

name Abigail Hill of Mrs. Masham, waiting-woman to Queen Anne. It appears to have been adopted by many authors.

Whereas they petition to be freed from any obligation to marry the chamber-maid, we can by no means assent to it; the *Abigail*, by immemorial custom, being a deodand, and belonging to holy Church.—*Reply to Ladies' and Bachelors' Petition*, 1694.

By coach to the king's play-house, and there saw "The Scornful Lady" well acted; Doll Common doing *Abigail* most excellently.—*Pepys' Diary*.

There are many other instances of the names of characters of comedies or novels having been adopted to denote a whole class of individuals. Thus, an inn-keeper is called Boniface, from Farquhar's "Beaux' Stratagem." A Bob Acres, from Sheridan's "The Rivals," is synonymous with a coward. The French apply to a swindler the name of Robert Macaire, immortalised by Frédéric Lemaitre in his impersonation of the character in the melodrama "l'Auberge des Adrets"—Robert Macaire, by the bye, was the name of a notorious bandit. One of the creations of Balzac, in his "Comédie Humaine," l'illustre Gaudissard, has provided an epithet for a commercial traveller; and the French use *Abigail* with the same signification as on this side of the Channel.

On vit paraître une superbe berline, forme anglaise, à quatre chevaux, remarquable surtout par deux très jolies

abigails, qui étaient juchées sur le siège du cocher.—*Brillat-Savarin: Physiologie du Goût*.

Dr. C. Mackay, alluding to the generally accepted derivation of the word, says, "This supposition may, or may not be correct; but it is curious to remark that in the ancient Breton and Gaelic language, *abhagail* signifies flip-pant, waspish, and snappish, which word is derived from *abhag*, a terrier, a snarling dog."

Abishag (thieves), the illegitimate child of a mother who has been seduced by a married man. In Hebrew it means the mother's error.

Walpole wrote—"I love David too well not to be jealous of an *Abishag* eight years old."—*Leigh Hunt's Indicator*.

Able-whackets (nautical), a popular sea-game with cards, wherein the loser is beaten over the palms of the hands with a handkerchief tightly twisted like a rope. It is very popular among sailors. French soldiers have a similar game, at least as regards the penalty, termed "*foutro*."—*Vide Barrère's Argot and Slang*.

Abnormity (vulgarism), "a bleeding *abnormity*," an opprobrious epithet applied to the treacherous and deceitful; a person of crooked ways, an informer, a deformed or humpbacked person. *Abnormeth* was formerly used in a similar sense.