

**Abraham-men**, the term being applied subsequently to lame or sick beggars, or those shamming distress. The begging impostors designated as Abram-men were well known in the sixteenth century, and are mentioned in the "Fraternitie of Vagabondes," 1575. "An Abraham-man is one that walketh bare-armed and bare-legged, and fayneth to be mad, calling himself Poor Tom." Abraham-men, in Stephen's "Essays and Characters," 1615, are designated as fugitive ragamuffins, pretending to be cripples or impotent soldiers. Harman thus describes them:—

These *Abraham-men* be those that fayne themselves to haue benee mad; and haue benee kept eyther in Bethelam or some other pryson a good tyme, and not one amongst twenty that euer came in pryson for any such cause; yet wyll they saye howe pitiously and most extremely they haue benee beaten and dealt with all. . . . These begge money.—*Caricat or Warening for Common Cursetors.*

The old English dramatists use *Abraham* as a cant word for nakedness, in which sense it is still common among tramps, who say of a naked person, "He was dressed in Abraham's suit, a suit of everlasting flesh colour."

A tawny beard was termed an "Abraham-coloured beard," probably in accordance with the directions for representing all the persons in Scripture as given in the "Byzantine Painters' Guide," the "Book of Ballymoti," &c. In all of these the beards are specially described.

A "Judas-coloured beard," a word of similar import, was so called because Judas Iscariot was traditionally supposed to have had a red beard, and was so represented by early Italian painters. But the epithet of an Abraham-coloured beard remains as yet without any explanation or justification. To "sham Abraham" was to feign sickness or distress, and the term is used to the present day.

THE "SHAM ABRAHAM" AGITATION.—Matters must have come to a pretty pass when even the *Daily News* withdraws its support from the Trafalgar Square impostors.—*The Globe.*

A popular song of the last century, when forgery of bank notes for one pound was a common crime, and when the hanging of the detected criminal was quite as frequent, has preserved for posterity the name of Abraham Newland, the then cashier of the Bank of England, who signed all the notes in circulation:—

Sham Abraham you may,  
But you must not sham Abraham Newland.

Sailors use the term to denote an idle fellow who wants to be put on the sick list so as to shirk duty. Workmen also use it, with the meaning "to pretend to be ill," in order to get off work.

**Abraham suit, on the**, any kind of dodge or deceit designed to excite sympathy, used by begging-letter impostors.