and quatern pots are emptied.
- ALLS.** The five alls is a country sign, representing five human figures, each having a motto under him. The first is a king in his regalia; his motto, I govern all: the second a bishop in pontificals; motto, I pray for all: third, a lawyer in his gown; motto, I plead for all: fourth, a soldier in his regimentals, fully accoutred; motto, I fight for all: fifth, a poor countryman with his scythe and rake; motto, I pay for all.
- ALSASIA THE HIGHER.** White Friars, once a place privileged from arrests for debt, as was also the Mint, but suppressed on account of the notorious abuses committed there.
- ALSASIA THE LOWER.** The Mint in Southwark.
- ALSASIANS.** The inhabitants of White Fryers or the Mint.
- ALTAMEL.** A verbal or lump account, without particulars, such as is commonly produced at bawdy houses, spunging houses, &c. Vide **DUTCH RECKONING.**
- ALTITUDES.** The man is in his altitudes, i. e. he is drunk.
- AMBASSADOR.** A trick to duck some ignorant fellow or landman, frequently played on board ships in the warm latitudes. It is thus managed: a large tub is filled with water, and two



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fools placed on each side of it. Over the whole is thrown a tarpawlin, or old sail: this is kept tight by two persons, who are to represent the king and queen of a foreign country, and are seated on the stools. The person intended to be ducked plays the ambassador, and after repeating a ridiculous speech dictated to him, is led in great form up to the throne, and seated between the king and queen, who rising suddenly as soon as he is seated, he falls backwards into the tub of water.

**AMBIDEXTER.** A lawyer who takes fees from both plaintiff and defendant, or that goes snacks with both parties in gaming.

**AMEN CURLER.** A parish clerk.

**AMEN.** He said Yes and Amen to every thing; he agreed to every thing.

**AMINIDAB.** A jeering name for a quaker.

**AMES ACE.** Within ames ace; nearly, very near.

**TO AMUSE.** To sting dust or snuff in the eyes of the person intended to be robbed; also to invent some plausible tale, to delude shopkeepers and others, thereby to put them off their guard. *Cant.*

**AMUSERS.** Rogues who carried snuff or dust in their pockets, which they threw into the eyes of any person they intended to rob; and running away (their accomplices pretending to assist and pity the half-blinded person), took that opportunity of plundering him.

**ANABAPTIST.** A pickpocket caught in the fact, and punished with the discipline of the pump or horse-pond.

**ANCHOR.** Bring your a-se to an anchor, i. e. sit down. To let go an anchor to the windward of the law; to keep within the letter of the law. *Sea Wit.*

**ANGLERS.** Pilferers, or petty thieves, who, with a stick having a hook at the end, steal goods out of shop windows, grates, &c; also those who draw in or entice unwary persons to prick at the belt, or such like devices.

**ANGLING FOR FARTHINGS.** Begging out of a prison window with a cap, or box, let down at the end of a long string.

**ANKLE.** A girl who is got with child, is said to have sprained her ankle.

**ANODYNE NECKLACE.** A halter.

**ANTHONY or TANTONY FIG.** The favourite or smallest pig  
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**IN** the litter.—To follow like a tantomny pig, i. e. St. Anthony's pig; to follow close at one's heels. St. Anthony the hermit was a swine herd, and is always represented with a swine's bell and a pig. Some derive this saying from a privilege enjoyed by the friars of certain convents in England and France (Sons of St. Anthony) whose swine were permitted to feed in the streets. These swine would follow any one having greens or other provisions, till they obtained some of them.

**TO KNOCK ANTHONY.** Said of an inkneed person, or one whose knees knock together; to cuff Jonas. See **JONAS**.

**APE LEADER.** An old maid: their punishment after death, for neglecting to increase and multiply, will be, it is said, leading apes in hell.

**APOSTLES.** To manœuvre the apostles; i. e. rob Peter to pay Paul; that is, to borrow money of one man to pay another.

**APOTHECARY.** To talk like an apothecary; to talk nonsense: from the assumed gravity and affectation of knowledge generally put on by the gentlemen of that profession, who are commonly but superficial in their learning.

**APOTHECARY'S BILL.** A long bill.

**APOTHECARY'S OF LAW LATIN.** Barbarous Latin, vulgarly called Dog Latin, in Ireland Bog Latin.

**APPLE CART.** Down with his apple-cart; knock or throw him down.

**APPLE DUMPLIN SHOP.** A woman's bosom.

**APPLE-PYE BED.** A bed made apple-pye fashion, like what is called a turnover apple-pyc, where the sheets are so doubled as to prevent any one from getting at his length between them: a common trick played by frolicsome country lasses on their sweethearts, male relations, or visitors.

**APRIL FOOL.** Any one imposed on, or sent on a bootless errand, on the first of April; on which day it is the custom among the lower people, children, and servants, by dropping empty papers carefully doubled up, sending persons on absurd messages, and such like contrivances, to impose on every one they can, and then to salute them with the title of April Fool.

**APRON STRING HOLD.** An estate held by a man during his wife's life.

AQUA

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- AQUA PUMPAGINIS.** Pump water. *Apothecaries Latin.*
- ARBOR VITÆ.** A man's penis.
- ARCH DUKE.** A comical or eccentric fellow.
- ARCH ROGUE, or DIMBER DAMBER UPRIGHT MAN.**  
The chief of a gang of thieves or gypsies.
- ARCH DELL, or ARCH DOXY,** signifies the same in rank among the female canters or gypsies.
- ARD.** Hot. *Cant.*
- ARISTIPPUS.** A diet drink, or decoction of sarsaparilla, china, &c. sold at certain coffee-houses, and drank as tea.
- ARMOUR.** In his armour, got valiant; to fight in armour, to make use of Mrs. Philips's ware. See C--D--M.
- ARK.** A boat or wherry. Let us take an Ark and winns; let us take a sculler. *Cant.*
- ARK RUFFIANS.** Rogues who, in conjunction with watermen, robbed, and sometimes murdered, on the water, by picking a quarrel with the passengers in a boat, boarding it, plundering, stripping, and throwing them overboard, &c. A species of badgers. *Cant.*
- ARRAH NOW.** An unmeaning expletive, frequently used by the vulgar Irish.
- ARS MUSICA.** A bum-fiddle.
- ARSE.** To hang an arse; to hang back, to be afraid to advance. He would lend his a--e, and sh-te through his ribs; a saying of any one who lends his money inconsiderately. He would lose his a--e if it was loose; said of a careless person. A--e about; turn round.
- ARSE VARSEY.** To fall arse varsey, i. e. head over heels.
- ARTHUR; KING ARTHUR.** A game used at sea, when near the line, or in a hot latitude. It is performed thus: a man who is to represent king Arthur, ridiculously dressed, having a large wig made out of oakum, or some old swabs, is seated on the side, or over a large vessel of water. Every person in his turn is to be ceremoniously introduced to him, and to pour a bucket of water over him, crying, Hail, king Arthur! If during this ceremony the person introduced laughs or smiles (to which his majesty endeavours to excite him, by all sorts of ridiculous gesticulations), he changes place with, and then becomes,