

Hubbard Elbert

**The Roycroft Dictionary,  
Concocted by Ali  
Baba and the...**



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# Elbert Hubbard

## The Roycroft Dictionary Concocted by Ali Baba and the Bunch on Rainy Days

### The Roycroft Dictionary

**ADVERTISING:** The education of the public as to who you are, where you are, and what you have to offer in way of skill, talent or commodity. The only man who should not advertise is the man who has nothing to offer the world in way of commodity or service.

**Abel:** The first squealer.

**Abhorrence:** 1. A pronounced feeling of dislike in the presence of what is superior or unattainable. 2. To discover one's real self and to slander somebody or something else in revenge. 3. A form of hate that suffers from *mal de mer*.

**Asbestos:** 1. The white-hope of the damned. 2. A specially prepared paper upon which *The Philistine* is printed.

**Arson:** To be careless in the use of fire. (General Sherman was at times more or less careless in the use of fire on his March to the Sea. —*Hon. Henry W. Grady.*)

**Aeronaut:** A person who goes up in order to come down. Hence, a meta-physician.

**Abnormal:** To have intelligence, character or genius; to be less stupid than one's neighbor; to be better than the worst; to be one's self. *E. g.*, the writer of these lines.

**Abode:** 1. A place where one cleans one's teeth and occasionally sleeps. 2. A long counter with a gutter and a rail at the bottom over which one is served with any liquid in a glass. 3. Dwelling, fireside (obsolete in this sense). 4. A grave.

**Abnegation:** A plan for securing the thing in the easiest and surest way.

**Academic:** 1. Of, or pertaining to, fossils; vegetative; parasitic; the opposite of change, viable, evolution. 2. Relating to a society that promotes the love of the static and the immobile. 3. Apish, parrot-like, phonographic.

**Adieu:** A prayer of thanksgiving uttered at parting.

**Acquaintance:** Any one we bow to politely at the opera or shake hands with warmly in a barroom, but whom we would kick out of our homes. Hence, any one who has refused us a loan.

**Act:** 1. Thought in motion. 2. An actor who says he gets three thousand a week.

**Abys:** 1. The measureless gulf between literature and the American magazine. 2. The distance between a thinker and an editorial writer.

**Army:** A body of humanitarians that seeks to impress on another body of men the beauty of non-resistance, by exterminating them.

**Aborigine:** 1. A natural, unaffected person; one who has no conscience, who is honest, upright, and always at war. 2. A Deist, a Pantheist, who sees God in everything and feels His presence everywhere, even in his cannibalistic rites; hence, the first thinker in any country. 3. One who hates civilization and the *Ladies' Hum Journal*. 4. Any one who is mulcted, robbed, murdered, butchered, betrayed, in the name of progress.

**Anarchist:** 1. A Christian dilettante; one who casts a shadow on tomorrow while waiting for the Greek Kalends. 2. A mouther of sublime inanities. 3. One who maps and surveys the air and constructs dainty Utopias with the building-blocks quarried from his unbelievable credulity. 4. In the insane asylum of idealists, a man who imagines himself to be God. 5. A militant bourgeois who has deserted both Rome and Reason because he can not stand competition.

**American Plan:** A scheme for shortening human life through overeating.

**Ananias:** 1. The first ad-writer. 2. Any person who adapts the truth to his needs. 3. An ancient Saint George who slew the dragon Truth – hence, any popular hero or revealer who displays his grinders.

**Agriculturist:** One who makes his money in town and blows it in the country.

**Anger:** 1. A violent blushing and scampering up and down of the blood upon hearing the truth about ourselves; an epileptic condition produced by the presentation of a bill that is not yet due, just due, or overdue. A sudden tumescence of the ego and a furious exaltation of verbal powers upon losing a collar-button. 2. Before election, the righteous wrath of a candidate in the presence of evils that he has invented; after election-day, his wail in the presence of the grave he did not dig. *E. g.*, The devil (taking final leave of the Lord): "I am in anger with thee, Sire." The Lord: "For thee, son, 't will be a long time between heavens. So go to Hell and take thine Anger with thee."

**Admission:** 1. To lie frankly and truthfully about something that can not possibly incriminate you. 2. To go into a place where one is not wanted; as, "A burglar gained admission to my house."

**Admiration:** 1. The smile of Spite. 2. To secretly wish evil to one who has given us pleasure. 3. A form of shamefaced flattery. 4. To murder and go scot-free. *E. g.*, "I admire him very much." "Ah, so that is the reason he has become thoughtful!" From Bean's *Meditations of a Vegetarian*.

**Afterward:** A space of time in which something happens after something else has happened, as, life, death; love, disillusion; riches, gout; wine, headache; unselfishness, regret.

**Assembly:** The Pantheon of the mediocre.

**Autobiography:** 1. Auto-intoxication. 2. Things which no one else will say about you, and which therefore you have to say of yourself.

**Apostle:** 1. A machine for recording a lie. 2. A person who has grown round-shouldered from following the spoor of another. 3. A lickspittle needed by philosophers in their business.

**Albany:** 1. A place beyond which Henry Hudson could not go. 2. The lobby of the White House. 3. Famous in history by the biennial meetings of the Blackmailers' Club. 4. Any place wherein a capitol is burned at a pre-established psychological moment. (There is a famous proverb which says, "Those who are in Albany escaped Sing Sing, and those who are in Sing Sing were on their way to Albany.")

**Athens:** See Pericles and Aspasia.

**Art:** 1. The vengeance of the Ideal on the Real. 2. Anything done by a man or a woman on paper, canvas, marble or a musical keyboard that people pretend to understand, and sometimes buy. 3. The antithesis of whatever becomes popular in the cultured world. 4. To cast out the dragons of virtue and hypocrisy by committing some imaginary sin and telling the world about it. 5. The beautiful way of doing things. 6. The expression of a man's joy in his work. 7. A matter of hair-cut and neckties. 8. The uplifting of the beautiful so that all may see and enjoy. 9. The utilization of love's exhaust. 10. Love's by-product.

**Art-Collector:** A man who operates a morgue for things rich, rare and precious.

**Atheist:** Any man who does not believe in himself.

**Athlete Mex:** Any man who throws the bull.

**Atonement:** 1. Embolism of the will. 2. To raise a sin from a vice to a virtue. 3. A borax that kills the vermin of remorse, but that can not be relied upon to kibosh their breeding-place. 4. An immunity-bath in preparation for transgressions to come. (Among certain religious sects, the Day of Atonement is the day on which all gonofs line up for a fresh start.)

**Attention:** Concentration of the mind on whatever will ultimately put something in the pocket; hence, in law and politics, the frame-up.

**BACK:** 1. That part of the body to which your friend directs his remarks when he tells you the truth. 2. A smooth surface composed of skin and bones which stretches between Land's End and John O'Groat's.

**Bal-Masque:** The coronation of Mephisto.

**Balivorax:** A Battle Creek Bellifiller, made from selected fidoes, fuddies, fresh freddies, chibots and chitterlings. Ladies love it, babies cry for it, and men who eat it are loved by the ladies who love it who have babies who cry for it. This is the filler fidgeted for by Juno before she weaned Hercules – who was no bottle-baby – and fed to him afterward. Ask your Bagpiper and take no other.

**Beatitude:** A rare and evanescent mental state caused by the reception of money that one has not earned. Synonyms: Windfall, remittance.

**Beggar:** A robber who has lost his nerve – a bandit with a streak of yellow in his ego.

**Biddle:** The act of introducing a prizefight in a Sunday School.

**Bilysunday:** 1. A theological jumping-jack, jerked by financial strings. 2. Any one with a pious emotional jag. 3. Hypnosis at so much per. 4. A person intent on saving his soul by religious rigmarole at the expense of reason. 5. To paddle away to Paradise in an orthodox canoe, and feel happy in the thought that most of the folks on the Big Ship are going to Hell.

**Bloomingdale:** A condition of mind.

**Bastard:** Any man who doubts his own immaculate conception.

**Bean:** A dynamic spheroid, combustible under certain conditions.

**Blaberino:** Any person who tells a person something a person says about him, which puts fishbones in the throat and brickbats in the Ostermoor of the person told.

**Booty:** 1. Whatever belongs to somebody that really belongs to somebody else, or whatever belongs to somebody else that really belongs to you or ought to belong to you if it did not belong to a third party – hence, anything at all. 2. Property in a transitional stage.

**Baptism:** Hydrocephalic abracadabra.

**Bard:** Anciently a poet; now a Poet-Laureate.

**Boredom:** 1. The essential nature of monogamy. 2. A period or rest between I Did and I Will. 3. A state of divine revelation wherein for a single moment we are carried by the giant of Eternal Inutility to the abysses and summits of the perpetual Nix. (The word *boredom* comes from Bore, a tired son of Noah. After the subsidence of the waters, Bore wandered about the earth, yawning and gaping and stretching, for at that time malaria oozed from many stagnant pools. Finally, absolutely exhausted, Bore, being afraid to be down on the damp and slimy soil, rested on the seventh day on his own bean, hence boredom.)

**Bughouse:** 1. A condition of mind (See Boston) 2. The place where a person without funds is sent under certain conditions.

**Business:** Looking a payroll in the eye and kiting checks. 2. A method of reducing a landlady to her lowest terms.

**Businessman:** One who gets the business and completes the transaction – all the rest are clerks and laborers.

**Butler:** 1. A Person or Thing that has charge of the servants in a house belonging to another Person or Thing. 2. A tyrant without ears, eyes, organs, dimensions, passions.

**Brain:** A commodity as scarce as radium and more precious, used to fertilize ideas.

**Bohemia:** A good place in which to camp, but a very poor place in which to settle down.

**Bread:** A foodstuff which the rich occasionally give to the poor as a substitute for cake.

**CANNIBAL:** 1. The conceiver and first practitioner of the eucharistic rite. 2. A place where a missionary may have a hell of a time. 3. A Pierrot whose pranks are side-splitting. 4. One who appreciates his fellow-being at his true worth. 5. The most subtle of living ironists. 6. Any one who takes his brother man at his physical valuation.

**Carelessness:** 1. To have an eye on Eternity, wherein nothing matters. 2. To do a thing in the manner of a god who throws dice for the birth or death of a universe. 3. To perform an act wisely, but not too well.

**Courtesy:** 1. The court clothes of any two-legged predatory animal. 2. The oil that makes a juggernaut noiseless.

**Chums:** A condition of sophomorph propinquity that precedes a feud. (See furse and vendetta.) A state of chumminess between persons of opposite sex and suitable ages is more or less in the line of Nature. But that can't-get-along-without-you feeling between persons of the same sex is a form of hate and means that some third party is going to be beaned.

**Circumstance:** 1. The fresh banana-peel just around the corner. 2. *Ex-post-facto* knowledge of a series of incidents, episodes and laws which, had we known before doing something that we should not have done anyhow, we would have done otherwise, in the same way, or not at all. 3. The Shadowy Iago that follows us up and down life's promenades. 4. Man Friday to Chance.

**Cerebellum:** 1. The knapsack of Intelligence. 2. The *pons asinorum* between the mind and the cabeza. 3. A place whence, in democracies, politicians draw their strength, and in monarchies where the masses manufacture bombs and guillotines. *E. g.*, "Now suppose," began Professor Sapnoodle, "that a tiny elevator ran up the spine; we should then call the cerebellum the ceiling of the basement."

**Charity:** 1. A thing that begins at home, and usually stays there. 2. Bracing up Ralph Waldo Emerson's reputation by attributing to him literary mousetraps which he should have made, but didn't. (See Cheese.)

**Children:** Exquisite caskets of flesh that hold the scrolls of all our deeds.

**Chauffeur:** The power behind the thrown.

**Cheek:** 1. A drip-pan for tears. 2. Anciently, a part of the face; latterly, among women, the subsoil of rouge. 3. The principal asset of Ex-President Bombastes Furioso.

**Chef:** The Messiah of gluttons; a Borgia of the scullery; one who crochets sweetbreads instead of cooking them.

**Chalk:** A deposit found at the top, bottom and middle and in the space between the bottom and middle and between the middle and top of American literature. (Chalk-line, used generally in the phrase, "to walk a chalk-line"; *E. g.*, the shortest way to reach the poor-house is to walk the chalk-line of probity).

**Clique:** Friendship gone to seed.

**Committee:** A thing which takes a week to do what one good man can do in an hour.

**Christian:** 1. One of a sect that despises and rejects the race from which its founder sprang. 2. A person who thinks he believes in a certain creed that he does not believe in, and thus is pied mentally, morally and arithmetically. 3. A man who keeps one day in the week holy and raises hell with folks and fauna the other six – sometimes.

**Church:** A place where the Anointed of the Lord palm themselves off on one another. 2. A hall of echoes. 3. A counterpane for the dead. 4. An edifice wherein inspired fogyism gets its final degree.

**Chicago Tongue:** A lengthening of the unruly member to a hammer-like proportion.

**Conscience:** 1. The muzzle of the will. 2. The Pecksniffian mask of the fundamental Bill Sykes. 3. The aspiration of Rosinante to be Pegasus.

**Church Unity:** Joining my church.

**Cigarette:** One who is late every morning and fresh every evening.

**City:** 1. Any place where men have builded a jail, a bagnio, a gallows, a morgue, a church, a hospital, a saloon, and laid out a cemetery – hence a center of life. 2. A herding region; any part of the earth where ignorance and stupidity integrate, agglomerate and breed.

**Civilization:** A device for increasing human ills; a machine for the perpetuation of the weak; an ingenious contraption for spreading disease and hunger. (See war, harlot, politician, liar, Teddy, Sulzer, Murphy, hypocrisy, newspaper, forger, jail, policemen, lawyer, walking delegate, capitalist, poverty, clergyman.) *E. g.*, "Do you believe in civilization?" "Yep." From *The Confessions of Herr Krupp*.

**Commonsense:** The ability to detect values – to know a big thing from a little one. (I'd rather possess Commonsense than to have six degrees from Oxford. —*Fingy Conners' Confessions*.)

**Clock:** 1. A telltale; a gossip; a blab. 2. A chink through which the Greta Secret leaks. 3. The Big Ben of eternity.

**Coffin:** 1. L'Envoi, the end of the legend. 2. An ornamental candy-box which no one cares to open. 3. A room without a door or a skylight.

**College:** A place where you have to go in order to find out that there is nothing in it. (See Marriage.)

**College Degree:** A social disgenic, as compared with proof of competence.

**Comic:** Tragedy viewed from the wings.

**Competition:** 1. The struggle for a cake of ice in hell. 2. The life of trade, and the death of the trader.

**Chimeric:** To follow the right and get left. *E. g.*, A. He was chimeric. B. All the same, he went to the Chair like a man.

**Concoction:** 1. An imaginative mosaic distinguished from a lie in this, that a lie is "made up" and a concoction is "put together." 2. A social, religious, economic or political allegory, dogma, creed or program which lands some one in power and flattens out those who believe in it. 3. A mixture of dream and reality, sometimes called "Universe" or "World," put together by two strolling Super-Gentlemen Adventurers, sometimes known as God and Satan.

**Confidence:** The one big lesson the world needs most to learn.

**Conservative:** One who is opposed to the things he is in favor of.

**Compliment:** A sarcastic remark with a flavor of truth or not, as the case may be.

**Console:** To stab one in pain with the bare bodkin of pity.

**Contradiction:** 1. Two lies disputing the roadway. 2. A head-on collision in which two trains of thought telescope each other.

**Coquetry:** 1. An eye-shade worn by lubricity. 2. The colored glasses of The-Thing-Itself. 3. The death-tumbrel that Passion builds for its dreams.

**Consciousness:** A state wherein one becomes aware that he is being robbed, swindled or duped, by either a natural or an artificial law. Aside from his periods of sleep it may be said that man is always in a state of consciousness when voting, making love, or when succumbing to any other form of hypnotic suggestion.

**Conversion:** 1. To be suddenly seized by fright before a fiction or a fact. 2. To execute a mental and moral pirouette from one absurdity to a worse one. 3. To exhaust one pleasure and seek redemption in another. 4. A backslider from your own ideas to those of an inferior.

**Co-operation:** Doing what I tell you to do, and doing it quick.

**Courage:** 1. A matter of the red corpuscle. 2. A matter of getting used to it. (It is oxygen that makes every attack, and without oxygen in his blood to back him, a man attacks nothing – not even a pie. – From Wilbur Nesbit's book *Bunc as I Have Found It.*)

**Creed:** A metaphor with ankylosis – a figure of speech frozen stiff with fright.

**Curiosity:** 1. A gulf that swallows gods, men, creeds, matter, worlds, philosophies. 2. A peephole in the brain through which one sees the pomp and ceremony of the Absurd. 3. A monstrous antenna that feels its way through matter and mind, and founders in the Infinite. 4. At its lowest, the instinct that boosts us up to peep over our neighbor's transom, symbolized by a knot-hole.

**Critics:** Men who quarrel over the motive of a book that never had any.

**Criminal:** One who does by illegal means what all the rest of us do legally.

**Cromwell (Oliver):** The father of Nell Gwynn.

**Credit:** The lifeblood of commerce.

**Caste:** A Chinese Wall that deprives you of the society of sensible people.

**Cain:** The first progressive.

**AWN:** 1. The beginning of a daily instalment in a serial story that will never end. 2. That mystical hour wherein Dives goes belching into dreamland and Lazarus comes out yawning carrying a dinner-pail.

**Death:** 1. To stop sinning suddenly. 2. To resign one's membership in the Ananias Club. 3. A readjustment of life's forces.

**Debt:** 1. A rope to your foot, cockleburs in your hair, and a clothespin on your tongue. 2. The devil in disguise.

**Demagogue:** One whose highest ambition is to stand on the grave of a great dead industry and boast to an army of unemployed of his bloody deeds.

**Decalogue:** 1. The stakes that hold in its place the social circus-tent. 2. A collection of commandments formulated by a person who has broken them all. 3. An incubator in which eaglets are transformed into capons. 4. A fence that confines animals that can not climb or fly. (The most famous Decalogue is known as the Ten Commandments. Whoso has obeyed this Decalogue in toto has died obscure, poor, unsung, unwept, and overlooked by Clio.)

**Dogma:** 1. A hard substance which forms in a soft brain; a coprolitic idea; a lie imperiously reiterated and authoritatively injected into the mind of one or more persons who believe they believe what some one else believes. 2. A paying thought or doctrine. 3. A recession into the Divine or Imperial – hence, the father of graft.

**Democracy:** 1. A form of government by popular ignorance. 2. The dwarf's paradise. 3. Any political system where male votes are substitutes for brains. (This word comes from the Abracadabra: "demo," lungs; "crazy," to rule; hence, to rule by caloric.)

**Dennis:** The man who expresses the things he thinks other folks think he thinks.

**Dollar:** A disk of metal which has eucharistic qualities; a sacred, miraculous object, contact with which is looked upon as curative and prophylactic.

**Diary:** 1. To see one's self as no one else cares to see us. 2. A book that describes the birth, effulgence and disappearance of pimples. 3. The lavatory of literature.

**Diplomacy:** An endeavor to side-step Nemesis.

**Diplomat:** A man who says "perhaps" when he means no, as opposed to a woman who says "perhaps" when she means yes. (A man who says "no" is not a diplomat, and a woman who says "yes" is not a lady.)

**Dignity:** 1. A state of spiritual, mental or emotional starchiness that precedes a bluff. 2. A sartorial and tonsorial *chef-d'œuvre*. 3. The bodily attitude of a speaker or a preacher in the presence of people whose duty it is to believe he is not lying to them. 4. A mask we wear to hide our ignorance. (Man has dignity, woman has poise, animals have power; hence, dignity in a man or woman is anything that is a substitute for power.)

**Disappointment:** 1. The cradle of the ideal. 2. The skeleton of Purpose and the skull and crossbones of Desire. 3. A feeling in regard to the past that comes to every one on the Thirty-first of each December. 4. The final issue of any act begun yesterday, today or tomorrow. 5. The original road to Damascus and Horeb. 6. An alluvium deposited by the waves of Time in the human soul, and which becomes the basis of psychological Mont Blancs.

**Discord:** A guinea-hen, a peacock and a bluejay singing a trio.

**Disadvantage:** Having too many advantages in life.

**Devil:** A god who has been bounced for conduct unbecoming a gentleman.

**Doctor:** 1. A person who has taken seriously the biblical injunction, "Physician, heel thyself!" 2. In Germany, a swashbuckler person with many scars, much admired by small boys and unhappily married ladies, and feared by shopkeepers.

**Disinterested:** 1. Whatever is inconceivable. 2. A hypothetical ether that surrounds all forms of selfishness and naturalness. 3. That psychological interval when we look the other way before making a grab. 4. A monkey's mental attitude toward the hen.

**Dishonorable:** 1. To avoid infamy and almost attain respectability. 2. The first feeling we entertain toward each new acquaintance. 3. Any action whatsoever committed by a competitor.

**Duty:** A pleasure which we try to make ourselves believe is a hardship.

**Divorce:** 1. A legal separation of two persons of the opposite sex who desire to respect and honor each other. 2. A marital derail.

**Divorcee:** 1. A female fugitive from injustice. 2. Any lady who is a Post-Graduate in Love's Correspondence-School.

**Discontent:** 1. Inertia on a strike. 2. The mainspring of progress. 3. The starting-point in every man's career.

**Disinherit:** 1. The prankish action of the ghosts in cutting the pockets out of trousers. 2. To leave great sums of money to lawyers. 3. A method of insuring postmortem notoriety – and disappointment.

**Doubter:** 1. One who picks his teeth, blows his nose on his napkin, and yawns at the Lord's table. 2. A good-for-nothing who does not knock before entering the bathroom of the Faithful.

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