IX. PREPOSITIONS AND PREPOSITION-VERBS

The function of a preposition is to show the relation of one thing to another; it is necessary therefore for the writer to select the preposition that indicates the particular relation, otherwise he will fail to express himself clearly.

Is it **against** common sense to suggest that a Government is justified, morally as well as constitutionally, **in** preventing the decay **of** an industry **by** insisting **upon** the amalgamation **of** the prosperous **with** the needy?

All these seven prepositions are used correctly.

With the first dredge introduced **in** Russia, **of** Werf Conrad, Haarlem, make, this method of alluvial mining became important.

Here the prepositions "with", "in", and "of" are used wrongly. He means:

"This method of alluvial mining sprang into importance shortly after the first dredge, made at the Werf Conrad, Haarlem, was introduced into Russia."

The statement itself is not true, but for that I am not responsible.

Once, while I was serving **with** him, we were frozen **in out of** sight **of** land **in** the Gulf **of** Pichili **in** the North **of** China.

Admiral Fisher wrote thus. He has used nine prepositions in making this brief statement. The sequence of three prepositions "in out of" is particularly awkward.

Lounsbury says:

One might fairly infer from the way in which it [newspaper English] is often spoken **of that with** the steadily increasing circulation of this **sort** of periodical literature there is no hope whatever for our speech.

"Of that with" is lamentable. The construction is thoroughly bad, and it is bad mainly because the misplaced prepositions have tangled the meaning. I suggest:

"From the rate at which this sort of periodical literature is steadily increasing and from the way in which it is often condemned, one might fairly infer that there is no hope whatever for our speech."

The selection of a preposition should be guided by the requirements of the context and by idiomatic usage. In an uninflected language, like English, the correct usage of prepositions is a test of one's familiarity with the language, and long after a foreigner has acquired fluency he is likely to betray himself by a slip in the selection of these little verbal links. The difficulty lies in the idioms, the right use of which is dependent upon an intimate knowledge of the language; they are "special forms of speech that for some reason, often inscrutable, have proved congenial to the instinct of a particular language",* and, I may add, to the instinct of the particular people speaking that language. For example, most Englishmen say 'different to', whereas Americans as a rule say 'different from'. Freeman writes:

Their relation to the empire was wholly different **to** [from] that of the slaves.

We must feel charitably towards those who think differently **to** [from] ourselves.

What is the great difference of the one **to** [from] the other?

Two of these are quoted from the 'Daily Telegraph' of London. The last might be changed advantageously to:

"What is the great difference between the two", or "between them".

Noted writer says Los Angeles is no different **than** San Francisco.

The blame for this illiteracy rests not upon the "noted writer" but upon the half-educated young man that prepared the head-lines.

Mining on the desert presented different conditions **than** [from] those in the mountains.

* 'The King's English', p. 161.

This error of using 'than' after 'different' is common even in writings that presumably have been edited by competent, but careless, persons. For example:

Conditions of sea travel are different **than** [from what] they were eight years ago.

The impression that any great number of travelers are doing things much different **than** [from the way] they did [them] eight years ago.

Both sentences need to be re-organized.

But the strong government which he [Alexander Hamilton] would have created was of a different type from that which America ultimately developed.

So says Cecil Chesterton. "Different" should come after "type".

'Different from' is the older idiom, and the retention of it can hardly be deemed pedantry; at least, it is a defensive, not an offensive, pedantry.* In any event, 'different to' is taboo in the United States. Another nice question is the choice of the preposition that ought to follow 'averse'; should we say 'averse to' or 'averse from'? The dictionaries quote examples of both usages. The authors of the 'King's English' say that the use of 'to' is "more natural" than the use of 'from' after 'averse'. This statement surprises me, for it ignores the derivation of the word, which is from *a* and *vertere*, to turn away or to turn from. On the other hand, we have 'adverse', which comes from *ad* and *vertere*, to turn against. It seems to me that the language is enriched by giving 'adverse to' and 'averse from' their particular duties, instead of using them indiscriminately; thus:

I am averse **from** taking such a step.

This means that I turn away from it; I am unwilling to take the step; I do not oppose it actively. On the other hand:

I am adverse **to** taking such a step.

* 'The King's English', p. 162. In his later book, 'A Dictionary of Modern English Usage', H. W. Fowler says that the supposition that 'different' can only be followed by 'from', and not by 'to', is a superstition. This indicates either that he differed with his brother, or that he is of a variable mind.

This means that I face the idea of taking the step; and I object to it decidedly; I set my face against it.

A soldier running to the rear is asked: "What are you running *for*?". He retorts: "You mean, what am I running *from*?'.

A small boy, wet through, and clutching a fishing-rod, is asked by a farmer, "How did you *come to* fall into the pond?". Sobbing, the boy replies, "I didn't; I came to fish".

It is no wonder that even skilful writers trip. Disraeli says:

The conversations of men of letters are of a different complexion **with** the talk of men of the world.

"the conversations . . . are of a complexion different *from* . . ."

Hallam says:

This inspired so much apprehension **into** printers that they became unwilling to incur the hazard of an obnoxious trade.

"This inspired printers *with* such apprehension that . . ."

A. C. Benson says:

I want to learn to distinguish **between** what is important and unimportant, **between** what is beautiful and ugly, **between** what is false and true.

One does not distinguish 'between' what is beautiful *and* ugly or 'between' any other single thing; one distinguishes between what is beautiful and what is ugly; but what he really wanted to do was to distinguish the beautiful *from* the ugly, and the true *from* the false.

The constitution exhibits a broad-minded tolerance in **permitting** [granting] the right to work **of** anyone.

He means "granting anyone the right to work".

A metallurgist writes:

The two kinds of flotation concentrate are conducted **through** [in] concrete launders to the elevators.

A mining engineer says:

We must offer a protest **over** [against] this latest suggestion.

A trade paper remarks:

When the price of brass is increased somewhat **to conform to** [in conformity with] a reasonable advance in the quotation on raw copper.

Has it ever occurred to you that there is a general change in the relationship of the big corporations **and** [to] the general public?

One could say also, "in the relationship *between* the big corporations *and* the general public".

The use of the appropriate preposition is essential to perspicuity. "One virtue of style is perspicuity", says Aristotle.

If you speak of a distant city it may be regarded as a point, so you say:

Jones is **at** Tucson.

But if the city is so large that you regard it as an area, you say:

Jones is **in** New York.

Similarly if you are speaking of the place in which you yourself happen to be, you do not regard it as a point but as an area, so:

Jones is **in** San Francisco.

'Of' is not required after 'inside', 'outside', or 'alongside'.

Alongside **of** this eccentric and disturbing force.

Outside **of** the market for military uses, a premium can be obtained for electrolytic zinc.

The boat was moored alongside **of** the wharf.

When he found himself inside **of** the lines, he felt safe once more.

In the four preceding quotations the "of" is unnecessary.

'Of' is not required after 'all'.

All **of** the men refused to work.

He expected to roast all **of** the ore.

I saw [them] all **of the men.**

The whole of the [entire] staff resigned.

An engineer protests:

Under [In] these circumstances I refuse to accept your proposal.

'Been *to*' is an ugly colloquialism.

I have **been** to South Africa.
He was **up** to New York last week.

A veteran recalls old days:

This led to my **first** introduction to that firm, the best known British firm in the country, **and whom** I subsequently returned to work **for in** after years, and have since kept **up** a close professional connection **with.**

Here are several misplaced prepositions. He could have added to the interest of his statement by giving the name of the firm, thus:

"This led to my introduction to Brown, Jones & Co., which is the best-known British firm in the country, and one for which I worked in after years; indeed, I have maintained a close professional connection with Brown, Jones & Co. to this day."

A superintendent writes:

It was proposed to widen the blades 7 **to** 11 inches.

What this statement means is uncertain, because the necessary link between its two parts is lacking. It might mean that the width is to be increased by any amount from 7 inches up to 11; or, that the present 7-inch blade is to be widened to 11 inches. The reader might be able to infer the right meaning from his general knowledge of these things or from the context; but the sentence itself ought to make the meaning unmistakable. After "widen the blades" it should read "from 7 inches to 11 inches".

Mexico had practically unlimited **quantities** [reserves] of untouched petroleum **which** [that] under Diaz's administration were **free for** [open to] exploitation, but which, under the recent regimes, have been closed to the world.

An ungainly use of 'with' is a characteristic of careless writing. This useful preposition is compelled to perform many

duties other than those to which it is appointed by idiomatic usage. In preparing my second lecture I had written: " 'Certain' is a word *with an* uncertain meaning", but I changed "with an" to 'of'.

A common error is to use 'with' in place of 'when'.

With [When] this circular vibration [was] imparted, the screen-wire did not push directly against the material lying on the screen.

Even **with** slimes that settle well **with** lime, this method is undesirable.

He meant: "This method cannot be recommended even if applied to a slime that is made to settle by aid of lime".

With the new furnaces in operation, smelting **with** the cheapest fuel, **with** cheap power from waste gases, and **with** the Pierce-Smith converter operating, the plant will be completely up to date.

This is journalese of the worst kind; he meant to say:

"When the new furnaces are in blast, when the Pierce-Smith converters are in operation, when cheap fuel is used, and when the waste gases are utilized to generate power, this plant will be thoroughly up-to-date."

In the 13th book of the 'Say of Confucius' it is recorded:

"On matters beyond his ken a gentleman speaks with caution. If names are not right, words are misused. When words are misused, affairs go wrong. When affairs go wrong, courtesy and music drop, law and justice fail. And when law and justice fail them, a people can move neither hand nor foot. So a gentleman must be ready to put names into speech, to put words into deeds. A gentleman is nowise careless of words."

Here are a number of examples showing how 'with' is misapplied:

The lode has a north-east strike **with** [and] an easterly dip.

The rocks have been folded, **with considerable faulting** [and considerably faulted].

The vein becomes richer **with** [in] depth.

It might be better to say: "The vein appears richer the deeper it is mined".

It can be done **with** [at] small expense.

The formation consists of sand **with** [of] a greenish color.

The bodies of the sacrificial victims were eaten **with** [according to the] prescribed ceremonial.

As it stands, one is tempted to infer that the "prescribed ceremonial" was spinach!

This machine does exceptionally good work **with** [if applied to] high-grade ore.

They made brick **with** [of] clay that contained gold.

The various mines of the company are connected with the town of Triunfo **with** [by] a narrow-gauge railroad.

With [Under] the proposed law, it may be necessary to take up a hundred acres.

The peon is a faithful and steady worker **with** [under] a just and strong boss who understands him but lazy and worthless **with** [under] a weak or unjust **one** [boss or supervisor].

The uncertainties inherent **with** [in] any method of this kind.

With the failure to produce satisfactory coke, it was decided to smelt **with** coal, and a new plant was designed **with** much larger furnaces.

Here are three 'withs', each used in a different sense. The second one is doing proper duty; the others need substitutes.

"Upon the failure to produce satisfactory coke, it was decided to smelt with coal, and accordingly a new plant that contained much larger furnaces was designed."

All-sliming is necessary in Mexico **with** [for the treatment of] silver ores, as at Kalgoorlie **with** [for] telluride ores; but it is unnecessary **with** [for] the majority of gold ores.

In Mexico, **with** [for the treatment of] silver ore, amalgamation was only partly successful.

A boy hung the new sheets **on** [during] the day-shift.

The reference is to the starting-sheets in an electrolytic zinc plant. "On the day-shift" is idiomatic, but it is awkward when accompanied by "hung".

Some verbs connote direction, and therefore do not need a preposition; thus:

The mineral particles dropped **down** through the emulsion.

The bubbles rose **up** through the pulp.

He descended **down** to the lowest level of the mine.

They traversed **across** the plains of northern Tibet.

In these four examples the prepositions that follow the verbs should be deleted.

Accepted idiom requires certain prepositions to follow certain nouns, adjectives, or verbs. The following list is far from complete, but it may prove suggestive and useful.

Abound in
Accord with
Account for
Acquiesce in
Adhere to
Adverse to
Averse from
Agree with a person
Agree to a proposal
Alien to
Aware of
Capable of
Capacity for
Commence by doing something
Commence from a point
Commence with an act
Compare to
Concur in an opinion
Concur with a person
Consist in (definition)
Consist of (composition)
Conversant with
Demand for a thing
Demand of a person
Differ from (quality)
Differ with (opinion)
Different from
Embark in a business
Embark on a ship
Fill with
Full of
Indifferent to
Invest in a business
Invest with a title
In view of circumstances
With a view to a purpose
Join in a game
Join to (things)
Join with (persons)
Labor at a task
Labor for a person
Labor in a good cause
Labor under a difficulty
Live by labor
Live for riches
Live on an income
Look after a business
Look at a thing
Look for a missing article
Look into a matter
Look over an account
Necessary for a person
Necessary to do
Need of
Overcome by entreaty
Overcome with fatigue
Parallel with
Perpendicular to
Point at a thing
Point to a fact
Possessed of wealth
Possessed with an idea

Preference for
Proceed against a person
Proceed to an act not previously started
Proceed with an act already started
Provide against ill luck
Provide for a contingency
Provide oneself with something
Pursuant to
In pursuance of
Ready at sums
Ready for a journey
Ready with a reply
Reckon on a result
Reckon with a contingency
Reckon with a person
Regard for a person
With regard to a subject
Regard for one's interest
Relief to suffering
Relieve of a duty
Relieve with a tint
Responsible for an action
Responsible to a person
Responsibility of a position
Result from an event
Result in a failure
Result of an investigation
Satisfaction in an improvement
Satisfied of a fact
Satisfied with a little
Secure against attack
Secure from harm
Secure in a position
Suited for a part
Suited to an occasion
Tamper with
Tinker at
Tired of a thing
Tired with exercise
Versed in
At variance with
Wary of a danger

Intransitive verbs are made to seem transitive by attaching a preposition. This is because a peculiar idiom of modern English permits an intransitive verb with its dependent prepositional phrase to be turned into a passive construction, in which the noun of the prepositional phrase re-appears as the subject, the verb takes the auxiliaries of the passive voice, and the preposition is left hanging to the verb as an adverbial modifier. The verb thus seems like a transitive verb.

I shall not interfere with his plans.
His plans were not interfered with.

The linking of a preposition with a verb may give it an entirely new meaning; for example, to 'dispense' and to

'dispense with'. A judge was about to retire from the bench and was given the honor of a public banquet at which prominent citizens eulogized his services to the community. One of the speakers congratulated the judge upon the way in which he had "dispensed with justice" for thirty years!

Our language is full of preposition-verbs, many of which have a meaning of their own, distinct from that of either member of the compound. In some cases the preposition precedes the verb and has been merged with it; thus we have such words as 'withstand', 'overflow', and 'undermine'. 'Keep up' is used as a synonym for 'maintain', whereas 'upkeep' is used for the corresponding noun. A host of childish combinations of this type are used in ordinary conversation, such as 'fill up', 'fill in', 'fix up', 'melt down', 'melt up', 'work up', 'work in', 'meet with', 'keep out', 'keep in', 'break up', 'break down', 'shake up', 'shake down'. The fact that 'up' and 'down' can be used without changing the meaning indicates that the preposition has lost its significance; indeed, much of this is baby talk, entirely unsuited to technical matters; it should be shunned in serious writing. When discussing technical subjects it will be found that words of Latin (sometimes Greek) origin help to make nice distinctions of meaning and produce the precision for which we strive continually. The short and simple Anglo-Saxon may suit the poet's purpose, but the engineer will discover that many old-fashioned English words have associations and meanings unfitting them for his special use. This applies particularly to the numerous preposition-verbs, which, idiomatic though they be, and forming an essential part of our colloquial speech, should be avoided or used sparingly by the technical writer. They came into every-day use long before modern science was developed and they carry with them a looseness of meaning that renders them unfit for our particular purpose. Note the following equivalents:

Call for	Demand, require
Carry out	Perform, conduct
Come out from	Emerge
Come together	Converge, meet
Deal with	Treat, discuss
Decide on	Select
Do away with	Discard
Draw out	Extract
End up	Conclude
Fall off	Decline, decrease
Force away	Repel
Go into	Investigate, examine
Go up	Ascend
Go on with	Continue
Go up	Ascend
Keep out	Exclude
Keep up	Maintain
Look for	Anticipate, expect
Look upon	Regard
Make up	Compose
Make up to	Compensate
Make use of	Utilize
Prove up	Confirm
Push forward	Impel
Put in	Insert
Put up with	Endure
Reach up to	Attain
Refer to	Mention
Result from	Ensue
Result in	Cause
Rouse up	Arouse
Speed up	Accelerate, hasten
Try out	Test
Work out	Devise, exhaust

These synonyms remind me of the philosopher who contended that there were two natural forces: one that tended to pull everything down, and one that tended to pull every-

thing up. His theory was received with levity, not with gravity.

He said it was the richest mine he had **met with** in California.

"He had met with" says nothing; the statement would be as significant if a blank were to replace this childish expression. He should state whether he saw the mine, examined it, or only heard of it.

A San Francisco newspaper recorded the fact that a bogus British peer had made the acquaintance of a soubrette on board ship coming from Honolulu. The reporter stated that the young man had "met up with" the young woman. Presumably to 'meet' a person is one thing; to 'meet *with*' him suggests more than a chance encounter; and to 'meet *up with*' him may be tantamount to a scandal in high life.

The amount of dissolved oxygen **met with** [present] in cyanide solutions.

The company has been **meeting with** [obtaining] profitable results at Cochasayhuas.

Perhaps it would be better to say:

"The results at Cochasayhuas have brought profit to the company."

Contact with the organic acids **met with** in common fruits is without effect.

Here "met with" is redundant and ridiculous.

These papers should be **gotten up** [written] in the simplest language.

At times we are connected **up with** the Gastineau power-plant.

He means that when power is short, his company obtains power from a neighboring company. He might have written:

"At times we connect with the Gastineau power-plant."

When the carbon would get low, pig-iron was added to **bring it up** [increase it to normal].

The London 'Times' spoke of the unfailing enthusiasm which Mr. Roosevelt has **met with.**

It were better to say, "the unfailing enthusiasm with which Mr. Roosevelt has been received".

A reviewer in the 'New Republic' begins a paragraph thus:

He had **met with** [found or seen], in China in 1803, an old commentary **of** one of the books of Confucius.

Here are six prepositions tumbling over each other. Note the consecutive use of 'in' and 'of' twice. The noun "commentary" should be followed by the preposition 'on'.

As an editor I have reason to be convinced that the excessive use of preposition-verbs is a serious obstacle to precision in writing. The habit of using them is more British than American, but it is a hindrance to perspicuous writing wherever the English language is spoken. 'Punch' published a series of cartoons to show "What our artist has to *put up with*". Even cultivated Englishmen sometimes trip over their prepositions, largely because they employ so many preposition-verbs, which require cautious use.

There must be men in the House [of Commons] who see that of all the evils the Constitution can suffer **from** rash legislation is the most dangerous.

'To suffer from' is idiomatic, but you will note the confusion caused by the misplacing of 'from'. In speaking, "from" is pronounced immediately after "suffer", and a slight break is made before "rash", but in reading "from" appears to be linked with "rash legislation". He meant to say:

"There must be men in the House who see that, of all the evils threatening the Constitution, the most dangerous is rash legislation."

'The Times' says:

Gladstone, with all his exalted and sincere sense of truth and duty, was occasionally afflicted with the kind of lie **which** [that] Plato thought the worst of all—the lie [of] which the liar is unaware **of** because it is inside the soul.

I quote from 'The Times' again:

When the movable types invented by Pi Shing were found too troublesome to **work with the Chinese** went back to printing from wooden blocks.

with which an edition of their classical books had been published as early as 922, and which are still in use.

The phrase "work with" runs into "the Chinese", so that the idea of working with them crosses the mind. Moreover, the "work with" jars against the "with which" in the next clause.

I am aware, of course, that Shakespeare can be quoted in defence of such a placing of the preposition; for example:

> What a taking was he **in** when your husband asked what was in the basket.*
>
> I have a letter from her
> Of such contents as you will wonder **of**.†

One can find examples of similar usage in the writings of Addison, Goldsmith, Jane Austen, Ruskin, and Stevenson, as shown by Professor Hill,‡ who is no mean authority on the subject; but, on examination, it will be found that the examples cited usually represent colloquial expressions. In technical writing the preposition-verbs do not conduce to the precision that is essential to our purpose. Shakespeare's characters spoke naturally; so they spoke imperfectly. Talk is habitually careless, even among the literate; it is a mistake therefore to use conversation as a model for writing. I can find no warrant for citing colloquial slips as guides for correct usage in deliberate writing.

The 'Westminster Gazette' says:

> One of the conclusions **at** which Lord Rosebery has arrived **at** in the study of Dr. Johnson is that he would have made a splendid journalist.

It seems to me that a "splendid journalist" would not have used his prepositions so carelessly. Delete the second "at".

> The use of coal-dust, to be fired directly in the cylinders, was also **aimed at.**

* 'The Merry Wives of Windsor,' Act III, sc. 3.

† *Ibid.*, Act III, sc. 6.

‡ 'Beginnings of Rhetoric and Composition', by Adams Sherman Hill, pp. 489-490.

It may be that the use of "fired" suggested the employment of "aimed at"; the coal dust is not shot into the cylinders, it is only set on fire there. Here "aimed at" means 'intended'.

E. F. Benson writes:

> Lucia flicked **off with** the tassel of her riding whip a fly that her mare was twitching **its** skin to get rid **of**.

Evidently he forebore from writing 'her skin', because it might have suggested that the lady Lucia, not the mare, was annoyed by the fly.

Hilaire Belloc writes:

> First, as **to** the points the bombardment **of** which **from** the air one reads **of** almost daily **in** the present development **of** the aerial offensive **by** the Allies—which, **by** the way, is proving **the** increasing superiority **of** the allied air navies.

What a prepositional bombardment!

American authors make similar blunders; for example, William Dean Howells concludes an article thus:

> This is the climax I have been working **up to**, and I call it a fine one; as good as a story to-be-continued ever ended an instalment **with**.

He makes a childish anti-climax by using an insignificant preposition as his last word. Here is another example of this rhetorical error:

> It is palpable that radical revision of laws, which have diverted so many millions of dollars into the pockets of the non-producing legal fraternity, is called **for**.

He might have said:

"There is palpable need for a radical revision of the laws that have caused so many millions of dollars to be directed into the pockets of the non-producing legal fraternity."

An editorial paragraph on the New York mayoralty election ends thus:

> It was a case of any stick being good enough to hit Hylan **with**.

So a fervid statement ends in an anti-climax, for the "with" is a meaningless little word when placed where it does not

belong. It belongs somewhere before "to hit", for the idea is 'with which to hit Hylan'. The "with" can be omitted entirely or the sentence changed to:

"Any stick was good enough for hitting Hylan."

Nor did any of them describe a practical form of apparatus for conducting the proposed operation **in.**

He means "an apparatus in which to perform the operation", but became confused by using "for". He might have written, simply: " . . . a practical form of apparatus for the proposed operation".

Woodrow Wilson said:

. One can feel sure that Franklin would have succeeded in any **part** of the national life that it might have fallen to his lot to **take part in.**

The use of "part" in two senses is confusing. He meant:

"One can feel sure that Franklin would have succeeded in any branch of our national life."

The same distinguished writer said:

If there should be disloyalty, it will be **dealt with with** a firm hand.

"Dealt with" stands for 'suppressed'.

Presumably equal **to,** but actually next, in rank . . .

The "to" is not needed. Be careful of the prepositions when you interject a clause.

A further investigation was **dispensed with** [considered unnecessary].

The residue, amounting to about 70% of the original weight of the shale, must be **disposed of** [discarded] **as valueless.**

The ruling by the Land Office that diamond-drilling would count as expenditure on a patent was helpful, and will be **taken advantage of by** many shale companies.

It were better to say, "and advantage of it will be taken by many shale companies".

The foregoing examples show how often the preposition that is tied to a verb is followed by another preposition, making an awkward phrase, difficult to read and sometimes difficult to

understand. Moreover, the preposition belonging to the preposition-verb must be kept close to its mate, otherwise it may become, as it were, 'lost in the shuffle'. The ending of a serious statement with a preposition is a rhetorical blunder; such a statement is made impressive if it ends with a significant word—a word that is apt or conclusive.

The preposition-verb is idiomatic, as I have said; so also sometimes is the placing of the preposition at the end of a sentence; our language derives these idioms from the Anglo-Saxon or Low-German part of its origin. In German one says: "*Machen Sie die Thüre zu*". Old-fashioned people in western England still say, "Shut the door to"; and a Cornish miner will say, "Where be going to?". The emphasis gained by placing a preposition at the end of a statement survives usefully in such a phrase as "Just now Russia is a good country to come *from*". This was written by an engineer that had arrived from a copper mine in Siberia, where disorder was rife. The statement as made is not only idiomatic but highly expressive, for the three significant words in it are 'now', 'Russia', and 'from'. Of these the last is the most significant, and it gains in emphasis by being placed last. In such sentences the preposition has an adverbial value, as also in

He has gone **out**.
He told me to sit **up**.

In my first lecture I quoted Huxley. You will remember what he said of a writer that used big words needlessly: "He will be afraid to wander beyond the limits of the technical phraseology which he has got up". Here "up" is adverbial. It ends the sentence awkwardly. "Got up" might be replaced advantageously by 'prepared', or 'concocted', or 'learned'. On this matter Professor Hill says: "A good author does not hesitate to put a preposition at the end of a sentence, when, on grounds of clearness, force, or ease, he thinks it belongs there; but often, perhaps usually, he finds that it belongs *somewhere else* [elsewhere]". The placing of the preposition at the end

of the sentence may contribute to ease, but it rarely ministers to clearness or force.

Another authority * says: "The common belief that a sentence ending with a preposition is on that account incorrect is a mistake; such sentences abound in good literature". True, but defective sentences also abound in good literature, and great writers occasionally make errors in composition. The homely usage illustrated by "shut the door to" may have idiomatic excuse, but I submit that such phrases are inappropriate to careful speech and precise writing.

A preposition-verb is followed often by another preposition because the prepositional part of the verb has ceased to function as a preposition.

As regards the miners, a much more serious prospect of social disaster has been, it was hoped, **done away with** [prevented or obviated].

The preposition was **agreed to** [accepted or approved] **by** all.

The plan **decided upon by** the company was to re-design and re-equip the concentrator.

This is puerile.

"The company decided to change the design and equipment of the concentrator."

Robert K. Duncan writes:

It should be the young man's business to learn all the chemistry and cognate knowledge that he can lay his hands **upon in** the laboratory; and his brains alongside **of in** the study library.

This quotation is full of literary atrocities; note how the prepositions jostle each other.

An engineer writes:

The gold-mining industry which the Government **looks to for** its supply of gold.

The "to" should precede "which".

Another engineer writes:

The cleverest man I **came across** [met] **in** my travels . . .

In this part of Mexico the more vitreous rhyolites are **met with.**

* E. C. Woolley, in his 'Handbook of Composition', p. 37.

This suggests an encounter with a band of Yaqui Indians on the warpath. One might substitute: "In this part of Mexico the more vitreous type of rhyolite is common", or "The vitreous type of rhyolite is found in this part of Mexico". But "met with" does not convey either of these meanings; it says nothing; so perhaps "are met with" should be replaced by 'occur', which itself is a vague word.

The sulphides **came in on** the next level.

"Sulphides began to appear on the next level."

This plan is being **carried out** [followed] **on** the Violet claim.

"This method of work is being applied on the Violet claim."

They are **piled on to** the thickness of six or eight inches.

"They are piled six or eight inches thick."

The "on" is redundant, because 'piling' means the heaping of things upon one another.

The tar by-product was difficult to **dispose of to** the tar-distillers.

"It was difficult to market this tar by-product among the distillers" or "to sell this by-product to the distillers".

Three separate tests were **carried on** [made or performed] **in** this apparatus.

An authority on the art of writing says: "What should we *aim at in* learning to write English?". My reply to him is that, among other things, we should aim to avoid the unnecessary preposition-verbs, thus: "What should be our aim in learning English?".

Another metallurgist writes:

The ore is hard and requires to be **shaken up with** [loosened by] powder.
The final decision was not **arrived at** [reached] **for** several hours.
Classification was exhaustively **dealt with in** his book.

"Classification was discussed exhaustively in his book."

Those who have **gone in for** [undertaken] serious work . . .
Oil can be **made use of** [utilized] to float mineral.

The output has been much **interfered with** [hindered or curtailed] **by** political disorder.

As an illustration **of** how the activities of corporations affect our daily life, I thought it would be interesting to find out how many people were employed by the corporations I would have to **deal with in** coming from New York to Denver.

This is quoted from an experienced writer. He might have said:

"To illustrate how the activities of corporations affect our daily life, I thought it would be interesting to ascertain how many people were employed by the [railroad] corporations with which I would have to deal in coming from New York to Denver."

The ore is broken **along with** the barren rock.

"Ore and barren rock are broken together."

Over against this pessimistic report, we have the sanguine opinion of Professor Smith.

Delete "over", or substitute 'as'.

When oil is shaken **up** with water or some [other] liquid with which it is miscible, an emulsion is formed.

The oil, owing to its specific gravity, would rest on top of the water before the commencement of the agitation to which reference is made; moreover, the agitation would have the effect of shaking it down, not up.

An author on the metallurgy of zinc writes:

These methods **tie in with** the process of electrolytic extraction. In the case of zinc-lead ores, moreover, everything **ties in with** the methods of lead extraction. Therefore is perceived the need of perfect metallurgical coördination. Starting with the mixed ore, the desideratum is to get the maximum of value out of it, without reference to whether more or less is eventually to appear through the lead works or the zinc works. Some very earnest thought is pursuing these lines.

Another desideratum is to write English that does not simulate the refractory nature of a complex zinc-lead ore. We hope some earnest thought, potent for clarification, will not

only pursue "these lines" but overtake them, lest they wander too far into the morass of verbiage. If a method *ties in with* a process and if everything *ties in with* a method, what does 'tie in with' mean? Apparently to 'adapt' or 'connect' one with the other for the purpose of "metallurgical coördination". What he means exactly, one cannot tell; I venture to suggest: "These methods can be used in conjunction with the electrolytic process. As regards zinc-lead ores, moreover, they suit current methods of extracting the lead".

The permission to **go on with** [continue] their business . . .

I submit that the consistent way of meeting the want is for such a reserve to be **provided for in** the initial capitalization.

He is entangled by his preposition-verb; he means: "I submit that the proper method is to provide for such a reserve when arranging the original capitalization".

This matter **has been dealt with** [was discussed] in my last chapter.

From the foregoing examples it should be evident how unnecessary are most of these preposition-verbs, especially in technology, in which single-word verbs of more precise meaning are desirable and available. Much of the trouble is caused by an affected squeamishness about using the personal pronoun, thereby forcing the use of quasi-passive verb phrases. Thus it would be better to say:

"I have discussed this matter in my last chapter."

Preposition-verbs are woolly in their texture; they contribute to abstract phrasing.

Mines where sampling **results in** [gives] an incorrect subnormal value . . .

This is jargon. "Where" should be 'in which'. 'Value' is a word that needs to be qualified if it is to be significant. He means:

"Mines in which, by ordinary methods of sampling, the ore is likely to be under-valued . . ."

Some of the misplacing of prepositions is caused by separat-

ing the preposition from the relative pronoun to which it belongs, as in

This is kind of you; I cannot find words to thank you **in.**

He means "in which to thank you". He might have omitted the "in" without spoiling the sense.

The properties which it now consists **of** are many old and new claims.

The "of" should precede "which"; he means: "The properties of which it now consists include many old and new claims". He might say: "The property now includes both old and new claims".

These are matters which the Chamber of Mines might with profit devote a few minutes **to.**

The "to" should precede "which". Even then the sentence would be roundabout; he might say: "These are matters that the Chamber of Mines might well consider".

The discrepancies between sampling estimates and actual recoveries, [of] which Mr. Hutton speaks **of** in his article . . .

Writing on a subject one is **interested in** is a fascinating entertainment which I have often **indulged in.**

The entertainment must have been his alone if he wrote like that. The last "in" belongs to the "which", thus: "Writing on a subject that is interesting is a fascinating entertainment in which I have indulged often".

Gilbert M. Tucker * remarks: "Another peculiarity of recent British speech and literature is the insertion of superfluous words that an American speaker or writer would never think of putting in". As an illustration he quotes from Henry J. Nicoll:

Every critic occasionally meets **in** with works of great fame of which he cannot appreciate the merit.

Mr. Tucker is mistaken; the error to which he refers is common among us; like other errors of speech it prevails on

* 'American English', p. 45.

both sides of the Atlantic. Indeed, the jibe "Physician, heal thyself" can be thrown at the authors of textbooks on writing, this one of mine included, of course. It is extremely difficult to be consistently correct. For example, Professor W. T. Brewster, in 'Writing Prose English', speaks of 'win out' as an "annoying redundance", yet himself writes: "No logical case can be *made out for* capitals, except the capital at the beginning of a sentence, which *helps out* the preceding period". In the same book I find:

Many people [to] whom he listens to or reads.
To learn to write it is necessary to **keep on** writing.

Technical writers appear to use an extra preposition with the idea of obtaining emphasis.

He tested **out** the process.
He is sure to win **out in** this competition.

Reverting to Mr. Tucker and his book on 'American English', I venture to say that the effort made by him and by others like him to prove that either the Britons or the Americans speak or write more incorrectly one than the other is a sheer waste of time and an unnecessary trespass upon the goodwill of the English-speaking peoples. Mr. Tucker himself uses the phrase "our knowledge of Pennsylvania provincialisms". This use of the name of a region in place of the corresponding adjective (Pennsylvanian) is itself a provincialism, into which the scribes of the daily press are prone to fall:

A great Italy battle [in Italy]
Greeks wrest big Asia [Asiatic] area from the Turks.
Africa [African] missionary has difficult task.

We agree with Mr. Tucker when he remarks, incidentally: "However, the *tu quoque* argument is unconvincing and unsatisfactory at best; and it is admittedly impracticable to substitute any very instructive comparison between either the fashionable or the literary language of the two countries".

I note that 'Colonel' House "sat *in* with the Big Four"

during the Peace Conference; and more recently I heard a man say, "Jones lost my umbrella *on* me". Another remarked, "My clients have been holding *out on* me"; meaning that they had been withholding their support.

A New York newspaper says:

When we first joined **out with** the Allies . . .
He joined **in with** the others.

These are feeble efforts to obtain emphasis. Again:

Many miles of the railway were constructed and connected **up with** the old line out of Messina and Alexandretta.

The "up" is redundant, if not worse.

My advice was to throw the proposition **up.**

He means to "reject the proposal".

A raise has been **put up to** the surface.
The sinter cools **off** and disintegrates.

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

Governments in Europe are breaking **up.** Governments in Mexico are one after another breaking **down.**

Does he mean that the change from the Czar to the Bolshevists is upward and from Diaz to the Villistas downward? *Quien sabe?* The feeble prepositions are loaded with too much social philosophy. "Are" should follow "another".

The particles of mineral may become attached to air-bubbles by means of which they are floated **up** to the surface.

They do not 'float' until they are *on* the surface. He means that they rise. He could say that they are 'levitated'.

To make sure that the heating **up** and the cooling **down** of the emulsion does not produce a bad effect.

Here the prepositions serve to emphasize the verb in a feeble kind of way. They are redundant.

The oil and water are fed **in** at the centre and **thrown out** [discharged] at the circumference.

To 'feed' is to put something into something; the "in" is not needed after "fed".

The flask containing the extract was placed in a water-bath; after most of the ether had been distilled **off**, the residue was transferred to a small separating-funnel of known weight.

To 'distil' is to drive off as vapor.

Work just enough to draw **down** a day's pay . . .

This is colloquial. Also these:

He has used **up** all his supplies of coal.
The traveler who does not study **up** his map . . .
The electrodes will penetrate close to the bottom and heat it **up**.
A great deal of electrical energy is wasted in heating **up** the carbon.
It is well to melt **down** the lead.
The next process consists in melting **up** the copper.

This is child's talk. 'Down' and 'up' are of equal value; that is to say, they are of no value.

Frequent unequal heating **up** of the roof of the furnace . . .
He ordered the men to fill **up** the tank.
He filled **in** the vat with cyanide solution.
The Grand Bonanza mine is to be proven **up on by** H. C. Mieli.

Yes, preposition-verbs are idiomatic, they are part of our language, but they should be used sparingly in technology, which cannot suffer careless colloquialisms without serious loss of clarity. It may be proper to settle *down* in the country in order to settle *up* one's debts in the city. Some of these preposition-verbs are not to be dispensed *with* lightly, but the technical man should not melt *down* a charge and melt *up* a slag, nor should he test *out* a process or prove *up* an orebody, unless he means that his readers must put *up with* his vagaries. He ought to do *away with* these meaningless little obstacles to clear speech. In German such preposition-verbs are compounded, and in English it might help if we 'shut-down' a mill or 'opened-up' a mine. We need do neither, however, because a more explicit term is available. Try for yourself. You need not take the word of the pedants. As an editor, I can assure you that the habit of

employing preposition-verbs, and the consequent liability to misplace the preposition, will hinder you in the acquisition of a style suited to the discussion of technical subjects.

I have said enough concerning the use of prepositions; I trust that you will pay more attention to this detail; if you do, you will, I feel sure, learn to write more clearly. In my own writing I have found attention to this matter a great help, and that is why I have discussed the subject at some length. Above all, remember what the old lady said: "A preposition is a poor thing to end *up* a sentence *with*".