

make them forget their pain and weariness for one afternoon at least.

No sadness, therefore, was allowed to mar the enjoyment of this lovely evening, for everyone had conspired together to make the little guests happy.

Even the Lady Mayoress' little black Pomeranian dog contributed his share towards the afternoon's entertainment by barking lustily whenever anything specially good was said or done.

This set us all off laughing, as it came in so appropriately, it sounded as if the wee doggie really meant it for applause. Presently their kind, funny, clever entertainer reappeared with two dolls, one an old man and the other an old woman, with whom he proceeded to converse, for they talked as well as he did in the oddest of cracked voices, and "Sally" even sang a little, but was so hurt by the old man's unkind remarks, that the song came to an abrupt close.

By-and-by they announced that a friend was waiting outside, but could not come in as

he had a lot of parcels to take care of, whereupon a messenger was despatched to fetch him. As it happened the unknown friend never appeared at all, but this mattered less, as his parcels did, and the excitement of finding that they were all toys drove everything else out of their heads.

It was not till after the distribution of these presents that we found out what was behind the screens; but then, at a given signal they were removed, and there stood revealed two long tables covered with the most appetising good things elegantly arranged, as if for a grown-up party.

Soon they were all seated and busily employed in sampling the various dainties set before them.

One little man was too fragile to sit up to the table and had to remain on his improvised couch, to which tea and cakes were brought, but it was pitiful to see what a mere morsel he ate, and how even the hot-house grapes failed to tempt his appetite.

Here too was a tiny lassie, who should by

rights have been in the hospital, but whose father could not deprive her of this one day's pleasure.

Poor mite! she looked as if any more pain would finish her altogether, for her small hands were like claws and her little face pinched and wizened like an old woman's, but let us hope that the pink and blue dolly she so affectionately clasped in her thin arms brightened the hours of suffering that I fear were before her.

The golden minutes sped to the hour of departure, and soon the time came when they had to shake hands with their queenly hostess and turn their backs on the Palace of Pleasure.

Friendly hands were again ready to help their crippled limbs and stumbling feet downstairs on the way back to their own drab-coloured lives.

Again the stalwart footmen and gigantic policemen lent tender and willing aid, and the pathetic procession melted away into the London crowd, leaving us in a very April condition of mingled smiles and tears.

## MODERN SLANG.

By DARLEY DALE.



**T**IME was when the use of slang was almost entirely confined to schoolboys, and a very stupid kind of language it was when everything that was not "awfully jolly" was—but we all remember that unspeakable alternative. We have changed all that now, and one of the many things which have improved in these latter days of the nineteenth century is our slang.

We owe this in a great measure to our American cousins, from whom some of our pithiest sayings emanate. To them is due that picturesque element which is so characteristic of much of our modern slang; to them we owe its humour—the wittiness of slang lies more in its application than in the words themselves—to them we owe that Machiavellian power of concentrated force, but when, as rarely happens, our modern slang is touched with poetry, then we must look nearer home for its origin.

When Mr. Rhodes said Dr. Jameson had upset the apple-cart by his excursion into the Transvaal, he raised a vulgar but picturesque phrase from slang to historic English, though we doubt if it will ever become classical. Again, when he said he was coming home to face the music, when he came to give evidence before the South African Committee, he used another picturesque piece of slang, which recalls a mediæval phrase of still greater force, "facing the lions," the motto of the Medici.

When Blanche tells Maud that the result of her expressed determination to marry a penniless man was then the band played, she has advanced considerably in grace of expression from the "jolly row," which, twenty years ago, would have accurately described the situation. And, if Maud has the sense and courage to reply that her friend's folly was enough to make her parents sit up, she uses a very telling and forcible manner of describing the mental attitude of Blanche's parents towards their daughter's foolishness.

When Jones tells Fitzroy-Brown he will have to climb down, he hints in a mild but effective way that the latter has set too high a value upon himself, and when Mrs. Fitzroy-Brown plaintively implores Jones not to give her away, he quite understands he is being asked not to tell Fitzroy-Brown he knows F-B.'s wife shares his opinion of her husband.

When young Sprigg tells his pretty wife that to expect him to take her to two "at-homes" in one week is rather a large order, he is probably unconsciously quoting an Aristotelian phrase, which has degenerated into modern slang from Attic Greek.

The minor poet, or shall we make it plural and say the minor poets, for alas, their name is legion, who complain that their poems do not catch on, in spite of the "boom" in the journals they control, these use a pithy, if not a very elegant phrase, to describe the feelings of the reading public towards their productions. And he among these bards who generously vows that he considers another's poems take the cake, is undoubtedly guilty of the first degree of lying, but his hearers will understand he thereby offers the laurel crown to his contemporary poet.

The schoolboy who, failing to distinguish his hostess at an evening party, asks his

companion who bosses this show, uses a vulgar Americanism to express his dilemma; but the boy who, on being summoned to family prayers, asks his sister the same question, makes a witty though irreverent application of the same.

When Mabel tells Ethel she is a little previous in congratulating her on her engagement to Captain Lancer, before he has proposed to her, she states succinctly a truth she doubtless deeply deplores; and when this same gallant captain complains to Ethel that Mabel's manner at the ball last night was rather casual, Ethel quite understands why Mabel lent herself to this reproach, and is not at all inclined to exclaim *Rats!* We have never quite fathomed why "rats" should mean "I don't believe it" any more than "cats" or "dogs," but the laws of slang which, unlike the laws of the Medes and Persians, change continually, have decreed otherwise. "Rats" expresses incredulity, cats or dogs at present do not.

There is another very pregnant saying, to put on side, for to give oneself airs, which is of modern origin, and not to feel very fit is quite as impressive and certainly more refined than the "very seedy" of a former generation.

There is one modern slang phrase which rises very nearly to poetry, when wishing to give an idea of general depression or low spirits, the speaker says the lights were turned low, while the frequent allusions to "the little rift within the lute which lets the music out," in reference to some of the lesser difficulties of life, is scarcely common enough to come under the head of slang, yet it is certainly a highly poetical way of referring to some of life's minor discords.

Up to date is one of those eminently descriptive phrases which custom has raised from the byways of slang to the higher paths of current speech, and is of such wide application, that it will serve equally well to describe either a sermon or a bonnet.

Less obvious is *I can't do it for nuts*, when a man wishes to say he expects to be well-paid for his work.

Modern slang possesses to almost a sublime degree the power of concentration; it can suggest, if it cannot actually say, volumes in a couple of words, as, for instance, when Lady



A. declares those new-comers, the Parvenu-Smiths to be quite impossible, don't you know? How much that "quite impossible" or "those impossible people" implies; it is like an impressionist picture and has the merit of finality, and leaves no room for further discussion. Henceforth the Parvenu-Smiths will have to take a back seat, to use a favourite

modern metaphor, unless they make tracks for that happy land where the almighty dollar reigns supreme, where *dudes and bounders* most do congregate, and where the *mashers* are at home. This is no doubt rough on the Parvenu-Smiths, but it is the way of a world which can forgive a crime rather than tolerate bad form or people who have not much class,

though, as young Robinson said, it was playing it rather low down on the new-comers.

Lastly, there is that phase of modern speech which delights in the use in season and out of season of some saying which has caught on at one of the theatres, as now we *sha'n't be long*, the natural and inevitable conclusion to an article on modern slang.

"THAT PECULIAR MISS ARTLETON."

CHAPTER II.



SAY, Miss Pringle, do you know the name of that ancient party who haunts this counter? You know who I mean—the creature with grey curls and a sailor hat? Fancy, over sixty and a sailor hat!" asked Ellen Martin, a tall, showy girl.

"No, I don't know her name; but I think she is either a broken-down governess or a retired lady's-maid wearing up her mistress' old clothes. I haven't patience to attend to her—she always wants some washed-out drab or muddy grey. I am sure she must have come out of the Ark. I nearly laughed in her face yesterday, only old Froggie was watch-

ing me; but, really, she would make an angel laugh. You served her once, Miss Day; I believe she likes you. Perhaps she will leave you that old dust-cloak in her will; I'm sure you are welcome to it." And Dolly Pringle giggled.

"I think we ought not to make a jest of old age and infirmity," answered Clarice Day quietly. "I feel really sorry for her. Somehow, I believe she has passed through a great trouble, and though she dresses peculiarly, I am sure she is a lady. Some day we may be as poor and forlorn as she appears to be."

"Before I would live to look like that old creature I'd drown myself!" cried Ellen Martin.

"And I am quite sure that I wouldn't be an old maid if I could help it!" retorted Dolly Pringle. "Come, girls—let's make haste; old Froggie has gone, and I'm not going to spend my half-holiday in this musty old shop. Why doesn't that horrid Dickie close the doors? Oh, dear, talk of an angel—the ancient party is coming in! I shan't serve her, so there!" And, rudely turning her back to the incoming customer, Ellen Martin shrugged her shoulders, and Dolly Pringle giggled.

With a blush for the rudeness of her companions, Clarice Day came forward, and a pleased look came into the eyes of the little old lady.

"My dear, I want a yard of blue ribbon—royal blue."

"Yes, madam," answered Clarice, in approved shop-fashion, and she drew a box of blue ribbon from a shelf.

The little old lady sat down upon the nearest chair and cried—

"Oh, my dear, I am so tired! You don't begrudge an old woman a rest?"

"Certainly not," answered Clarice, with a smile. "The weather is very warm and exhausting."

"Yes, it is, and this parcel is quite heavy. If you will kindly give me a length of cord I will tie it up."

"Shall I tie it for you, madam?" asked Clarice politely.

"Oh, no, thank you—I can manage quite well. Oh, dear me, what an accident! The newspaper has burst, and the potatoes are rolling in all directions. I am so sorry."

There was a subdued explosion in the background, but Clarice turned not.

"I will come and help you to pick them up," she said quietly, and, passing her companions, she walked to the other side of the counter. Very soon the potatoes were collected and wrapped in a clean sheet of paper, and the dilapidated newspaper was thrust out of sight.

"Dear me, the heat is so oppressive, I don't know how I shall carry this parcel through the streets"—and the little old person looked so wan and feeble that a sudden pity stirred the heart of Clarice.

"If you will wait a moment I will carry it for you," she said kindly.

"Oh, thank you, my dear; I shall be so glad if you will."

With a look of reproof at the giggling girls, Clarice finished her work and hastened to the cloak-room. She was followed by Ellen Martin and Dolly Pringle.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Miss Day! After this, the old creature will expect us to trot after her like a set of lap-dogs. But I'm not paid for that, if you are! I'll take good care I don't make myself a greengrocer's errand-girl. One might as well wheel a costermonger's barrow at once!" cried Ellen Martin.

Clarice did not speak. She felt that if she gave expression to her feelings she might say something that she would afterwards regret, so angry and ashamed did she feel. Poor, worn, little creature! How could they be so rude to her? Probably she lived alone in a poor lodging; and an ardent desire to do something to brighten the lonely life came into the heart of Clarice. Wait, Clarice—the time is coming!

Half way down the street the little old person paused, and asked in apparent confusion—

"My dear, do you think your companions will follow you? The fact is I am taking you into my confidence, and I should not like those two giggling young women to know where I live."

"Oh, no; they live at the other end of the town. They won't follow us," answered Clarice in soothing tones. "And if you wish it I will keep your address a secret. My mother lives at No. 1, Hamer Street, and that is in a very poor part; indeed, people think we rent the whole house, but we have only two rooms. I think one ought not to be ashamed of poverty—what do you think?" asked Clarice confidentially.

The little old person sighed lugubriously.

"Some folk make unkind remarks," she said. Then in a tragic whisper she added, "My dear, do you always have enough to eat?"

A compassionate look came over the face of Clarice as she answered—

"Oh, yes; last winter before I was—"

She paused and blushed. "I mean when I was out of a situation; for several weeks mother and I couldn't afford to buy beef, but we made potato balls and potato fritters, and had potatoes fried and potatoes boiled, so that we didn't grow tired of them—indeed, it would have been great fun, only mother had such a poor appetite. I can eat anything if it is wholesome."

"I like potatoes with milk as the Irish people eat them, and bread and cheese I like also," said the little old person. "But, my dear, you said, 'Last winter before I—' Now I like people to finish a sentence when they have once commenced it. What has happened since last winter? Always be honest, my dear."

Clarice blushed again.

"I was going to say, before I was engaged to Charlie."

"Who is Charlie?"

"Charlie Burnett is a clerk in Griffith and Gaunt's warehouse."

"Porter in Griffith and Gaunt's warehouse, did you say, my dear? Speak a little louder—I am growing an old woman."

"No; I said clerk," answered Clarice indignantly.

"And why don't you get married?"

"I would rather not answer that question."

"But, my dear, I think one should never be ashamed of poverty—what do you think?" asked the old lady, mimicking the tones of Clarice.

Clarice laughed.

"Now, my dear, I am going to ask you a favour. I know it is your half-holiday, and doubtless Charlie will be sweeping out the office in delightful anticipation of a walk in the park. No—don't interrupt me; if he doesn't sweep out the office he does something else for his living, and all work is honourable. I want him for once to practise a little self-denial. I am going to carry you home to lunch with me."

"Poor little creature! She speaks as though she were the mistress of a mansion. Will the lunch consist of potatoes and butter, or bread and cheese?" Clarice asked herself compassionately.

"Don't refuse a lonely old woman. I won't keep you long, Miss Day!" and a wistful look came into the brown eyes that went straight to the heart of Clarice.

"I must first go home and ask mother. Do you live far from here?"

"I live in Artleton."

"The village of Artleton two miles away?" asked Clarice ruefully.

"Yes, my dear."

"And shall you walk?"

"No; I shall ride."

"By bus or train?"

"I will arrange the mode of conveyance when you return. I have another call to make, so I will meet you here in half-an-hour. You can carry the potatoes with you as a surety for your return. If you fail me I shall be so disappointed." And the little old person turned away.

FRANCES LOCKWOOD GREEN.  
(To be continued.)