

XII. JARGON

The dictionary defines 'jargon' as "barbarous or debased language". This description does not suffice. Quiller-Couch has said, it is "a kind of writing which, from a superficial likeness, commonly passes for prose in these days, and by lazy folk is commonly written for prose, yet actually is not prose at all". The two main vices of jargon, he says, are "that it uses circumlocution rather than short straight speech", like the Babu who reported his mother's death by saying: "Regret to inform you, the hand that rocked the cradle has kicked the bucket". Its other chief vice is that "it habitually chooses vague woolly abstract nouns rather than concrete ones", like the newspaper statement, "He was conveyed to his place of residence in an intoxicated condition", instead of saying, "He was carried home drunk". Jargon is "an infirmity of speech", it is not journalese, but akin to it. "Like respectability in Chicago, jargon stalks unchecked in our midst" and renders much technical writing ridiculous. It deals in periphrasis instead of going straight to the point, it loves the abstract rather than the concrete, it dabbles in words of sound rather than of meaning. Avoid it, despise it, if you purpose earnestly to write well. "In literature as in life he makes himself felt who not only calls a spade a spade but has the pluck to double spades and re-double." *

Jargon is rampant in technical publications. Catalogues and other advertisements are conspicuous offenders, but with these the critic is not concerned, except in so far as such 'write-

* These quotations are from a lecture delivered at Cambridge by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch. 'The Art of Writing', 1916.

ups' pretend to follow the style set by technical journals and the transactions of technical societies. Here is an example, taken from a reputable paper:

The next proposition was to take out the rock to a depth of 20 ft. and build up an underpinning wall to carry the weight of the caisson and make the permanent seal to keep out all water. To avoid the possibility of jarring loose any of the temporary sealing blocks or breaking back under them the rock which was of a slaty nature, this excavation was started by channeling out for a depth of 5 ft. all around the shaft about 1 ft. inside of the blocking. The rock was then taken out in the ordinary manner with two shaft-bars and four rock-drills in operation. To further prevent the jarring of this blocking the rock was taken out in 5-ft. benches only. This made the work necessarily slower, but it was deemed advisable and so proved, for, notwithstanding the care exercised, certain leakages occurred which made the rock excavation slow on account of the shifting of pumps, taking off and putting back suction pipes, etc. This rock, as above mentioned, was a species of sand slate which would break back a considerable distance from the line of holes.

I shall not attempt to revise it, for it needs to be re-written by one possessing the detailed information that the writer has attempted, unsuccessfully, to impart. To many it may not seem utterly bad, but it is obvious that only absolute need of the information would induce anyone to read it.

The foregoing example shows how the English language is mishandled in America; now I shall give you an example to show how our language is maltreated in the country of its origin. The following quotation is taken from a book on petroleum recently published in London.

In this vaporizer, which works efficiently with any of the refined flash-proof lamp oils, the mixture is only heated to the comparatively low temperature of 300° to 400° F., in which connection it is well to understand that the more perfectly an oil is atomized the lower is the temperature necessary to its combustion, which is an advantage, if not off-set by the necessity for a more than corresponding complexity of apparatus, which in this case, as will be seen, requires an air pump and for the fuel to be contained in a tank subject to a pressure of 8 to 15 lbs. per square inch; and this again obviously necessitates a separate hand pump, or a pressure supply for starting.

The errors are so many that the entire paragraph needs to be re-written. Why does he hyphenate "flash-proof" and not "lamp oils" and "air pump" or "hand pump". He uses 'which' with irritating frequency; he employs the abstraction "complexity of apparatus" instead of the concrete 'complex apparatus', besides a plain error of grammar, namely, "requires . . . for the fuel to be contained". The writer is an educated engineer, but he disregards the obligations of an educated man.

Here follows an attempt to describe the operation of a machine-drill in a mine:

Following the shooting, the **mucker** begins his work, the drill man climbs to the top of the **muck**, and by the time the four feet of ground shot down is **mucked out**, he is again ready to shoot his round of holes.

"Muck", "muck", "muck"—it is the very muck of writing. The word means filth or manure. It is used as a synonym for 'dirt', the miner's term for broken rock. Thus 'muck' refers to the shattered rock resulting from blasting, which is not in the least filthy. Shovelers, that is, those who shovel the broken rock into the car at the face of a level or cross-cut, are now called 'muckers'. What gain is there? 'Shoveler' is significant; 'mucker' is the rubbish of words.

The next example comes from a description of the small locomotives used in mines. It reads:

Face gathering, wherein the locomotive must enter the room, impose conditions which call for distinctly special treatment in the design and equipment of a locomotive of high efficiency. The ordinary haulage locomotive in nearly all cases is totally unfitted to this work, which involves operation in narrow quarters, around sharp curves, over poorly laid tracks, etc. The locomotive of real value in room work is one which, by reason of proportions and construction, will go wherever a mine car will run, and with equal facility. It must be compact, no wider than the wheels, with short wheel-base and small wheels, and without long overhang at either end.

This is the sort of thing that makes a technical description seem like a cryptogram or a slab of picture-writing from Nineveh. To any one versed in the subject of locomotives for

underground use, this paragraph is intelligible, but only barely intelligible. It succeeds in making the subject as uninteresting as possible and places the meaning as much beneath the surface as the locomotive itself.

The last two examples come from 'write-ups', the trade name for a eulogistic description of a manufactured article, prepared in the interest of the manufacturer and written by a man more accustomed to the use of a screw-driver than a pen. The worst writing concerning technical matters is to be found in such disguised advertisements. They ought to be written attractively, to serve their purpose; in failing to do so, they illustrate the essential ineffectiveness of bad writing.

Grammatical correctness is no excuse for a statement that is likely to cause trouble to your reader; he must have your consideration if you expect to win, and hold, his attention.

A technical journal states:

The specifying by a mining company that no man may be employed by it unless he be a member of such an organization, though undoubtedly legal, is as contrary to social justice as the specifying that no member of any organization will be employed, or the refusing to recognize any employee as representing anyone or anything except himself as an individual.

That reminds one of a passage in 'Alice in Wonderland': "Never imagine yourself not to be otherwise than what it might appear to others that what you were or might have been was not otherwise than what you had been would have appeared to them to be otherwise".

Here is more technical writing of a supposedly serious sort:

The expenditure involved is only justifiable with the assured certainty of very large ore reserves having values materially above operating costs.

I suggest:

"The expenditure involved would be justified only by the certainty of an adequate reserve of profitable ore."

A respectable engineer writes:

They would go to the lay-out and see if it was checked out; if found out to be laid out, the lay-out foreman would spend his time in looking for it, and if he could not find it he would get out a new one.

Writing of this kind is a disgrace to the profession; moreover, it is proof of such lack of mental capacity as to argue against the possession of technical understanding.

Shun outworn figures of speech, like 'a bolt from the blue', 'the swing of the pendulum', 'the cry is still they come', 'after us the deluge', 'the Mecca of their pilgrimage', 'the Phoenix from his ashes', 'open Sesame', and 'the labors of Hercules'. They rarely give point to technical description; usually they are mere tags, in the reporter's style—a style to be scrupulously avoided in technical writing. Abstain from the use of such verbal inanities as 'festive', 'pristine', 'erstwhile', 'materialize', and 'eventuate'. These are precious to the reporter, but taboo to the intelligent writer.

Take note of the fact that nonsense remains nonsense however much you may disguise it in a veil of words. We think in words, and when we lack clear words we lack clear thoughts. Clear thinking is necessary to effective speech or writing. The forceful utterances and keen analyses to be remarked occasionally in men devoid of academic training show that the strength of clear statement depends upon logic. Correct speech—grammatical speech—is logical speech. The following is a quotation from an address delivered by a prominent financier in San Francisco:

Let us learn, then, to realize that each has his dominion and his empire of domination, in which by the exercise of these qualities that are alike in spelling success each may rise to a position of leadership, with potentialities of power as great in its sphere of action as that one of the many, to whom we look for the time being, because of some particular preferment as a leader.

This is balderdash. It is "the delirious trimmings" of language.

Early Victorian elegance has no place in technical writing; for example:

The ore was relieved of its moisture through the medium of drying kilns.

Meaning that "The ore was dried in kilns".

Nor do we want late Nevadan uncouthness:

With the installation of the new air-compressor underground development is being prosecuted more rapidly.

Is the air-compressor underground or is it being used for development underground? Should a comma come before or after the word "underground"? The rapid progress is not being made "with the installation" of anything, but by the new compressor, actuating more machine-drills. You do not "prosecute" a development; for that involves the pursuit of an abstraction. He means:

"By aid of the new compressor, the development of the mine is being hastened."

The tributer is assisted in the prosecution of his work by being given supplies.

'Prosecution', in this context also, is a foolish word, apart from being an abstract noun. Slovenly writers who use such words also use too many others. He meant to say:

"The tributer is assisted in his work by being given supplies"; meaning candles, dynamite, caps, and fuse.

Gold Mountain was turned down by a succession of eminent engineers.

It would be more to the point to give the names of some of the engineers.

The slime in the drifts entirely obscured the occurrence of the ore.

Delete the words indicated.

He extracted the gold in the residue, thus doing away with [obviating] the necessity for re-handling [of] it.

It is not the "necessity", but the "re-handling", that he wished to avoid. Was it the gold or the residue that he was trying not to "re-handle"? He meant to say:

"He extracted the gold in the residue, thus avoiding re-treatment."

If the final judgment is favorable, the next step is to assemble the proposition.

One cannot "assemble" one thing, any more than one can flock by oneself in a corner. By "proposition" he means the elements essential to the business. 'Proposition' is beloved of jargoneers, who use it for 'proposal', 'business', and for other meanings even more remote, as in:

I would like to know how the proposition tends.

He is referring to the National Research Council, and would like to know what it is doing.

Slovenliness in writing is due not to poverty of ideas but to careless thinking. It may escape censure because the majority of readers are uncritical and too patient. Given a careless writer and an equally careless reader, you have a performance as profitable as a harangue to the deaf.

The Lake Superior copper mines are making a good recovery from the disorganized condition in which the long persistence of the strike put them.

Here you have the abstract phrases "the long persistence" and "making a good recovery" instead of a concrete statement saying that the strike had lasted long and that work at the mines had been resumed. "Mines" is not the real subject of this statement, but the work being done in them. He—and he was an editor—meant to say:

"The working force at the Lake Superior copper mines is being re-organized after the long strike, and operations are being resumed."

Statements that seem intelligible and are accepted by the patient reader without protest may yet fail to convey information accurately; and the docile reader—for every man that submits willingly to the attraction of an article, and reads it, is in a docile mood—either loses interest presently because of the vagueness of the discourse, or struggles against the obstacles of clouded style until he is inclined to attribute the difficulty to a temporary inability of his own. The headache that over-

comes the young student in his struggle to conquer knowledge in textbooks is due usually to the defective literary technique of the authors rather than to his own stupidity or to the difficulty of the subject.

The vein is a quartz fissure with a width of 1 to 6 ft., a dip of 50° to the north, and a filling of galena, sphalerite, pyrite, and chalcopyrite.

How can it be a fissure filled with quartz—for that is a “quartz fissure”, not a fissure in quartz—if it be filled with the four other minerals specified? Nor is the fissure attached to a width or a dip. He meant:

“The vein varies in width from one to six feet; it dips 50° north, and consists of quartz containing galena, sphalerite, pyrite, and chalcopyrite.”

‘Encounter’ is a word greatly overworked. It means to meet hostilely or in conflict. The use of it in varying senses tends to vagueness.

The rocks indicate to the miner when **encountered** the general lower limits of the volcanics.

He means that where (not “when”) a particular rock is found underground, there the lower limit (not “limits”) of the volcanic series is indicated. Therefore he might have said:

“These rocks, wherever found in the mine, indicate that the lower limit of the volcanic series has been reached.”

The ore-bearing volcanics are seemingly of more importance to the district from a gold-producing standpoint than was at first supposed.

He meant that the volcanic rocks had a greater influence upon the deposition of gold in the district than had been supposed. He used “seemingly” three times in eight lines of his manuscript, and you can infer from that how careless he was.

Some difficulties are **encountered** by the formation of sodium sulphate in the roasting furnace, **which** dissolves together with the sodium chromate.

Here “encountered” means ‘caused’. The wrong use of “which” makes the writer state that the furnace dissolved.

The omission of the hyphen suggests that the furnace itself was "roasting". "Together" is redundant. What he meant to say was:

"During the process of roasting, sundry difficulties are introduced by the formation of sodium sulphate, because it dissolves with the sodium chromate."

All these pluralities, generalities, and abstractions are the mark of jargon. As Quiller-Couch says: "To write jargon is to be perpetually shuffling around in the fog and cotton-wool of abstract terms: to be forever hearkening, like Ibsen's Peer Gynt, to the voice of the Borg exhorting you to circumvent the difficulty, to beat the air because it is easier than to flesh your sword in the thing".

Avoid extravagance. One of the chief obstacles to precision in writing is prolixity, the employment of superfluous words. Shy at such phrases as 'with regard to', 'in respect of', 'at the same time', 'as a consequence of', 'in connection with', 'from the standpoint of', 'on the basis of', 'of such a character', 'to any extent', 'according as to whether', 'on the whole', 'more or less', and so forth. Occasionally one or another of these unlovely locutions may be useful or necessary, but resort to them grudgingly, treating them as first cousins to jargon, which is the newspaper prostitution of our language.

With regard to the process, the principal difficulty that arose in connection with the operation of it was the large amount of dust; the success of it therefore depended as to whether it could, or could not be collected without incurring a more or less prohibitive expense.

The 21 words indicated are mere 'empties' in the train of thought. Note too the careless use of "it"; the first and second refer to "process", but the third refers to "dust". He might have said:

"The success of the process depended upon the economical collection of the dust made during the operation."

For it is well known that man's methods are ever changing while Nature's laws upon which they depend are invariable.

Two unnecessary and insipid clauses are interjected under the false impression that they give dignity to the statement. How much stronger it sounds thus:

"Man's methods are ever changing; Nature's laws are immutable."

Perhaps a few notes as to some of my experience in connection with mining in Colombia will be of interest.

"Perhaps a few notes on my mining experience in Colombia will be interesting."

Mistakes in assaying are far commoner than is generally thought to be the case.

"Mistakes in assaying are more common than is generally supposed."

The silver veins have not been enriched [sufficiently] to a commercial degree except near the dikes.

He means that the vein-filling is not rich enough to be 'ore'. The use of the adjective 'commercial', as in "The mine is now able to produce commercial ore", is an objectionable vulgarity. The ore was not the subject of commerce, but of metallurgical treatment by the owners of the mine.

'In this case' and 'in the case', with their variants, are used by careless writers to an excessive degree. They are vapid phrases at best and readily contribute to the making of jargon. Here are a few more examples:

The same as is the case where the soap solution is added.

This refers to the use of soap in the flotation process. "Where" is entirely inappropriate to the meaning, which is:

"The same as when the soap solution has been added."

The main reason why the contract system fails, as it has in many cases, is because [that] it is applied unfairly to the workers.

The statement refers to the contract system as used in mines; if the writer had used 'mines' instead of "cases", he would have said something. "Case" is a vacuous word; it reminds

me of the head-line in a San Francisco evening paper, when the King of Portugal was assassinated: "Youth ascends throne vacated by bullet", meaning that the throne had been made vacant by the bullet that killed its occupant.

The distribution is more perfect with this machine than is the case with the other type, **where** [in which] gravity interferes with the movement of the crushed rock.

The entire statement is jargonese. He means: "The distribution of the crushed rock is more uniform in this machine than in the other, in which gravity interferes with the movement".

This is an advantageous feature **in the case where** thickened sludge is being drawn.

"In the case where" should be replaced by the single word 'when'.

This device is especially suitable **in the case where** a slimed pulp is being handled.

This is like the previous example. He means:

"This device is particularly adapted to the treatment of slime."

The principle on which the vertical disc-crusher operates is the same as is **the case with** [that of] the horizontal machine.

A higher consumption of power sometimes occurs **in those cases where** the rock crushed contains a proportion of material that cakes and tends to choke the machine.

"The consumption of power may be increased if the rock to be crushed contains an ingredient that cakes so as to clog the machine."

The use of 'where' with 'cases' and 'instances' is a common blunder.

The other extreme is met with **in those cases where** a lot of material is **very** heterogeneous.

Those who write jargon are rarely content with one error in a sentence; the above example contains several. The use of

"met with"—a meaningless phrase—and the addition of "very" to "heterogeneous" will be noted. He is writing on the subject of sampling ore, and he means:

"The other extreme is presented by ore of heterogeneous composition."

Then in the case where a single metal is saved in a single concentrate

He means that the concentrate is not one that contains several metals on which the smelter will make payment; it is a concentrate valuable for one mineral or metal only. He might say: "In case the concentrate contains only one marketable metal" or "If only one marketable metal is recovered in the concentrate".

This precaution is especially important in the case of a pulley or gear, with which the length of hub exceeds the width of face, for in this case the side pressure comes directly on the hub.

Lamentable, is it not? He means:

"This applies especially to a pulley or gear that has a length of hub exceeding the width of face, for then the side pressure comes directly on the hub."

In the case of gold and silver ores, where the metal is enclosed in a vehicle of friable sulphide, this error should be carefully considered.

Did he have an idea of movement and was that why he used "vehicle"? The word he needed was 'matrix'. He might have written:

"In treating gold and silver ores, especially those in which the precious metal is enclosed by a friable sulphide, the possibility of this error should be considered carefully."

Abstract phrases introduced by 'with' are as common as they are undesirable.

The stamps drop through $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches with a frequency [at the rate] of 95 times per minute.

"Through", of course, must be deleted.

The surface is of a very uneven character.

Delete the words indicated.

The **soft nature** [softness] of the rocks

Any lumps of **more or less** [nearly] pure chalcocite were but superficially altered.

A mining journal says:

A particularly striking thing of the last Anaconda report is the exhibit of that company as the great metallurgical concern **that it is**.

The superfluous words are indicated. The statement can be amended thus:

"The latest Anaconda report exhibits that company as a great metallurgical concern" or

"This report exhibits the Anaconda as a great metallurgical enterprise."

Another author wrote thus:

So far as the writer is aware, the process has not been applied to any ore in this country, but there **can be no doubt that there** are many instances where it could be successfully applied.

This is a windy performance. What he wanted to say was:

"So far as I know, the process has not been tried in this country, but there must be many ores to which it could be applied successfully."

Probably flotation is due to a combination of phenomena **which [that]** are **rather high in the scale** of complexity.

"Probably flotation is due to a combination of complex phenomena."

From the standpoint of [according to] this theory

This is too important a matter to be treated **from a careless point of view** [carelessly].

Use the active, not the passive, voice of your verbs; use the direct phrase instead of the circumlocution; write like a man, not a nanny-goat!

He started **the accumulation of** a fortune in the lumber business.

This is a roundabout way of saying it; the direct way is
 "He started to accumulate a fortune . . ."

The smoke and gas **were the cause of** [caused] an immediate shut-down of the mine.

It is noteworthy as **being indicative of** [indicating] a tendency to diminish industrial unrest.

The Nevada Consolidated company is **carrying on the development of** [developing] the high-grade ore **encountered** [found] some months ago on the 700-ft. level of the Ruth mine.

I do not **make an exception of** [except] the recent election.

In Chile one must **take into consideration** [consider] the peculiar **problems that are met with** [local conditions].

Tests **resulted in** [caused] a change of plan.

The discharge **takes place on** [goes through] a grizzly.

I had some practice in the **preparation of** [preparing] exhibits for mining lawsuits.

The use of the gerund or the present participle instead of the corresponding noun is a favorite method of expressing the abstract idea instead of the concrete, thus:

The **escaping** [escape] of **vapors** [vapor] from leaky **piping** [pipes]

The use of the plural of "vapor" illustrates further a hanker-ing for the abstract.

The **capping** [cap] has to be removed by **steam-shoveling** [steam-shovels] before the copper **ores** [ore] can be quarried.

A **capping** [cap] of leached monzonite covers the ore.

There **are** [is] no **croppings** [outcrop] of the vein to guide the prospector.

The **fillings** [fill] in the old stopes can be milled now at a profit.

The **faulting** [fault] extended across the entire series of veins.

The cave smashed the **heavy stulling** [big stulls] in the main stope.

The sulphide ore follows the east-west **fracturing** [fractures], until they are crossed by the main **faulting** [fault].

I closed the end of a piece of half-inch glass **tubing** [tube].

Abstraction is carried to inanity by scribblers who change

nations	into	nationalities
authors	"	authorities
events	"	eventualities
persons	"	personalities
characters	"	characteristics

It may be that such errors are due to a preference for words of many syllables, this hankering for sound rather than sense being a part of the literary disease by which the jargoneer is afflicted, and which he inflicts on his unprotected readers. Another sad trick is to mix the abstract with the concrete, using one verb for both, thus:

A knowledge of the methods of first aid and [the use of] a few medicines is of great value.

Do not compare things with qualities, the concrete with the abstract. Correspondence in form promotes lucidity and ease of statement.

This is the time for class blindness to cease leading the blind.

So says the editor of the San Francisco 'Journal' in a vain attempt to be impressive. What he meant I do not know; perhaps he wished to say that it was high time that class prejudice should cease to minister to ignorance.

President Harding, on June 5, 1921, sent a telegram to the people of Pueblo, in Colorado, where a flood had done great damage:

I am deeply distressed to read of the misfortune which has come with its toll of death and destruction to the citizenship of Pueblo and the valley of the Arkansas river.

He meant the 'citizens' or 'people' of Pueblo. If not, the condolence should have been sent to "the citizenship of Pueblo and the topography of the Arkansas", thus joining two abstract terms.

A New York publisher began an address thus:

Publicity and engineers do not mix.

This is profoundly true, although not in the sense that he meant. A headache cannot mix with pebbles nor a thirst with golf-balls. He meant to say that publicity and engineering are discordant, or that engineers have no liking for publicity.

C. W. Barron, in the 'Boston News Bureau', said:

H. Clay Pierce, the American who 25 years ago dominated the country in its oil interests, is now but a memory, with an oil refinery at Tampico that buys oil from the Eagle and other producing companies.

To be a "memory with an oil refinery" is to be memorable indeed, and to be a "memory with an oil refinery that buys oil" is even more astonishing.

A physicist of the U. S. Bureau of Mines writes:

In a previous article a bubble was said to be the "surface-tension of water surrounding a gas, usually air".

The gentleman was so pleased with his definition that he quoted it from one technical paper into another. The earlier definition read: "A bubble is simply the surface-tension of water surrounding a quantity of air . . . A clear understanding of this is necessary to all flotation considerations". What this last may be, one can only surmise; it refers presumably to the discussion of the physical problems underlying the phenomena [a phenomenon is a thing one does not understand] of flotation. Whether the gentleman helped to clear the understanding of his readers, I do not know; it is evident that his own understanding needed to be clarified; also his writing. How can a bubble, flimsy as it may be, yet a concrete thing, become such an abstraction as the tensile state of water? He may mean that a bubble is made of water of low surface-tension surrounding a gas; but one cannot be sure of that. I venture to suggest that a bubble consists of a spherical liquid envelope enclosing a gas.

The vein is several times the width of the drift.

He joins the concrete to the abstract, producing a mixture that has no value in engineering. He means:

"The width of the vein is several times that of the drift" or

"The vein is much wider than the drift."

An investigation showed that the gold content of the vein was contained in small veins enclosed within the strike of the large vein.

This is not a stupid joke; it is merely the product of a muddled imagination. 'Strike' is the direction referred to the

meridian. How can a vein be enclosed within a direction? Again the abstract is jumbled with the concrete. He meant, probably:

"An investigation showed that the gold of the ore was contained in the small veins within the lode."

The vicinity in which the above-described properties are located consists of metamorphic and eruptive rocks.

This is metamorphosed English pseudomorphic after jargon. How can a 'vicinity' consist of rocks or of anything tangible? In any event, the statement that the rocks are "metamorphic and eruptive" is of no consequence; he is merely using sonorous words to mask his ignorance.

Recent statistics are not to be depended on for a number of reasons.

Preposition-verbs are contributory to jargon because they are verbose and vapid. The two prepositions "on" and "for" come together in an awkward way. He means:

"Recent statistics are not reliable, for many reasons."

From a genetic point of view the genesis of the coralline limestone have [has] been most carefully studied.

Delete the words indicated.

The last three examples are taken from 'Suggestions to Authors' by George M. Wood, the editor of the U. S. Geological Survey.

Such words as 'case', 'instance', 'nature', 'degree', 'character', and 'condition' should be used sparingly and with discrimination.

So in the case of these veins we have present a reversal of the usual case where native copper turns to sulphide in depth.

This statement is typical of a kind of jargon that masquerades as ornate speech. He meant to say:

"Thus these veins reverse the experience usual in mining, namely, the change from native copper to sulphide mineral in depth."

In the case of copper it is not advisable to leach the ore.

"It is inadvisable to leach the copper ore."

In every **case** an alteration product should be identified with extreme care.

Delete the words indicated.

As Mr. Wood suggests, the victim of this habit of using 'cases' and 'instances', or some other similar abstract term, should ask himself what he means by the word. What is the concrete thing about which he is writing? He is likely to discover that he is indulging in mere verbiage.

The lowlands in some **cases** [places] contain lakes, the most conspicuous **instances** being Crystal, Glen, and Portage lakes.

Here "instances" is an elegant variant of "cases". It should be deleted.

This is the only **instance** in the district of a copper mine that is wholly in the granite.

"This is the only copper mine in the district that is wholly in the granite."

The miners returned to work in most **instances**.

They went to work in overalls. He meant: "Most of the miners returned to work".

Even in Carboniferous areas, only in one or two **instances** do the veins carry ore.

Substitute 'places' for "instances". Perhaps he means "only one or two veins carry ore".

The accident was due to the dangerous **nature** of the work and the fissile **character** of the rock.

It was not; the accident was due to the weakening of the rock by fissuring and the sudden fall of a large piece upon the miner working below.

A singular **degree** of mineralization marks the district.

Meaning that "intense mineralization characterizes the district".

The auriferous mineralization is distributed throughout the ore and consists of metallic gold and gold associated with iron pyrites.

This is thoroughly bad, from beginning to end. 'Mineralization' is the condition of being mineralized; how can a condition be "auriferous", that is, gold-bearing? Next, how can "mineralization" be distributed throughout the ore; it is an abstraction. Probably all that could be said was:

"The ore contains free gold, associated with pyrite." The "iron" is redundant.

The word 'situation' is favored by jargoneers; it is a type of the abstract, of the general, and of the woolly.

To meet this situation [difficulty] as it developed, sand-filling [the filling of stopes with sand] was introduced in 1908.

The same writer continues:

Previous to this date some of the older mines had been showing signs of movement, and it became evident that preparation was necessary to meet this tendency, which was bound to increase in intensity as mining progressed.

'Tendency' goes well with 'situation'; both are abstract terms—the mere fog of an idea. He meant to say:

"Previous to that year some of the older workings had shown signs of movement, so that it became evident that a systematic effort must be made to check the settling of the ground—a condition sure to become worse as mining progressed."

He first went to Goldfield to examine a mining situation [mine] and then located [remained or resided] there for good.

To examine a situation is like fighting a chimera.

"He first went to Goldfield to report on a mine, and decided to live there."

This serious situation with respect to dye-stuffs has been splendidly met by the chemists of the country.

"This serious need of dye-stuffs has been met splendidly by the chemists of the country", or

"This serious deficiency in dye-stuffs has been overcome with splendid success by the chemists of the country."

The situation in regard to fuel is so alarming as to call for the most careful consideration.

He means: "The shortage of fuel at this time is so alarming as to demand serious thought". The same writer continues:

Our greatest [best] opportunity for success in meeting the fuel situation [escape from the dilemma] lies in efficient combustion.

The fuel situation in Brazil is almost tragic in its seriousness.

"The lack of fuel in Brazil is almost an economic tragedy."

A mining lawyer writes:

An apex could not exist in situations [under conditions] not greatly dissimilar [similar] to those in the Jim Butler case.

The labor situation is passing through a period of unrest.

"Situation" is a mere abstraction; it is "labor" that is unrestful.

He took an option on an interesting situation [promising prospect] in the Canyon Creek district.

He liked the situation [mine or property] and decided to invest his money in it.

Probably he speculated with his money; to the unthinking, a 'speculation' is synonymous with an 'investment'.

The easing up of the oil situation was in sight.

"The passing of the crisis in the oil industry was assured."

To meet the situation with regard to the gold

This is jargon from end to end; he means, simply:

"To find the needed gold"

A trail from the [end of the] road termination

The fact is that the presence of water affects the electric conductivity of rocks more than their own composition [the substances of which they are composed].

It is not the presence of one thing or the composition of another that produces certain definite results; it is the effects of the water and the minerals themselves that the writer has in mind.

As might be expected, the jargoneer loves such an abstract term as 'values'.

In my tests made with a view of [to] studying the form in which **lay the values** [the gold and silver exist] in such tailings I have been unable to detect any **values** [precious metals] in the tailing from our ore.

How would he make tests to determine "the form" of the gold and silver until he had ascertained the fact that they existed in the tailing? When a writer makes such statements, he is not to be trusted.

'Problem' is another word dear to the jargoneer in search of abstractions with which to obscure his lack of accurate knowledge.

One of our serious **problems** is clean water.

He means: "One of our chief hindrances [or handicaps] is the lack of clean water".

The **problem** presented by this difficulty engages the attention of metallurgists.

Delete the words indicated.

The water **problem** is a drawback to concentration.

"The large amount of water required is an obstacle to concentration."

'Standpoint' is a jargonistic decoration.

The portion of the range that is of interest **from an economic standpoint** extends due east and west about six miles.

"The portion of the range that is of economic interest extends due east and west for six miles."

'Eliminate' is another first cousin to jargon.

The presence of barite or gangue will in most cases **eliminate** the possibility of using gravity concentration.

He was writing about oil-shale, and meant:

"The presence of barite or other heavy minerals usually will prevent the use of gravity concentration."

One company has succeeded in treating this shale in a small retort, and is **contemplating the installation of [planning to erect] a larger plant.**

To "contemplate the installation" is rot.

The method has been employed **in connection with** the Herreshoff furnace installation.

"The method has been applied to Herreshoff furnaces."

The **problem** of water-losses was taken up coincidently with the stack-loss determinations.

He is referring to the metallurgy of quicksilver.

"The loss in water was investigated at the same time as the loss in fume."

The jargoneer loves to use 'interests' as a mysterious synonym for a company, syndicate, or a group of financiers. According to him the Morgan 'interests' are underwriting a loan or the Guggenheim 'interests' have acquired control of a mine.

We learn from a consular report that the British **interests [group] which [in] control [of the] railroad are [is] ready to begin construction.**

'Interests' is an abstraction; it stands for something concrete, by which it ought to be replaced.

Golfers appear to write with a niblick; the result is a verbal foozle. Thus W. Herbert Fowler says:

The tendency **with regard to the game at the present moment**, so far as courses are concerned, is more **in the direction of making them interesting** than of making them of abnormal length.

He means to say:

"The tendency today is to make golf-courses not longer but more interesting."

In a chemical journal I found an editorial that started thus:

The trustees of the funds of a tax-ridden people gambling on margin for a rise in a bear market is the spectacle presented by a repudiated

administration in enacting legislation to commit the American people not only to a policy of manufacturing a commodity for the benefit of a class under conditions that violate every instinct of business prudence, but to a precedent for the nationalization of industry whose logical eventuality, if not the condemnation for the benefit of agricultural interests of the plants of the International Harvester Co., would be the use of arsenals in peace time for the manufacture of agricultural implements, or of such products as any special class who at the time may be in dominance may require.

One is justified in supposing that the editor had surrendered his chair to the office-boy. This is the sort of thing one expects in the essay of a high-school sophomore. As Huxley said: "A good style is the vivid impression of clear thinking". Conversely, a bad style reflects the shapeless confusion of muddled thought.

It is likely that many of the examples quoted by me will seem to you by no means bad; in fact, they represent the kind of writing that is so common as hardly to elicit comment from those whose critical faculties have not been awakened; yet, I assure you, the avoidance of such jargon is essential to good writing. Jargon defeats its purpose; the thought fails to reach its destination; the cross-currents distract the tired reader's attention, they interrupt the voyage of his thought, which drifts with the flux of words and becomes stranded at last on a shoal of verbiage. Brevity is the soul of wit; conciseness is the essence of clarity; every unnecessary word is an obstacle to the transmission of thought.