

make them forget their pain and weariness for one afternoon at least.

No sadness, therefore, was allowed to mar the enjoyment of this lovely evening, for even one had conspired together to make the little guests happy.

Even the Lady Mayoress' little black Pomeranian dog contributed his share towards the afternoon's entertainment by barking lustily whenever anything specially good was said or done.

This set us all off laughing, as it came in so appropriately, it sounded as if the wee doggie really meant it for applause. Presently their kind, funny, clever entertainer reappeared with two dolls, one an old man and the other an old woman, with whom he proceeded to converse, for they talked as well as he did in the oddest of cracked voices, and "Sally" even sang a little, but was so hurt by the old man's unkind remarks, that the song came to an abrupt close.

By-and-by they announced that a friend was waiting outside, but could not come in as

he had a lot of parcels to take care of, whereupon a messenger was despatched to fetch him. As it happened the unknown friend never appeared at all, but this mattered less, as his parcels did, and the excitement of finding that they were all toys drove everything else out of their heads.

It was not till after the distribution of these presents that we found out what was behind the screens; but then, at a given signal they were removed, and there stood revealed two long tables covered with the most appetising good things elegantly arranged, as if for a grown-up party.

Soon they were all seated and busily employed in sampling the various dainties set before them.

One little man was too fragile to sit up to the table and had to remain on his improvised couch, to which tea and cakes were brought, but it was pitiful to see what a mere morsel he ate, and how even the hot-house grapes failed to tempt his appetite.

Here too was a tiny lassie, who should by

rights have been in the hospital, but whose father could not deprive her of this one day's pleasure.

Poor mite! she looked as if any more pain would finish her altogether, for her small hands were like claws and her little face pinched and wizened like an old woman's, but let us hope that the pink and blue dolly she so affectionately clasped in her thin arms brightened the hours of suffering that I fear were before her.

The golden minutes sped to the hour of departure, and soon the time came when they had to shake hands with their queenly hostess and turn their backs on the Palace of Pleasure.

Friendly hands were again ready to help their crippled limbs and stumbling feet downstairs on the way back to their own drab-coloured lives.

Again the stalwart footmen and gigantic policemen lent tender and willing aid, and the pathetic procession melted away into the London crowd, leaving us in a very April condition of mingled smiles and tears.

MODERN SLANG.

By DARLEY DALE.



TIME was when the use of slang was almost entirely confined to schoolboys, and a very stupid kind of language it

was when everything that was not "awfully jolly" was—but we all remember that unspeakable alternative. We have changed all that now, and one of the many things which have improved in these latter days of the nineteenth century is our slang.

We owe this in a great measure to our American cousins, from whom some of our pithiest sayings emanate. To them is due that picturesque element which is so characteristic of much of our modern slang; to them we owe its humour—the wittiness of slang lies more in its application than in the words themselves—to them we owe that Machiavellian power of concentrated force, but when, as rarely happens, our modern slang is touched with poetry, then we must look nearer home for its origin.

When Mr. Rhodes said Dr. Jameson had *upset the apple-cart* by his excursion into the Transvaal, he raised a vulgar but picturesque phrase from slang to historic English, though we doubt if it will ever become classical. Again, when he said he was coming home *to face the music*, when he came to give evidence before the South African Committee, he used another picturesque piece of slang, which recalls a medieval phrase of still greater force, "facing the lions," the motto of the Medici.

When Blanche tells Maud that the result of her expressed determination to marry a penniless man was *then the band played*, she has advanced considerably in grace of expression from the "jolly row," which, twenty years ago, would have accurately described the situation. And, if Maud has the sense and courage to reply that her friend's folly was enough to *make her parents sit up*, she uses a very telling and forcible manner of describing the mental attitude of Blanche's parents towards their daughter's foolishness.

When Jones tells Fitzroy-Brown he will have to *climb down*, he hints in a mild but effective way that the latter has set too high a value upon himself, and when Mrs. Fitzroy-Brown plaintively implores Jones not to *give her away*, he quite understands he is being asked not to tell Fitzroy-Brown he knows F.B.'s wife shares his opinion of her husband.

When young Sprigg tells his pretty wife that to expect him to take her to two "athomes" in one week is rather a *large order*, he is probably unconsciously quoting an Aristotelian phrase, which has degenerated into modern slang from Attic Greek.

The minor poet, or shall we make it plural and say the minor poets, for alas, their name is legion, who complain that their poems do not *catch on*, in spite of the "boom" in the journals they control, these use a pithy, if not a very elegant phrase, to describe the feelings of the reading public towards their productions. And he among these bards who generously vows that he considers another's poems *take the cake*, is undoubtedly guilty of the first degree of lying, but his hearers will understand he thereby offers the laurel crown to his contemporary poet.

The schoolboy who, failing to distinguish his hostess at an evening party, asks his

companion *who bosses this show*, uses a vulgar Americanism to express his dilemma; but the boy who, on being summoned to family prayers, asks his sister the same question, makes a witty though irreverent application of the same.

When Mabel tells Ethel she is *a little previous* in congratulating her on her engagement to Captain Lancer, before he has proposed to her, she states succinctly a truth she doubtless deeply deplores; and when this same gallant captain complains to Ethel that Mabel's manner at the ball last night was *rather casual*, Ethel quite understands why Mabel lent herself to this reproach, and is not at all inclined to exclaim *Rats!* We have never quite fathomed why "rats" should mean "I don't believe it" any more than "cats" or "dogs," but the laws of slang which, unlike the laws of the Medes and Persians, change continually, have decreed otherwise. "Rats" expresses incredulity, cats or dogs at present do not.

There is another very pregnant saying, *to put on side*, for to give oneself airs, which is of modern origin, and not to *feel very fit* is quite as impressive and certainly more refined than the "very seedy" of a former generation.

There is one modern slang phrase which rises very nearly to poetry, when wishing to give an idea of general depression or low spirits, the speaker says the *lights were turned low*, while the frequent allusions to "the little rift within the lute which lets the music out," in reference to some of the lesser difficulties of life, is scarcely common enough to come under the head of slang, yet it is certainly a highly poetical way of referring to some of life's minor discords.

Up to date is one of those eminently descriptive phrases which custom has raised from the byways of slang to the higher paths of current speech, and is of such wide application, that it will serve equally well to describe either a sermon or a bonnet.

Less obvious is *I can't do it for nuts*, when a man wishes to say he expects to be well-paid for his work.

Modern slang possesses to almost a sublime degree the power of concentration; it can suggest, if it cannot actually say, volumes in a couple of words, as, for instance, when Lady