

THE PORTFOLIO.

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A CORRESPONDENT of an exchange gives at some length an account of the origin of the word "slang," the substance of which is as follows: "Slangs were originally convict's fetters; and 'slangus talk,' the conversation of the wearers of such; therefore, slang is only an abbreviated name for the language of thieves, robbers, and all kinds of criminals and convicts."

Fortunately the majority of the patrons of "slangus talk" are not what they were in the early days of that language, or perhaps we might hear of something in the shape of an action for slander.

We would not advocate the extermination of slang, for the reason that it has furnished us with a few words whose equals for pith and brevity are not to be found in the dictionary, and we cannot overlook their good qualities. We have yet to meet the person who would take the "long way round" to describe a condition of mind peculiar to certain aggravating circumstances, when it might be expressed in the simple word "bored," or who would waste time in heaping together authorized adjectives in order to classify certain persons whose whole is summed up in the word "shoddy."

Yet, neither would we advocate the use of slang, because in almost every case its use is equivalent to its abuse, and people of little brains, either not knowing how to express themselves in good English, or not having any ideas to express, interlard their speech with idiotic ejaculations and slang phrases, which, as they suppose, supply the lacking ideas, and add tone and color to their statements; while many who are well able to converse fluently on any subject, unconsciously acquire a habit of employing like expressions.

Much of what might be termed mild slang has its origin in exaggeration. A desire to excite wonderment in others suggests the use of adjectives and adverbs too extreme in their meaning to be applied to the thing spoken of; hence the abuse of that word *awful*. In its right place it ought to inspire the feeling it represents, but when constantly connected with what is trivial and ridiculous, it loses any power it may have had, and rather excites laughter than solemnity. Thus people who exaggerate defeat their own ends, and instead of the desired impression, none at all is made.

Seeing then that no positive rule can be made in regard to slang, and that we are liable to pedantry and affectation on the one hand, and to vulgarity and folly on the other, it is best to be guided in the choice of words by that last but not least of the senses—common sense.

THE resolution of accustoming the ladies to lecture, adopted some time ago in the Society, has been acted upon in a manner which so far has proved highly satisfactory, and we regret that this exercise had not been sooner engaged in. The purpose in thus putting the oratorical and intellectual talents of the young ladies to a somewhat unusual test, is not from any view we have of preparing them all for the rostrum or platform (although, should they be qualified, we know of no reason to the opposite), but merely as an aid in acquiring a greater facility of speech and better command of language. At first there was, as a matter of course, the usual embarrassment consequent upon such an undertaking; but this has worn away, and the desired change is rapidly taking place. We know of no way in which an improvement of such a nature as