

lish shire; it is surely worse still when it is applied to a sovereign commonwealth.

The words "metropolis" and "provinces," used in this way, I venture to call slang, whether the city which is set up above its fellows is London or New York. Anyhow this use of them is in no way distinctively American; indeed the misuse of the word "provinces" is, I fancy, excessively rare in America, and it is certainly borrowed from England. Each side of the Ocean unluckily finds it easier to copy the abuse of the other side than to stick to the noble heritage which is common to both. But even in the abuses of language on either side there is no strictly dialectic difference; still less is there any such difference in those legitimate varieties of local usage which have grown up out of the different circumstances of the two countries. But many of these last have thus much in common with dialectic differences, that they have come of themselves without any fixed purpose, even though we often can, as we cannot in the case of strictly dialectic difference, see why they have come. It is otherwise when one word is used rather than another under the notion of its being finer. This is plainly the case with "depôt," and I suppose it is also with "conductor" for "guard." But one cannot see either that "railroad" is finer than "railway," or that "railway" is finer than "railroad." If "store" may, from one point of view, be thought finer than "shop," the increased fineness is quite accidental; it is another thing when any man on either side calls his shop or store his "establishment." In nearly all these cases the difference matters nothing to one whose object is to save some relics of the good old English tongue. One way is for the most part as good as the other; let each side of the Ocean stick to its own way, if only to keep up those

little picturesque differences which are really a gain when the substance is essentially the same. This same line of thought might be carried out in a crowd of phrases, old and new, in which British and American usage differs, but in which neither usage can be said to be in itself better or worse than the other. Each usage is the better in the land in which it has grown up of itself. A good British writer and a good American writer will write in the same language and the same dialect; but it is well that each should keep to those little peculiarities of established and reasonable local usage which will show on which side of the Ocean he writes. It is not so with slang, on whichever side it has grown up. It is hard to define slang; but we commonly know it when we hear it. Slang, I should think, was always conscious in its origin. A word or phrase is used, not unconsciously under the natural compulsion of some good reason for its use, but consciously, indeed of set purpose, because it is thought to sound fine or clever. It presently comes to be used by crowds of people as a matter of course, without any such thought; but its origin sticks to it; it remains slang, and never becomes the true yoke-fellow of words and phrases which have grown up of themselves as they were really needed. Or again, there may be a word or phrase which is good enough in its turn with others, but which, if used constantly to the exclusion of others, seems to partake of the nature of slang. Some favourite American forms of speech seem to us in this way to savour of slang, and I believe that some favourite British forms of speech in the like sort savour of slang to an American. To take a very small example, perhaps the better because it is so very small, the word "certainly" is a very natural form of granting any request; but in