

current, which, without being *vulgar* or directly associated with crime, were, owing to their novelty, flippancy, or "fastness," still kept in limbo, or under probation. It has been truly enough said that the old slang was altogether coarse or vulgar, and that there was subsequently a great increase in the number of low and obscene terms classed with it, a growth which went on vigorously until the end of the reign of George IV. But while Butler, Swift, Tom Brown, Grose, and scores of minor artists dealt out more or less "dirt or deviltry," it should be remembered that the accretion of new phrases, which were in no way "immoral," was really much greater.

About this time, during the latter part of the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth, was the beginning of the vast array of words now in familiar use, which are unjustly called *slang*, because that term forces upon them associations with vulgarity and crime which they no more merit than that leaves or flowers should be identified with the dirt from which they grow. This quarantine language is simply the natural and inevitable result of a rapid increase in inventions, needs, new sources of humour, and, in fact, of all social causes. New names are in as great demand as they were of yore, when heathen were converted and baptized in batches. Then they were often all called John or James by the thousand "for short," but now we are more discriminating and analytical. But it is to be observed that hitherto no writer whatever has ever dealt with these quarantined words or probationers in the spirit which they merit, or pointed out the fact that they fulfil a legitimate function in language, or attempted to collect them in a book.

It would appear to have been about a century ago that a few Yiddish, or Hebrew-German, words began to creep into English slang. When we consider that fully one-half of the Rothwalsch or real slang of Germany is of this kind of Hebrew, and also the great numbers of persons who speak it, it is remarkable that we really have so little of it. As an instance of the guess-work philology which we have alluded to, it may be pointed out that the common Jewish word *quaff* (Hebrew *qanf*), a thief, is according to Hotten very old, in English, because it is found in a song of the time of Edward VI. as *quoffe*!

"The country *quoffes*, Hob, Dick, and Will,
With clubs and clouted shoon,
Shall fill up Dussyn Dale
With slaughtered bodies soon."

But *quoffe*, according to Wright, does not mean a thief at all, but