

meant a swindler or criminal, and is conjecturally derived from such fellows' legs being black and bruised from sitting in the stocks and wearing fetters; or from the legs of a game-cock, which are always black, gamblers and swindlers being frequenters of the cockpit. Else from an allusion to the legs of a "rook," another name for a swindler. *Blackleg* is now a recognised word. In old provincial English a *black-foot* was a man who attended a lover on a courting expedition to do the dirty and mean work, such as bribing servants, and acting the Leporello.

(Tailors) to *blackleg*, a set that reject a man as not fit to move in their society, or who organise a method to compel a man to leave his situation or the town, are said to *blackleg* him.

Blackletter lawyer (legal), an antiquarian expert in law, whereas one well versed in "case law," or the decisions of judges, is termed a "case lawyer."

Black lion (medical), the name given to certain rapidly-sloughing ulcers which affected our soldiers when in Portugal.

Blackmail (recognised). To levy *blackmail* was a tribute extorted by powerful robber chieftains to protect travellers from the depredations of other robbers inferior to themselves in strength and organisation. In the United

States, says Bartlett, it usually means money extorted from a person, by threatening to accuse him of a crime or to expose him in the newspapers (it is used with a like meaning in England).

"Thrice is he armed who hath his quarrel just,
But sure that force in self defence will fail,
Whose only armour 'gainst the critic thrust,
Is found to be *black mail*."
—*Punch*.

What Mr. Caine tells us about Clapham Common is unfortunately not confined to the suburbs, but is a very active evil in the centre of the very best parts of our town, and the continuous *blackmailing* of unfortunates by the police has been a notorious fact in such thoroughfares as Piccadilly, Pall Mall, Waterloo Place, Regent Street, &c., for some years past.
—*Saturday Review*.

Skeat says:—"Mail is a Scottish term for rent. *Blackmail* or *black rent* is the rent paid in cattle, as distinct from *white money* or silver." It is curious to note, however, that *maille* in old French signified copper coin (a trace of which still remains in the modern phrases *sans sou ni maille*, *avoir maille à partir*, &c.). This word may have been adopted by the Scotch, who still retain French words in their phraseology. *Black-money* is a provincialism still used (Wright).

Black Maria (English and American), the cell van in which prisoners are removed from court to prison. Termed in the French argot "panier à salade."