

## The Use of Prepositions.

The idiom of our language requires that appropriate prepositions be used after certain words and phrases. Facility in the use of such prepositions is the price of labor and pains. But the price must be paid by all who aspire to sound scholarship and wish to become custodians of the force and purity of our language. Indeed a true student of the language ought to deem the corruption of his noble mother tongue a disgrace : in fact it ought to be his constant endeavor not only to keep it pure but even to adorn it.

Let us consider the uses of *with* and *by*. In the use of these prepositions it is not easy to lay down fixed rules. Two however may be given. If both agent and instrument are expressed, *by* follows the agent and *with* the instrument as : Goliath was killed *by* David *with* a stone ; The peddler was shot *by* a boy *with* a gun : The stone was raised *by* the man *with* a lever. If only the instrument is expressed *by* follows the passive of intransitive verbs as ; St. John was destroyed *by* fire in 1877 : The criminal was bound *with* a rope *by* the executioners : Socrates died *by* poison ; he dies *by* violence ; He was killed *with* poison : he burns the city *with* fire : he slew him *with* a sword.

"The proper destruction in the use of these prepositions." Says Blair, "is elegantly marked by a passage in Dr. Robertson's History of Scotland."

"When one of the old Scottish Kings was making an inquiry into the tenure by which his nobles held their lands, they started up, and drawing their swords : "By these" said they "we acquired our lands, and with these we will defend them." By these we acquired our lands" signifies the more remote means of acquisition by force and martial deeds and "with these we will defend them" signifies the immediate direct instrument which they would employ in their defence."—Blair.

With regard to these words usage is often arbitrary an unsettled : as, to reduce a town *by* famine : to burn stubble *with* fire : he gained his purpose *by* cramming : he shocked us *by* a recital of his woes.

*By* may be applied to any object which is viewed as partaking of action and agency : The metal is corroded *by* the acid ; Skill is gained *by* practise : Communication *with* a person *by* letter.

Examples from Macaulay's History : "Even his martial ardour had been tamed *by* misery." He could not protect him from contumely *with* his sword." Persecuted, then *with* the same treachery : "edified *by* his account." "The houses were surrounded only *by* a wall." "Bent down *by* years and crippled *by* gout." "Was shattered *by* the English cannon."

Let us note the use of other prepositions. Antipathy *to* a thing or *against* (not *for*) a thing : accord *with* ; when neuter, *to*, when tran-