Cambridge, and University College, London. University College received the additional bequest of six art scholarships.

**SLANDER,** a false tale or report, defamation. The word is a doublet of “ scandal” and comes through the O. Fr. *esclandre,* which, through the earlier forms *scandele, escandele, escandre,* is derived from Lat. *scandalum* (see further Scandal). In law, slander is the malicious defamation of a person in his reputation, profession or business, by words (see Libel and Slander).

**SLANG,** in what is now the usual sense, a general name for the class of words and senses of words, more or less artificial or affected in origin or use, which are not recognized as belonging to the standard vocabulary of the language into which they have been introduced, but have an extensive currency in some section of society either as a means of concealing secrets or as intentionally undignified substitutes for those modes of expression that are employed by persons who value themselves on propriety of speech.

As thus defined, slang includes many varieties of speech, which are current respectively among different sections of the population. The one, however, which most perfectly answers to the definition, and may be regarded as the primary type, is the artificial jargon, partly cryptic and partly facetious, used by vagrants and professional thieves. It is true that the name of slang is now seldom applied to this jargon; it is more commonly designated by its older name of “ cant.” Nevertheless in the 18th century it was chiefly used in this particular application. The earliest example of the word hitherto discovered occurs in Toldervy’s *History of Two Orphans,* published in 1756. One of the characters in this story is a man who, "in return for the numerous lies which he told, was called the cannon-traveller and it is said of him that "he had been upon the town, and knew the slang well.” It is not clear whether “ slang ” here has its modern sense, or whether it means the ways of fast life in London. A more unequivocal instance, two years later in date, is quoted in J. C. Hotten’s *Slang Dictionary* (1864) from a book entitled *Jonathan Wild’s Advice to his Successor,* apparently one of the many catchpenny publications that were called forth by the popularity of Fielding’s burlesque romances. No copy of this book is in the British Museum or the Bodleian Library, and inquiries have failed to discover any trace of its existence; but there is no reason to doubt that Hotten had seen it. The passage, as quoted by him, is as follows: "Let proper Nurses be assigned to take care of these Babes of Grace (i.e. young thieves). . . . The Master who teaches them should be a man well versed in the Cant Language, commonly called the Slang Patter, in which they should by all means excel.” Four years later, in 1762, the word is found with a different and now obsolete meaning, in Foote’s play *The Orators.* A fast young Oxford man, invited to attend a lecture on oratory, is asked, "Have you not seen the bills?” He replies,“ What, about the lectures? ay, but that’s all slang, I suppose.” Here the word seems to be equivalent to "humbug.” In the 1st edition of Hugh Kelly’s comedy, *The School for Wives,* there is a passage (omitted in some of the later reprints) in which one of a company of sharpers, who pretend to be foreigners and speak broken English, says: “ There’s a language called slang, that we sometimes talk in. . . . It’s a little rum tongue, that we understand among von another.” Francis Grose’s *Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (1785) has the entry “ *Slang,* the cant language”; and after this instances of the word are abundant. In the early part of the 19th century it appears in literature chiefly as a general term of condemnation for “ low-lived ” and undignified modes of expression. It seems probable that the word came from some dialect of the north of England; but this is difficult to establish, as most of the dialect glossaries date from a time long after it had obtained general currency, so that it would escape the notice of the compilers as being outside their proper scope. The *English Dialect Diction­ary* mentions only the sense of “ abusive language,” which is said to be current in Yorkshire and the Lake Country. Some reason for believing that the word is genuinely dialectal—an inheritance from the language of the Scandinavian settlers in the north of England—is afforded by the coincidence of its uses with those of the modern Norwegian verb *slengja* (etymologically equivalent to the English “ to sling ”) and related words, as given in the dictionary of Ivar Aasen. *Slengja kjeften* (literally, to sling the jaw), means to pour out abuse; the compound *slengje-ord (ord*=word) is explained by Aasen as “ a new word without any proper reason,” which comes very near to the notion of a “ slang word.” The English word has, in cant speech, certain applica­tions to matters other than those of language; and although these have not been found recorded at any very early date, they may possibly be old, and may contribute to the determination of the primary sense. Any particular mode of thieving or of making a living by fraudulent means is called a “ slang ”; and the same term is applied to the particular line of business of a showman or a troupe of strolling players. Further, the word is used adjectively to designate fraudulent weights and measures, and the early slang dictionaries explain the verb *slang* as mean­ing “ to defraud.” The precise relation between these various senses cannot be determined, but they seem to agree in having some reference to what is lawless or irregular, and this general notion may be regarded as having a certain affinity to the mean­ing of the verb “ to sling,” with which the word is probably etymologically allied. It is unlikely that the word *slang,* in the senses here under consideration, has any direct connexion with the homophonous word meaning “ a strip of land.”

The modern extended application of the term, which is closely paralleled by that of the French synonym *argot,* is not difficult to account for. In the first place, the boundaries of the world in which slang—in the original sense—is current are somewhat indeterminate. It is, for instance, not easy to draw the line between the peculiar language of “ rogues and vagabonds ” and that of the lowest order of travelling showmen and strolling players, or between this latter and the strictly analogous body of expressions common to all grades of the histrionic profession. Similarly, the prize-ring, the turf, the gaming-table and all the varieties of “ fast ” and "Bohemian ” life have their own eccentric vocabularies, partly identical with, and in general character altogether resembling, the slang of the criminal and vagrant classes. In the second place, a little consideration is sufficient to show that thieves’ cant is only one species of an extensive genus, its specific difference consisting in the unessential circumstance that its use is confined to one particular class of persons.

Although the term "slang ” is sometimes used with more or less intentional inexactness, and has often been carelessly defined, the notion to which it corresponds in general use seems to be tolerably precise. There are two principal characteristics which, taken in conjunction, may serve to distinguish what is properly called slang from certain other varieties of diction that in some respects resemble it. The first of these is that slang is a conscious offence against some conventional standard of propriety. A mere vulgarism is not slang, except when it is purposely adopted, and acquires an artificial currency, among some class of persons to whom it is not native. The other distinctive feature of slang is that it is neither a part of the ordinary language, nor an attempt to supply its deficiencies. The slang word is a deliberate sub­stitute for a word of the vernacular, just as the characters of a cipher are substitutes for the letters of the alphabet, or as a nickname is a substitute for a personal name. The latter comparison is the more exact of the two; indeed nicknames, as a general rule, may be accurately described as a kind of slang. A slang expression, like a nickname, may be used for the purpose of concealing the meaning from uninitiated hearers, or it may be employed sportively or out of aversion to dignity or formality of speech. The essential point is that it does not, like the words of ordinary language, originate in the desire to be understood. The slang word is not invented or used because it is in any respect better than the accepted term, but because it is different. No doubt it may accidentally happen that a word which originates as slang is superior in expressiveness to its regular synonym (much as a nickname may identify a person better than his name does), or that in time it develops a shade of meaning which the ordinary language cannot convey. But when such a word comes