The varieties of slang that have their origin and currency in the reputable classes of society owe their existence partly to impatience with the constraint of ceremonious propriety of speech, and partly to the kind of *esprit de corps* which leads those who are associated in any common pursuit, or whose mutual intercourse is especially intimate, to take pleasure in the possession of modes of speech that are peculiar to their own "set.” The former feeling is naturally strongest among those who are under the control of superiors in whose presence they have to observe an uncongenial formality of expression. It is therefore only what might be expected that every public school and every university has its own elaborately developed slang vocabulary, and that there is also a good deal of slang that is common to schoolboys and to undergraduates in general. Even among persons of riper years there are many to whom cere­monious speech is unwelcome. The motive for the creation of slang is therefore widely diffused throughout all classes. Besides the general slang that is current among all who rebel against the laws of conventional decorum of language, there are innumerable special varieties. As a rule, every trade and profession, and every closely associated group of persons, has its own slang; indeed, there are probably few family circles that have not certain peculiar expressions used only within the household. It may be noted that some classes of workmen—printers and tailors for example—are more than others remarkable for the copiousness of their trade slang. The theatrical profession has in all countries an abundant vocabulary of sportively meta­phorical and allusive words and phrases. The slang current in the orderly portions of society, in England at least, does not present many insoluble puzzles of etymology, the words of obscure origin being for the most part such as have been imported from a lower level. There is no difficulty in accounting for the many jocularly similative uses of ordinary words, such as “ tin ” for money, “ bags ” for trousers, “ tile ” for hat. Especially characteristic of university slang is the distortion of the form of words, sometimes with the appending of a conventional termina­tion, as in the German student’s “ schleo ” for *schlecht, "*Kneo” for *Kneipe, "*Bim ” for *Busen, “* Respum ” for *Respekt,* or the English "rugger ” and "soccer ” for the Rugby and Association varieties of the game of football, “ tosher ” for unattached student, "progging ” for the disciplinary function of the proctor, "ekker ” for exercise, “ congratters ” or "congraggers ” for congratulations. Such shortened forms of words as "thou ” for thousand, "exes ” for expenses, "exam ” for examination, "vac ” for vacation, “ photo ” for photograph, “ bike ” for bicycle, may reasonably be classed as slang when they are used with intentional impropriety or flippancy, but many such forms, on account of their convenient brevity, have acquired a degree of currency that entitles them to rank as respectable colloquial English.

It is generally admitted that in the United States the currency of slang is wider, and its vocabulary more extensive, than in other English-speaking countries. Indeed, an American encyclopaedia has the entry “ Slang, see Americanisms.” The two things, of course, are not identical, and some of those American expressions that are in England regarded and used as slang have no such character in their native country. But the invention of new words of grotesque sound and ludicrously descriptive point is a favourite form of humour in America, and the freedom with which these coinages are used in many newspapers contrasts with the more sober journalistic style usual in England. Much of the current slang of America is used only in the land of its origin, and it is not uncommon to meet with newspaper articles of which an untravelled Englishman would hardly be able to understand a sentence, and on which the dictionaries of American­isms afford little light. The American contribution to the current slang of the British Isles consists mainly of words and expressions that are recommended by their oddity, such as "scallywag,” “ absquatulate,” “ skedaddle,” “ vamoose ” (from the Span. *vámos,* let us go), and words relating to political life, such as "mugwump ” (originally an Indian word meaning "great chief ”), "carpet-bagger,” and "gerrymander.” Australia, also, as may be seen from the novels of Rolf Boldrewood and other writers, possesses an ample store of slang peculiar to itself, but of this "larrikin ” is the only word that has found its way into general use in the mother-country.

To the philologist the most interesting question connected with slang is that relating to the importance of the share which it has in the development of ordinary language. It is probably true that the standard vocabulary of every modern European language includes some words that were originally slang; but there is certainly much exaggeration in the view that has been sometimes maintained, that slang is one of the chief sources from which languages obtain additions to their means of ex­pression. The advocates of this view point to the fact that a certain number of Italian and French words descend, not from the Latin words of identical meaning, but from other words which in vulgar Latin were substituted for these by way of jocular metaphor. Thus the Italian *testa,* Fr. *tête,* head, repre­sent the Lat. *testa,* pot or shell; the Fr. *joue*, cheek, corresponds by strict phonetic law to the Late Lat. *gabata,* porringer. It may be conceded that in these instances, and a few others, words of popular Latin slang have become the accepted words in the languages descended from Latin. But the number of instances of this kind is, after all, inconsiderable in comparison with the extent of the whole popular vocabulary; and the conditions under which the Romanic languages were developed (from Latin as spoken by peoples mainly of non-Latin origin) are somewhat abnormal. A consideration of the essential characteristics of slang, as previously explained in this article, will show that it is only to a limited extent that it is likely to be absorbed into the general language. It has been pointed out that slang words, for the most part, do not express notions which ordinary language cannot express quite as efficiently. This fact implies a note­worthy limitation of the capabilities of slang as a source from which the deficiencies of a language can be supplied. As the prevailing tendency of words is toward degradation of meaning, one of the most frequently recurring needs of language is that of words of dignified and serious import to take the place of those which have become cheapened through ignoble use. It is obvious that slang can do nothing to meet this demand. The less frequent want of terms of contempt or reprobation may, of course, be supplied by adoptions from slang; and in the exceptional instances in which, as has already been indicated, a slang word has no synonym in ordinary speech, it may very naturally find its way into recognized use.

On the whole, the debt of modern standard English to slang of all kinds is probably smaller than most persons would suppose. A few words have been furnished by thieves’ cant, and, as might be expected, most of these relate to criminal or vicious practices. No one will be surprised to learn that *rogue* and *bully,* and the verbs *to filch* and *to foist,* are derived from this source. On the other hand, one would hardly have expected to find “ *drawers,* hosen ” in Harman’s vocabulary of "Pedlers’ French ” in 1567. The word soon came into general use, probably because (though not euphemistic in original intention) it suited the same affected notion of delicacy which led to the substitution of "shift ” for "smock.” There are some words, such as *prig,* to steal, which were once vagrant slang, but are now universally understood and widely used, without, however, losing their "slangy ” character. The utmost that can be said is that they are on the debatable ground between slang and merely jocular language.

Although it often happens that words belonging to the more reputable kinds of slang undergo some improvement in status— acquiring some degree of toleration in refined circles where they would once have been considered offensive—there are few in­stances in which such a word has come to be regarded as unex­ceptionable English. One example of this is *prig* (a distinct word from the term of thieves’ cant already mentioned), which originally denoted a person over-scrupulous in his attire and demeanour, but has now acquired a different sense, in which it supplies a real need of the language. Other words that were once slang but are so no longer are *mob, humbug, tandem* (apparently