

STRUGGLES IN SLANG

(With a Slight British Flavor)

JEAN M. CHALIFOUR

"Slang!! Our children do not use slang," emphatically pronounced the Head English Mistress in the G. S. C. School for Girls, somewhere in England. Now, in spite of an extremely exaggerated Oxford accent which usually practically defied the American Exchange Teacher's powers of translation, the meaning of this statement was crystal clear and raised a healthy resentment in the American's heart. Had not the A. E. T. heard much slang at the "digs" among the "diggers" who were well educated, teachers and bank "clarks?" When the A. E. T. suggested this to the H. E. M., she was informed that although British children may have their speech peculiarities, those are merely colloquialisms and not slang. When this argument was attacked, the H. E. M. insisted that if the British children did use any slang, it was that slang which had been acquired from those poisonous American films.

Rather than to have a miniature Revolutionary War on the spot, the A. E. T. withdrew from the staff room. Determined that America should never come off second best even in a small verbal engagement, especially when she knew positively that she was right, she crossed the building to the Head Mistress' office where the only really usable dictionary in the entire school was kept, and which, in fact, was the personal property of the Head. Incidentally, the Head was quite flattered that her "King's English" should be put to use. And she privately confessed that she regretted that the British people were so sure that they (each) knew what was right about the language that they all looked upon dictionaries with deep suspicion.

The A. E. T., armed with this high

authority, hurried back to the staff room to confront the H. E. M. with the fact that her own dictionary proclaimed a colloquialism to be a "common form of conversation," and that slang is a "colloquial mode of expression, especially such as is in vogue with some particular class in society."

With typical British stubbornness, the H. E. M. insisted, without any authority other than her own opinion, that British colloquialisms were not slang.

With typical American zeal to be right all of the time and also to prove it, the A. E. T. set out on a little bit of research work. In less than ten minutes a class of thirty-four girls, when asked to jot down all of the slang or colloquial expressions which they used habitually, furnished a list of 176 different expressions. These expressions were then mailed over to an American high school where a typical batch of high school students checked the ones they were familiar with. Eighty were checked, thus leaving a total of 96 which were purely British. The British girls were delighted with the investigation and willingly listed the places where they had learned the expressions. Only 17 of the entire 176 had been learned from those "awful American movies." The remaining 159 must have been learned in and around their homes.

Reinforced with the results of this bit of research, the American teacher again approached the H. E. M. who looked down her British nose as she said in her most pronounced Oxford accent, "Oh, isn't that nice! But the people of the United States are thought to be particularly addicted to slang, you know."

Honesty forced the A. E. T. to admit the truth of that fact but she also pointed

out that the language of almost every country is full of these picturesque expressions, and that slang dictionaries have been written in all of them as an aid to the understanding of current speech and literature. And as a final triumph, she referred the

British teacher to a lovely volume on British Slang which was on sale in Selfridge's book department, and which only the extreme lack of funds caused the A. E. T. to give up the pleasure of owning.

THIS THING CALLED LOVE

JIM MITCHELL

"What is this thing called lo-o-ove?" wails the radio crooner in his agonized search for the "sweet mystery of life." All over the country, dowagers and damsels alike sigh and shed a tear of pity; and "the poor fellow" is voted to a high place among the ranking stars of radio. As his popularity increases, his paycheck grows about in proportion to the square of his "public," and life becomes a song for the crooner with the "catch" in his voice. What is the first thing our poor love-starved hero does upon landing a spot on a coast-to-coast network? Why, he flies back to Sac City and marries the winsome little lass with whom he has been in love all the time, of course. Oh, it's an old, old story, but it can't fool me anymore. I can see through it all with ease, because my problem is the counterbalance of that of the crooner.

The facts of my case are simple, but the cure is difficult. In fact, it hasn't been discovered as this goes to press. Between the first of April and the last of June each year, I find myself madly in love with every rosy-cheeked maiden with whom I come into contact. Needless to say, this isn't right at all; and the problem is getting worse annually. This Spring, already, I

am in love with the cashier at my neighborhood movie, about three fourths of Butler's coed enrollment, my English professor, a cigarette girl at the Coliseum, and a woman filling-station attendant. All this in fifteen days!!

This disease is somewhat similar to hay-fever in that it is active only a few weeks each year. However, its reaction throughout the remainder of the year is as bad as the disease itself. Throughout the winter months, I look upon women as nothing more than "goons" and hindrances. This, of course, is the opposite extreme and is also very serious.

So, my affliction has become a year round proposition. In the Spring, I spend all my time and money on the ladies. During the remainder of the year, I not only ignore them completely but I find them disgusting.

The situation is becoming more and more acute as time goes on, but even the miracles of modern science are incompetent to cope with it. Now, I appeal to the world for aid. Perhaps a kindred soul somewhere can suggest a cure.

Maybe I should try the radio.

This thing called love—bah!