

cognised in the standard literature of the country. We shall find it convenient, however, to include under the same name certain peculiarities to which there is a noticeable tendency, at least in the more ephemeral portion of modern literature.

Slang is no modern invention. In fact, it seems so natural an outcome of an artificial state of society that it is not surprising to find it of great antiquity. Accordingly we recognise it in the comedies of both Greek and Roman writers, not to mention more serious works.

The constituents of English slang are of a very heterogeneous nature. All the languages of the civilised world have been laid under contribution. Examples might be multiplied indefinitely. The classical origin of *mob*, *chum* and *gyp* is generally admitted. *Bosh* and *chouse* are Turkish; *mull* (to spoil), *bamboozle*, *pal*, and many other words, including *slang* itself, are Gipsy. The French argôt has furnished some of our slang, and so has the *Lingua Franca*, a dialect spoken in some of the Mediterranean ports. *Lark*, in the sense of sport, and *bone* (to steal) are Early English words; *duds*, *galore*, etc., are Gaelic; *vamoose*, Spanish. *Cant*, *fudge*, *burk*, and a few others, are derived from proper names.

Many curious derivations are given in the "Slang Dictionary," which has much interesting information on the subject. A number of words and phrases now discarded in literature can boast an irreproachable pedigree and history, having at one time been employed by the best authors. In Shakspeare, for instance, we have the following :

"Ram thou thy fruitful tidings in mine ears."—*Ant. and Cleo.*

"Pitch me in the mire."—*Tempest.*

"Roaming clean through the bonds of Asia."
—*Com. of Errors.*

"I cannot tell what the dickens his name is."
—*Merry Wives of Windsor.*

Many other examples suggest themselves, among which we may mention *flush* (that is, having plenty of money); *lift* and *prig*, both meaning to steal; *jolly*, *saucy*, *budge*, *dodge*, and *tyke*. All these words have lost caste since the time of Shakspeare.

A large class of words, such as *whiz*, *fizz*, *bang*, *crunch*, etc., are obviously imitative. Descriptive words of this kind have been sanctioned by many great authors from Homer downwards, and the use of them within reasonable limits adds force to a description either in conversation or writing. Besides peculiar words, slang comprises new applications of words, odd phrases, fanciful metaphors, unusual constructions, and countless strange tricks of language which cannot be classed under any head. Metaphors are drawn from all manner of professions and occupations: from the workshop, as, for example, the expressions 'a screw loose,' and 'a close shave;' from the billiard-table, as 'to put side on;' the hunting-field, as 'to come a cropper;' the card-table, as 'a regular trump;' from nautical life, as 'to raise the wind,' and 'the cut of his jib.' I mention these only to point out from what diverse sources the materials of our slang have been collected.

Many words and phrases now familiarly employed were originally provincialisms. But of late years one of the most copious fountains of slang has been Young America. We are simply deluged by these efforts of our neighbours to improve upon the language of the mother-country. They vary from ingenious and expressive terms of language to phrases suggesting only the most vulgar ideas. They include a number of barbarisms, against which British taste has up to the present time taken its stand, and I sincerely hope it will be a long time before such words as *cablegram*, *walkist*, *swimmist* and the like become naturalized either in this country or in England.