

curs in print so early as the time of Chaucer, and is therefore in all probability much older.

**All-a-mort** (old), struck dumb, confounded.

**All around sports** (American), men who take an interest in all kinds of sport—racing, shooting, fishing, ball, pedestrianism, sparring, cock-fighting, ratting, &c.

**All at sea** (common), bewildered, confused; “*all at sea* on the question.”

“Dear, do scientific men become sailors when they are scared?”

“Guess not. Why?”

“Because this paper says that since the earthquake the scientists are *all at sea*.”—*Pittsburg Bulletin*.

**All beer and skittles**, recent slang signifying that the life and the circumstances of the person to whom it is made applicable are not so pleasant or so happy as they might be, or as they are represented to be. The allusion is to the supposed amusements of working men in the skittle ground, and to the beer which they drink to refresh themselves during the exercise.

Even the life of an heir to the Russian throne is not *all beer and skittles*. The young Grand Duke has narrowly escaped being sent to the Crimea instead of to Cannes for the benefit of his health.—*Globe*.

The expression is sometimes varied to *all skittles and beer*.

There's danger even when fish are caught  
To those who a wetting fear;

For what's worth having must aye be  
bought,  
And sport's like life, and life's like sport,  
It ain't *all skittles and beer*.

—*Adam Lindsay Gordon's Poems*.

The word *skittles* itself has ceased to belong to slang phraseology. It may be interesting to remark that the game was originally nine pins; but the Blue Laws of Connecticut having forbidden that game, the astute sons of the Puritans added a pin, and made the game ten pins, or, as it is now called, “American bowls.”

**All brandy** (popular), good, profitable, pleasant.

**All bum** (popular), a female with a large bustle.

**All-fired** (English and American), immoderate, violent. This common expression is thought in New England to be an euphemism for “hell-fired.” Thus people talk of an “*all-fired* abuse,” meaning a crying abuse; an “*all-fired* hurry,” *i.e.*, in great haste.

I knows I be so *all-fired* jealous I can't bear to hear o' her talking, let alone writing to.—*T. Hughes: Tom Brown at Oxford*.

**All fours, to be on** (common), to be on good terms, to be exactly similar; probably of Masonic origin, and referring to the completeness and harmony of the four sides of a “square.”

The cases [Bradlaugh *v.* Newdegate, Clarke *v.* Bradlaugh] are on *all fours*.—*Times*.