

Kerr \* before him, would beg the reader to observe that in this work no ancient or foreign words are advanced as *positively* establishing the etymology of any slang expression, but are simply adduced as indicating *possible* relations. The day has gone by when it sufficed to show something like a resemblance in sound and meaning between a dozen Choctaw and as many Hebrew words, to prove positively that the Red Indians are Jews. But "wild guess-work" is still current even in very learned works, and though "in a pioneer way" it is useful in affording hints to true philologists, it should never claim to be more than mere conjecture.

During the reign of Queen Elizabeth many Italian words found their way not only into English literature but also into slang, and additions have occasionally been made since then from the same source. Thus *fogle*, a handkerchief, is beyond question the Italian *foglia*, a leaf, also slang for a silk handkerchief (Florentine *follo*), and not the German *vogel*, a bird, as Hotten declares. The number of these derivations is much larger than has ever been supposed, and much of the mine is still unworked.

Old canting retained its character until the reign of Charles II., when a great deal of general slang began to be current, which was not connected in any way with the jargon of the dangerous classes. *Bite*, *macaroni*, and *quiz* were slang, but not cant; they originated in or were first made popular by fashionable people. Following the Spanish Quevedo, and other writers of the *vida tunantesca*, or "tag-rag-and-bobtail school," as models, not only the dramatists, but authors like Sir Roger L'Estrange and Defoe used directly, or put into the mouths of their heroes, a familiar, free and easy, offhand style, which was anything but conventional, or as many may think, correct. Pedantic writers also continued for more than a century to deliberately manufacture in great quantity, from Latin, words of the kind used by the unfortunate Limousin student who was beaten by Gargantua. An "about-town" dialect was developed by "bloods" and wits, in which Dutch, Italian, and French began to appear more frequently than of yore. Gypsy and old canting terms rose now and then from the depths, or dregs, and remained on the surface. It was during this which may be called the middle slang epoch, that those conventional or colloquial terms began to be

\* The author of an ingenious and eccentric work in two volumes, in which he endeavoured to prove that most English proverbs, sayings, and nursery rhymes are all in old Dutch, and have an esoteric meaning, being really attacks on the Church.