

the only slang to them still. We put in the qualifying "almost" because there always have been certain conditions, such as emigration to savage countries, which have bred new circumstances, with a corresponding development of language. The Roman legionaries in the wilds of Gaul and Germany found classical Latin as inadequate for hush vocabulary as the Anglo-Saxon finds classical English in the backwoods of America and the backblocks of Australia, and they evolved a Low Latin slang corresponding with such terms as "war-paint," "backwoodsman," "ring-barker," "bushman," and "throwing-stick." Modern French has its elements of base Latin origin, just as the English lexicons of the future will include a number of words forged by necessity in the bush and the backwoods—in New World mines and cities—and others which at the present time are only to be found in such dictionaries as the present one.

But here, in the heart as well as at the extremities of "Anglo-Saxony," new needs and new circumstances are being developed unceasingly, and society both high and low, in every walk of life, and on bypaths of art and trade, has of late years taken to inventing new words and phrases, some for practical wants, others for amusement, some coarse and rude, others daintily cut and polished, deftly veiled—all in such profusion, that every one of the old definitions of slang is now inadequate to express the "new departure" phase of the language.

Perhaps the best general definition at which one can arrive is that "slang" is a conventional tongue with many dialects, which are as a rule unintelligible to outsiders. In one case at least it has been framed with the intention of its being intelligible only to the initiated—the vagabond and thievish fraternity.

The vocabulary is based chiefly on words of the language proper, ancient and modern (with an admixture of foreign words), which have become "slang" through a metaphoric process or misappropriation of meaning. Thus "brass," "timbers" and "pins," "red lane," "mug," "canister," "claret," "ivory," "tile," taken figuratively, enrich the slang vocabulary by respectively acquiring the conventional meaning of "impudence," "legs," "throat," "face," "head," "blood," "teeth," "hat."