

# What Has Become of the Fall Crop of Slang?

PUT DE WOOD TO IT, CASLY!



Have you noticed something missing this fall—the usual crop of slang? That is real good, striking, catchy slang words and phrases.

Not for a number of years has the slang production been at such a low ebb. How little really new slang has been devised by phrase or word makers since last winter? Of course, one hears on every side the "fine and dandy" miniature imitation of good slang, but how little else?

New slang terms are the life of new slang comedies, as they enliven the streets. In a way, they keep things going and preserve us from mental indigestion.

There's something delightfully unconventional, a suggestion of a freedom from the trite and hidebound, in the use of slang. In the course of time many slang words become invested with a certain literary repute and become recognized as good English.

For what "gets 'em going" so much as a happy word, such as "rubber-neck" to the rubbers in a theatre! What delights the sentimentally inclined as a "soft" song with lots of "gush" words in it! What becomes so popular as a slang word, and who doubts that "on the bum," as a term of description "tickled" more genteel folk than Mr. Cleveland's correct "innocuous desuetude"?

But what is the matter with this season's slang-makers? Have their brains "petered out"? Or are they taking a vacation? There have been almost no new and striking slang "wurruds" this fall. The slang crop is poor.

Are you interested in slang? Have you never realized that "fount-bushing" is a more contemptuous expression for the "mutt" who cheats at cards than

the correct English adjective "unfair"? Or that to call a man a "tight wad" is more eloquent than to call him "extremely economical"? And would you not like better to "smash" a friend's enemy than merely to "punch" him? To tell some one that a gent is "pinched" is to give a more comprehensive idea of his plight than to say he was merely placed under arrest. Slang is usually terse and expressive.

Almost every season new slang words and phrases come in favor. But now it seems the supply is exhausted. Many of the words so popular a few years ago are already lost in the mists of the past.

One does not hear the expression, "O shush," nearly so much as one did four years ago. Even, "O piffle," is losing favor. "Get the hook" gave way to "twenty-three, skidoo," and even now this eloquent term is losing ground. Many old slang terms have become

recognized by the dictionary authorities. In the sixteenth century a "blackguard" was a man who travelled with a lord and carried smoky utensils. Once a person who talked grandiloquently was said to use "bombast," which meant literally cotton wadding used to pad hosiery of that early period. It is now a recognized term in English. Other old slang words which by usage have been made proper are "cockney," "top," "grit," "dude" and "sand."

Slang has always been favored by the "lodies" and "gents" of the "dramatic profess." Once the term "greenroom" was slang, because in early days this waiting-room was painted green. A theatrical failure was called a "fiasco"—a slang term—which originated in the Italian phrase "far fiasco," meaning to make flasks, instead of flowers, of faulty glass. An "angel" came to mean the kind

gentleman backing a play, and the "heavy," the actor who played villainous parts. An actress who "turned down" a suitor might also be said to "give him the cold-shoulder," or "the stare." She may have been "cut out" by a deadly rival. Or the fair lady may have "put her foot" on his aspirations. And when he was told to "cheese it," in sheer despair he may have gone to a "joy shop" and got "tight," after which probably he "went on the water wagon."

Where and how some of these slang terms originate must and will remain a mystery. That they have a humble origin among clever denizens of a world unused to dictionary learning cannot be doubted.

Big boy may "kick over the traces," "work a bunco game" on an "easy mark" and get "caught with the goods," and sent to "college." After a financial panic a broker may be "cleared out," and will be spoken of as being "on his uppers" or a "dead one." He may have "cold feet" and "keep out of the game," or he may again "butt in," "take a plunger" and "make good."

A "bly" hubby may find that his better half intends to "make it hot for him" if he does not turn over a new leaf, and ever thereafter may "walk the chalk line." His friends will tell you that the "missus" has him "under her thumb" and "sow his wild oats," and after having a "hot time" at school return home "all broken up," and learning by experience, may "cut out the fellows and 'buckle down' to work."

But few of these terms of description are new. Since the "twenty-three skidoo," what has really come in the delectable world of slang? There has been "nothing doing." The slang-makers seem to be "on the blink." They had better "spruce up" and "hand out a few."

## BURNS AND JOHNSON

### THE NEGRO SAID TO BE BEST AT LONG RANGE.

James J. Corbett Talks About the Coming Fight—He Would Like to See Burns Win—Johnson is a Hard Nut.

James J. Corbett, the former heavyweight pugilistic champion, has the following to say about the Burns-Johnson battle:

The arrival of big Jack Johnson in Australia has started the heavyweight championship bee to buzzing again and for the next two or three weeks the two foremost big men in the world will be in the limelight.

Jack Johnson, from present indications, will rule as favorite over Burns, but the margin will be close. Johnson has been seen in action in Australia, and the sports of the kangaroo land have taken a great liking to him.

And, unlike America, there the colored man will be given as much consideration as if he were white. The race prejudice is not as strong in this country, because the citizens of that far-off land have not experienced the same trouble as the white people here have.

Had Johnson been privileged to pick a place in this whole world in which he would have been given a fair slice of sympathy, there is no spot that he could have selected over Australia, unless it might have been Paris. In England Johnson would also have a fairly good following. Burns was a big favorite in King Edward's playground at first, but his stay there became monotonous, especially when he made such an unfair demand from the sport promoters, who

were also considering a match between him and Johnson.

With the conditions favoring neither pugilist, I am of the opinion that the outcome of the mill will depend largely upon how Burns tries to fight Johnson. I know both well enough to make a fairly good guess on the outcome were I acquainted with the plan of attack each will use.

There is only one way in which Burns will have a good chance to beat the big colored fellow, and that will be to mix it with him at close range every second of the time. Johnson is one of the most awkwardly clever fellows that ever donned a glove, and has a powerful pair of arms. Burns, in standing off and attempting to fight at long range, as he has been known to do at times, would almost be at the mercy of the black man. On the other hand, if Burns is able to keep in at close quarters he will greatly worry Johnson, and stand a chance of even chance to beat him down.

Burns has neither the size nor the strength to land a knockout from a distance unless it would be a chance blow. But because of his success against other big men he has met by might attempt to match his cleverness against big Jack's shiftness and he would thereby greatly weaken his chances of victory.

Johnson is far from being a dub, and those who have seen him work know this. The first impression of Jack's scientific development is not so encouraging. As you study his fighting methods, however, you can soon recognize where in his ability lies. Instead of being big and awkward he is big and clever.

Were I in the fighting game to-day there is no one I would sooner tackle than big Jack, and I would meet him at his own game. But Burns is possessed with neither the height nor reach to follow out these tactics.

It is too bad that this fight is not

booked for this country. I would certainly try to be at the ringside to witness it. And while I have nothing against Johnson I would be sympathetic with Burns because I realize probably as much as anyone else in the world what it means for a small man to tackle a giant black. I met Peter Jackson when I was still a youngster, and I know what it is to break a bone on the hard skull of a negro.

The impression has gone around the world that the fight between Johnson and Burns is to be a finish. I received a letter the other day from a friend of Tommy Burns in which are stated all the details of the match. Instead of being to a finish, the bout will be but twenty rounds, for in Australia this is the limit for a championship battle.

Burns' friend also writes that the purse is to be \$35,000, and instead of receiving \$20,000 Johnson is to receive \$30,000. Tommy's end of the gold is to be \$30,000 win, lose or draw. The pavilion in which the fight is to take place is just being finished now. It will seat 20,000 people and have standing room for an additional 5,000, so a record crowd undoubtedly will look on at the battle. Burns and Squires came near the high water mark in pugilistic Australia when they drew close to \$70,000.

The different stories that have been stated all the details of the match. In the letter just received by me states that the official sporting paper of Australia has announced the battle positively for the day before Christmas. This is known in Australia as boxers' day and is generally one of the hottest days of the summer season there, which begins when our winter season commences.

But after all is said and done, I still believe that America should have been the scene of this battle. Both men got their start in America and made most of their money here. I have had a lot of experience in foreign lands, but have never found the fighting game as profitable abroad as at home in Uncle Sam's domain.

If Tommy Burns wins the coming fight he expects to retire. This will further complicate the heavyweight championship question. Burns, according to stories published in Australia, has assured his wife that he will be through with the fighting game no matter whether he wins or loses. If he keeps his word he will probably quit the game with more ready cash in his possession than any fighter that ever lived. Burns has made a lot of money since he shipped Jack O'Brien in the celebrated "fight," and when he gets through with Johnson he will have a lot more, for the pictures and the prospect of a long theatrical engagement from which he should reap a big reward.

## VAUDEVILLE PUZZLE



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