

Brief snatchers (thieves), pick-pockets who devote their attentions to pocket-books on race courses.

Brigh (thieves), pocket. Probably from breeches, but closer in form to the Gaelic *brigis*, whence the French *braies*, breeches, and *brayette* or *braguette*, flap of breeches, which formed a convenient receptacle for small articles when pockets had not superseded the pouch.

Bright (freemasons), an adjective applied to well-instructed masons.

Bright in the eye (popular), a mild state of intoxication.

Brim (old cant), a woman; (common), a violent and irascible woman. *Brim*, a very old English word for angry or enraged, is supposed to be from the raging or roar of the sea. Anglo-Saxon *brim*, surf, surge on the shore.

She raved, she abused me, and splenetic was;
She's a vixen, she's a *brim*, rounds! she's
all that is bad.

—*W'him of the Day*, 1799.

Brimstone (old cant), an abandoned rogue, or prostitute; (common), a violent, irascible woman.

The *brimstone* swore I beat her husband,
and so I paid for meddling.—*Johnston: Cerysal*.

Confound the woman . . . was there
ever such an aggravating *brimstone*!—*J. Greenwood: Almost Lost*.

Bringing down the house (theatrical and journalistic), eliciting thunders of applause.

Bring on your bears! (American), a common form of challenge. It is said that a small boy in the Far West, who lived in a place where bear-killing was a favourite amusement, was very much struck at hearing for the first time the story of Elisha read from the Bible. The next day, while in his log-cabin home, he saw approaching an old man on whose pate not a hair could be seen. He hastily took down his father's rifle and loaded it, sharpened the family bowie-knife, and roared at the ancient passer-by, "Go up, thou Bald-head!" Then looking defiantly up to heaven he cried, "Now, *bring on your bears!*" The *Chicago Tribune* (September 13, 1886) heads a defiant article to England with this exclamation.

Briny (popular), the sea. French slang, "la grande salée."

He delights in collaring a greenhorn, and after pouring into his willing ears tales of unutterable woe and adventures undergone on the *briny* . . . —*H. Evans: The Brighton Beach Loafer*.

Brisket-beater (popular), a Roman Catholic (Hotten).

Brismelah (Anglo-Yiddish), the ceremony of circumcision. *Beris*, a covenant; *beris hamiloh*, the covenant of circumcision.

The practice, however, of putting round the hat at *brismelahs* has fallen off const-