

murders, to call out loudly. "If you hit me again I'll call out *blue murders*."

Blue noses (Americanism), natives of Nova Scotia.

"Pray, sir," said one of my fellow-passengers, "can you tell me the reason why the Nova Scotians are called *blue noses*?" "It is the name of a potato," said I, "which they produce in the greatest perfection, and boast to be the best in the world. The Americans have in consequence given them the nickname of *blue noses*."—*Haliburton: Sam Slick*.

Blue peter (nautical), the signal for sailing when hoisted at the foretop mast-head. This well-known flag has a blue ground with a white square in the centre (Admiral Smyth).

The *blue peter* has long been flying at my foremast, and . . . now I must soon expect the signal for sailing.—*Justin McCarthy: A History of Our Own Times*.

This expression is also applied to the call for trumps in whist.

Blue pigeon (thieves), the lead on roofs; to fly or shoot the *blue pigeon*, to steal lead off the roofs of buildings. (Nautical), a nickname for the sounding lead.

Blue pill (American), a bullet. Lead has long been termed *blucy* in England, and death by a bullet *bluc* murder, but the enormous consumption of *blue pills* or calomel in the United States renders it possible that the simile originated there.

. . . That if he did so he would be received with a welcome from a horse-pistol. To which the answer was, "Hev got a mountain howitzer witch karrys a fore-pound (4 lb.) ball, and I intend to blow you and your house to hel before I begin on your turkers. So come on with your pistil and *blue pil*."—*Knickerbocker Magazine*.

Blue plumbs (thieves), bullets.

No rapture can equal the tobyman's joys,
To blue devils *blue plumbs* give the go-by.

—*Ainsworth: Rookwood*.

Blue ribbon (racing), the term is only applied to the Derby.

Melton, who won the *blue ribbon* after one of the most exciting finishes.—*Illustrated London News*.

Blue ruin (popular), gin of inferior quality. Termed also "blue ribband."

His ear caught the sound of the word *morbleu!*

Pronounced by the old woman under her breath;

Now, not knowing what she could mean by blue death,

He conceived she referred to a delicate brewing,

Which is almost synonymous, namely, *blue ruin*.

—*Ingolitsly Legends*.

A tumbler of *blue ruin* fill, fill for me!
Red tape those as likes it may drain,
But whatever the lush, it a bumper must be.

—*Lord Lytton: Paul Clifford*.

Dr. Brewer gives the explanation: "*Blue*, from its tint, and *ruin*, from its effects." Compare as regards similes of colour "*red tape*," red wine; "*petit bleu*," coarse red wine; "*une verte*" or "*perroquet*," a glass of absinthe (which is green); "*une brune*," a glass of porter; "*une*