

It has been well said therefore that slang, in its general features, is hardly more than an arbitrary interpretation of the ordinary language. It does not suffice, however, that it should be merely conventional or figurative, else it might be multiplied *ad infinitum*. But being to a great degree the outcome of the humour and wit, more or less refined, of its promoters, it bears the stamp of sarcasm, of callousness, and occasionally of a grim philosophy, as, for example, when a drunkard is called a "lean away," or a man "waiting for a dead man's shoes" is said to be "shepherding" his rich relative—when a clergyman is jestingly called a "sky-pilot" or a "fire-escape"—when a man who feels beaten says that he has been "had on toast," and will "give it best."

Each profession or trade has its "lingo," not to be mistaken for technical phraseology. Thus in cricket "wickets" is technical, but "sticks" is slang; to put a "break" on a ball the former, to put "stuff" on it the latter. "Bone shaker," the old type of bicycle, is slang; but "kangaroo," the latest improvement on the spider bicycle, and which in shape somewhat resembles the primitive "bone shaker," belongs to the technical phraseology of cycle machinists.

It sometimes occurs that a technical word comes to be used figuratively in an humorous and sarcastic sense. Sailors talk slang when they say of a drunken man that his "mainbrace is well spliced," or that he is "two sheets in the wind."

Occasionally a class slang word is adopted by the public, and swells the vocabulary of general or "society" slang. This specially applies to nautical and sporting phraseology. Thus it is quite possible for people who do not belong to the seafaring fraternity to hear of a husband having to "look out for squalls" when he comes home "heeling over" from having dined too well, even if he has not "capsized" or been "thrown upon his beam-ends" in the gutter. And many a person when asked to contribute to a charity has declared himself "stumped," though he may never have been near a cricket-field since he left school.

What one might call the classical slang of thieves is technically termed "cant." It has the appearance of possessing more quaint and original features than the more modern lingo, the sole reason