

(American and provincial English), a boy's exclamation to express warning or prohibition. "Fen puds," or "fen ball," keep away the ball; from English "fence off," or very old English, *fend*, ward off. English boys use the word "feign," I decline; also "feign it," leave off.

Fence (thieves), a receiver of stolen property; also his house or shop. Probably from "fence in."

About two moon after this same *fence* fell for buying two finns.—*Horsley: Jottings from Jail.*

G. Parker, in his "Variegated Characters," says: "In Field Lane, where the handkerchiefs are carried, there are a number of shops called 'fence shops,' where you buy any number."

Fence-riding (American), said of those who wait to see which side it will pay them to indorse, and then when victory or success seems certain, to throw in their lot with the winning side.

This question is one of clear right and wrong, and there can be no *fence-riding* when the rights of four millions of men are at stake.—*Congressional Globe.*

Fence, sitting on the. Although without doubt American in its later usage, the idea conveyed is "as old as the hills." Trench, in his "English Past and Present," page 300, points out how singular it is that not only is the same idea embodied in the phrase as in the Latin *prævari-*

cato, viz., "straddling with distorted legs," but that it should also carry with it almost exactly the same figurative meaning as the classical word. "To sit on the fence," in political cant parlance, is to wait and see how things go before committing oneself to definite action or partisanship.

A kind o' hangin' round an' *settin'* on the fence,
Till Providence pinte how to jump an' save the most expense.

—*Biglow Papers.*

Sometimes the phrase is varied with "sitting on both sides of the hedge." The expression is of Western growth, being traceable to the care with which the squatter fences in his lot; it also being a point of vantage at the top of which, at the close of the day's work, he can smoke his pipe and survey his possessions while thinking out his plans for the future.

Fence, to (thieves), to sell stolen property, or take it to a receiver's. The term is old.

It's not the first time that I have *fenced* a rum screen with him.—G. Parker. *Variegated Characters.*

Also to spend money.

Fencing crib (thieves), a place where stolen property can be disposed of.

Fencing cully (old), a receiver of stolen goods.

Ferg, to (Vermont University), old English *ferke*, to hasten, pro-