

"For my part," remarked a handsomely, even sportively dressed young man in the smoking car, "I think this Grover Cleveland is getting altogether too much attention. . . . I predict that in two months he will take a *back seat* as it were. He will discover that there are some big men in this country beside himself. This ain't no one-man country."—*American Humorist.*

Backsheesh (Anglo-Indian). From the Persian *bakhshtsh*, a gratuity, a "tip."

What an honour to think that I am to be elevated to the throne, and to bring the seat in Parliament as *backsheesh* to the Sultan.—*Thackeray: Pendennis.*

Back slang (Australian convicts), the going stealthily to or into a place, sneaking into it. Probably taken out to Australia by the convicts transported thither, though it may have originated there.

(Thieves), to enter or come out of a house by the back door, or to go a circuitous or private way through the streets in order to avoid any particular place in the direct road, is termed *back-slanging* it.—*Vaux's Memoirs.* *Back slany* also means slang produced by spelling words backwards, e.g., "nael ekom" for lean moke, "occabot" for tobacco.

Back-slanging is quite aristocratic up the country in Australia, where, unless it is a formal visit, it is almost the universal custom for any one of any rank to drive straight into the stables of the house he is going to, call for a groom (or quite as often a boy) to take the horses, and then walk round to the house.

Back slum (Australian convicts' slang), a back room, a back entrance. Probably taken out to Australia by the convicts transported thither.

In ordinary colloquial English, *back slum* simply means a "back street" or a "bad neighbourhood," but Vaux in his *Memoirs* says that among the Australian lays *back slum* is a back room, also the back entrance to any house or premises; thus, "We'll give it 'em on the *back slum*," means "We'll get in at the back door."

Back staircase (popular), a derisive term for a bustle, called by maid-servants "bird cage," or "canary cage." Parisian ladies had formerly the unassuming *polisson*, superseded under the Third Empire by the more "all round" crinoline, brought into fashion by the Empress, and which became so much the rage all the world over as to be worn even by African belles, whose sole adornment it frequently was. English girls of the lower classes, who could not afford to procure the "real article," would affix wooden hoops to their petticoats. Scoffing Parisians now term the modern "dress improver"—so elongated, painfully pointed, and almost horizontal—"un lieutenant" (a pun on "tenant lieu de ce qui manque") "nuage" ("parcequ'il cache la lune," *lune* being slang for the posterior), and "volapuk."