

Backstairs influence (common), a disparaging term for occult, intriguing influence.

There is no rule of the service so strict that it will not yield to *backstairs*, or other influence.—*Truth*, April 26, 1888.

Back talk (popular), no *back talk*, i.e., speaking frankly.

Back-tommy (tailors), a piece of cloth used to cover the stays at the waist.

Back-track (American); going back, retreating, eating one's words; to take the *back-track*, to recede from one's position.

The first law of self-preservation has admonished Mr. Douglas that he has gone as far in the slavery concessions to the South as he can possibly go, and that if he would save himself at home he must take the *back-track*.—*New York Herald*, December 26, 1857.

I turned to Mac and said, "Come, Mac, what's the use of fooling; come with me."

"No *back-tracks*, Texas. I'll stay here."
—*R. Morley: The Western Avernus*.

Back up (public schools), to call out, as, for instance, when a prefect requires a fag.

Backy (tailors), the man working immediately behind the speaker. The term is much affected by "slop cutters."

Bacon (common), the body; "to save one's *bacon*," to escape a castigation; "to baste one's *bacon*," is to strike one; (theatrical), to "pull *bacon*."

The late Mr. H. J. Byron, the

actor, very popular in his time, says this phrase has reference to a grimace which he used to make, and which was called pulling a *bacon face*, or, in short, pulling *bacon*, but the expression is not in general use.

Bad break (American), an outbreak, outrage, turbulent conduct.

"Sam," he says, "you've made one or two *bad breaks* since you've been in town."
—*F. Francis: Saddle and Moccasin*.

Bad egg (popular), a rascal.

There is some philosophy in the remark that a man may be a *bad egg*, and yet not be a nuisance unless he gets broke.—*Sporting Times*.

The term is used in America to express a man of unsound or doubtful character. It became popular about 1849–50. If the corresponding slang term existed in China, a *bad egg* would, on the contrary, mean a very honest fellow.

But one gray-haired old veller shmiled
crimly und bet
Dat Breitmann would prove a *pad egg* for
dem yet.
—*Ballads of Hans Breitmann*.

There was, however, a considerable feeling amongst others there that he was a *bad egg*, and they even went so far as to suggest that the sooner he had a bullet in him the better.—*A. Staveley Hill: From Home to Home*.

Badge coves (old cant), persons existing on the bounty of the parish.

Badgeer (Anglo-Indian), from the Persian *bād-gēr*, wind-catch.