

THE USE OF SLANG.

ONE thing that is the subject of much criticism today among all lovers of correct speaking, is the growing use of slang in our modern speech. The fact that it is growing cannot be questioned, and in whose hands is vested the power of arresting progress, is problematical. Its use is not only prevalent in popular speech, but it is finding its way into the works of the present day writers to a very large degree. Newspapers write editorials on the subject; magazines publish scores of articles—some for and some against it; teachers of English everywhere, condemn it mercilessly. Addison, Steele, and Swift complained of the popular and fashionable corruption of the language in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, yet if they could read some of today's literature, their criticisms would probably be much more severe.

Someone has defined slang as "the language of a highly colloquial type considered as below the level of standard educated speech, and consisting of either new words or of current words employed in some special sense". Slang has also been called the illegitimate sister of poetry, because their common ground is the use of the metaphor. It is the opposite of poetry, however, in that it consciously seeks to be in bad taste. The difference is in the nature of the emotion it seeks to arouse.

Our use of slang is perhaps due to the fact that we are too lazy to think up the correct word, and at other times we employ it because the terms are expressive rather than elegant, and convey the meaning to everybody, high and low. Probably it is the latter reason that has more largely influenced its use. It may be said, too, that many of the expressions that are so common today are not a product of the twentieth century. We find that Shakespeare used "good night" and Chaucer, "come off" and "go sit down". Sheridan is credited with "cut it out."

The career of slang as such, is short. A new expression either perishes by its over use, or is slain by the Purists, so