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SELF STUDY

THE THEME: PREPOSITIONS IN PRESENT DAY ENGLISH

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PREPOSITIONS IN PRESENT DAY ENGLISH

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1. Prepositions in present day English

These fall under two main heads: (1) agreement or concord, (2) government.

By agreement we mean a method of expressing a syntactical relationship, which consists in making the subordinate word take a form similar to that of the word to which it is subordinate. In Modern English this can refer only to the category of number: a subordinate word agrees in number with its head word if it has different, number forms at all. This is practically found in two words only, the pronouns *this* and *that*, which agree in number with their head word. Since no other word, to whatever part of speech it may belong, agrees in number with its head word, these two pronouns stand quite apart in the Modern English syntactical system.

As to the problem of agreement of the verb with the noun or pronoun denoting the subject of the action *(a child plays, children play)*, this is a controversial problem. Usually it is treated as agreement of the predicate with the subject, that is, as a phenomenon of sentence structure. However, if we assume (as we have done) that agreement and government belong to the phrase level, rather than to the sentence level, and that phrases of the pattern "noun + + verb" do exist, we have to treat this problem in this chapter devoted to phrases.

The controversy is this. Does the verb stand, say, in the plural number because the noun denoting the subject of the action is plural, so that the verb is in the full sense of the word subordinate to the noun? Or does the verb, in its own right, express by its category of number the singularity or plurality of the doer (or doers)?

There are some phenomena in Modern English which would seem to show that the verb does not always follow the noun in the category of number. Such examples as, *My family are early risers, on* the one hand, and *The United Nations is an international organisation*, on the other, prove that the verb can be independent of the noun in this respect: though the noun is in the singular,

the verb may be in the plural, if the doer is understood to be plural; though the noun is plural, the verb may be singular if the doer is understood to be singular. Examples of such usage are arguments in favour of the view that there is no agreement in number of the verb with the noun expressing the doer of the action.

The fact that sentences like *My family is small*, and *My family are early risers* exist side by side proves that there is no agreement of the verb with the noun in either case: the verb shows whether the subject of the action is to be thought of as singular or plural, no matter what the category of number in the noun may be.

Thus, the sphere of agreement in Modern English is extremely small: it is restricted to two pronouns — *this* and *that*, which agree with their head word in number when they are used in front of it as the first components of a phrase of which the noun is the centre.

Government

By government we understand the use of a certain form of the subordinate word required by its head word, but not coinciding with the form of the head word itself — that is the difference between agreement and government.

The role of government in Modern English is almost as insignificant as that of agreement. We do not find in English any verbs, or nouns, or adjectives, requiring the subordinate noun to be in one case rather than in another. Nor do we find prepositions requiring anything of the kind.[1]

The only thing that may be termed government in Modern English is the use of the objective case of personal pronouns and of the pronoun *who* when they are subordinate to a verb or follow a preposition. Thus, for instance, the forms *me, him, her, us, them,* are required if the pronoun follows a verb (e. g. *find* or *invite)* or any preposition whatever. Even this type of government is, however, made somewhat doubtful by the rising tendency, mentioned above, to use the

[1] Ganshina M.A. English Grammar.Higher School Publishing House, 1964 (148p)

forms *me, him,* etc., outside their original sphere as forms of the objective case. The notion of government has also become doubtful as applied to the form *whom,* which is rather often superseded by the form *who* in such sentences as, *Who(m) did yon see?*

As to nouns, the notion of government may be said to have become quite uncertain in present-day English. Even if we stick to the view that *father* and *father's* are forms of the common and the genitive case, respectively, we could not assert that a preposition always requires the form of the common case. For instance, the preposition *at* can be combined with both case forms: compare *I looked at my father* and *I spent the summer at my father's,* or, with the preposition *to: I wrote to the chemist,* and *I went to the chemist's,* etc. It seems to follow that the notion of government does not apply to forms of nouns.

Other Ways

In Russian linguistic theory, there is a third way of expressing syntactical relations between components of a phrase, which is termed примыкание. No exact definition of this notion is given: its characteristic feature is usually described in a negative way, as absence both of agreement and of government. The most usual example of this type of connection is the relation between an adverb and its bead word, whether this is an adjective or a verb (or another adverb, for that matter). An adverb is subordinate to its head word, without either agreeing with or being governed by it. This negative characteristic cannot, however, be said to be sufficient as a definition of a concrete syntactical means of expression. It is evident that the subject requires some more exact investigation. For instance, if we take such a simple case as the sentence, .. . *lashes of rain striped the great windows almost horizontally* (R. WEST) and inquire what it is that shows the adverb *horizontally* to be subordinate to the verb *striped,* we shall have to conclude that this is achieved by a certain combination of factors, some of which are grammatical, while others are not. The grammatical factor is the fact that an adverb can be subordinate to a verb. That, however, is not

sufficient in a number of cases. There may be several verbs in the sentence, and the question has to be answered, how does the reader (or hearer) know to which of them the adverb is actually subordinated. Here a lexicological factor intervenes: the adverb must be semantically compatible with its head word. Examples may be found where the connection between an adverb and its head word is preserved even at a considerable distance, owing to the grammatical and semantic compatibility of the adverb. Compare, for instance, the following sentences: *Nobly, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the North-West died away.* (BROWNING) *Swiftly he thought of the different things she had told him.* (DREISER)

An adverb can only be connected with its head word in this manner, since it has no grammatical categories which would allow it to agree with another word or to be governed by it. With other parts of speech things stand differently in different languages. In inflected languages an adjective will agree with its head word, and even in French and Italian, though they are analytical languages, adjectives agree with their head words both in number and gender. In Modern English no agreement is possible. The same can be said about many other types of phrases.[2]

However, there is another means of expressing syntactical connection which plays a significant part in Modern English. It may be called "enclosure" (Russian замыкание) and its essence is this. Some element of a phrase is, as it were, enclosed between two parts of another element. The most widely known case of "enclosure" is the putting of a word between an article and the noun to which the article belongs. Any word or phrase thus enclosed is shown to be an attribute to the noun. As is well known, many other words than adjectives and nouns can be found in that position, and many phrases, too. It seems unnecessary to give examples of adjectives and nouns in that position, as they are familiar to everybody. However, examples of other parts of speech, and also of phrases enclosed will not be out of place here. *The then*

[2] Koshevaya I.G. The Theory of English Grammar. Moscow “Prosvesheniye”, 1982.164p.

government — here the adverb *then,* being enclosed between the article and the noun it belongs to, is in this way shown to be an attribute to the noun. In the phrase *an on-the-spot investigation* the phrase *on-the-spot* is enclosed between the article and the noun to which the article belongs, and this characterises the syntactic connections of the phrase.

The unity of a phrase is quite clear if the phrase as a whole is modified by an adverb. It is a rather common phenomenon for an adverb to modify a phrase, usually one consisting of a preposition and a noun (with possible words serving as attributes to the noun). Here, first, is an example where the phrase so modified is a phraseological unit: . . . *that little thimbleful of brandy ... went sorely against the grain with her.* (TROLLOPE) The adverb *sorely* cannot possibly be said to modify the preposition *against* alone. So it is bound to belong to the phrase *against the grain* as a whole.

An adverb modifying a prepositional phrase is also found in the following example: *The funeral was well under way.* (HUXLEY) The adverb *well* can only modify the phrase *under way,* as a phrase *well under* is unthinkable. This is possible because the phrase *under way,* which is a phraseological unit, has much the same meaning as *going on, developing,* etc.

A phrase may also be modified by a pronoun (it should be noted, though, that in our example the whole phrase, including the pronoun, is a phraseological unit): *Every now and again she would slop and move her mouth as though to speak, but nothing was said.* (A. WILSON) It is clear that a phrase *every now* would not be possible. A similar case is the following: *Every three or four months Mr Bodiharn preached a sermon on the subject.* (HUXLEY) It is quite evident that the whole phrase *three or four months* is here modified by the pronoun *every.* This may be to some extent connected with the tendency to take phrases consisting of a numeral and a noun in the plural indicating some measure of time or space as denoting a higher unit (compare p. 38).

The phrase "noun + *after* + the same noun" may be a syntactic unit introduced as a whole by a preposition, thus: *She spent the Christmas holidays with her parents in the northern part of the State, where her father owned a drug-store, even though in letter after letter Eve Grayson had urged and begged her to come to New Orleans for the holidays, promising that she would meet many interesting men while she was there.* (E. CALDWELL) That the preposition *in* introduces the whole phrase *letter after letter* is evident from the fact that it would not be possible to use the noun *letter* (alone) after the preposition without either an article or some other determinative, such as, for example, *her.*

In the following example the preposition *with* introduces, not a noun, but a phrase consisting of a noun, a preposition *(upon)* and the same noun repeated. *Brown varnished bookshelves lined the walls, filled with row upon row of those thick, heavy theological works which the second-hand booksellers generally sell by weight.* (HUXLEY) That the preposition *with* introduces the phrase *row upon row* rather than the noun *row* alone, is evident from the fact that it would not be possible to say . .. *filled with row of those* . .. *works* .. . The noun *row* could not be used without the article, to say nothing of the fact that one row of books was not enough to fill the walls of a room.[3]

Sometimes a phrase of the pattern "adverb + preposition + + noun" may be introduced by another preposition. Compare this sentence from Prof. D. Jones's Preface to his "English Pronouncing Dictionary": *For help in the preparation of this new edition I am particularly indebted to Mr P. A. D. MacCarthy, who supplied me with upwards of 500 notes and suggestions.* The phrase *upwards of 500 notes and suggestions* means the same as *more than 500 notes and suggestions,* and this may explain its use after the preposition *with.* But the fact remains that a preposition *(with)* is immediately followed by a prepositional phrase *(upwards of).*

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[3] Koshevaya I.G. The Theory of English Grammar. Moscow “Prosvesheniye”, 1982.181p.

2. Phrases equivalent to Prepositions and Conjunctions

Under this heading we will treat such formations as *apart from, with reference to, as soon as, so long as,* etc., which quite obviously are phrases rather than words, and which quite definitely perform the same function in a sentence as prepositions and conjunctions respectively.

The treatment of these units in grammatical theory has been vague and often contradictory. Most usually they are treated as prepositions or conjunctions of a special type, variously described as compound, analytical, etc. This view ignores the basic difference between a word and a phrase and is therefore unacceptable. We will stick to the principle that a phrase (as different from a word) cannot be a part of speech and that phrases should be studied in Syntax.

An obstacle to this treatment was the view that a phrase must include at least two notional words. As we have rejected this limitation, we can include under phrases any groups, whether consisting of a form word and a notional word, or of two form words, etc.[4]

Among phrases equivalent to prepositions we note the pattern "adverb + preposition", represented, for instance, by *out of, apart from, down to,* as in the sentences, *"I love you so," she answered, "but apart from that, you were right."* (R. WEST) *As the cool of the evening now came on, Lester proposed to Aram to enjoy it without, previous to returning to the parlour.* (LYTTON) *All within was the same, down to the sea-weed in the blue mug in my bedroom.* (DICKENS) The phrases equivalent to prepositions (we may accept the term "prepositional phrases") perform the very functions that are typical of prepositions, and some of them have synonyms among prepositions. Thus, the phrase *apart from* is a synonym of the preposition *besides,* the phrase *previous to* a synonym of the preposition *before,* etc.

Another pattern of prepositional phrases is "preposition + + noun + preposition", e. g. *in front of, on behalf of, with reference to, in accordance*

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[4] Blokh M. Y. "A course in theoretical English Grammar" Moscow, "Vysshaya Shkola”. 1983.232 p

with, as in the sentences, *His friend was seated in front of the fire.* (BLACK) *Caesar crossed in spite of this.* (JEROME K. JEROME) It must be admitted that there may be doubts whether a group of this type has or has not become a prepositional phrase. Special methods can then be used to find this out. For instance, it may prove important whether the noun within such a phrase can or cannot be modified by an adjective, whether it can or cannot be changed into the plural, and so forth. Opinions may differ on whether a given phrase should or should not be included in this group. On the whole, however, the existence of such prepositional phrases is beyond doubt.

Other types of phrases ought to be carefully studied in a similar way, for example the phrase *of course,* which is the equivalent of a modal word, etc.

The number of phrases equivalent to conjunctions is rather considerable. Some of the more specialised time relations are expressed by phrases, e. g. *as soon as, as long as.* Phrases with other meanings also belong here, e. g. *in order that, notwithstanding that.* These phrases may be conveniently termed "conjunctional phrases", though this term is not so usual as the term "prepositional phrases".

There are several patterns of conjunctional phrases. One of them is "adverb + adverb + conjunction" (as *soon as, as long as, so long as).* The first component of the two former phrases is probably an adverb, though it might also be argued that it is a conjunction. We may say that the distinction between the two is here neutralised.

There is also the pattern "preposition + noun + conjunction", as in the phrase *in order that,* which is used to introduce adverbial clauses of purpose, or in the phrase *for fear that,* which tends to become a kind of conjunctional phrase introducing a special kind of clause of cause: *For fear that his voice might betray more of his feelings, which would embarrass the old lady so involved still with her voyage and getting away to where it would be quiet again, so without such sudden, sick floods of sentiment herself, he*

simply repeated again how good, good it was to see her... (BUECHNER)

It would appear that the treatment of such phrases attempted here does better justice both to their structure and function than a treatment which includes them under prepositions and conjunctions proper and thus obliterates the essential difference between words (parts of speech) and phrases (groups of words).[5]

In passing now from a study of phrases to that of the sentence we are, it should be remembered, proceeding to a different level of language structure. Notions referring to the phrase level should be carefully kept apart from those referring to the sentence and its members. An indiscriminate use of terms belonging to the two levels (as, for instance, in the familiar expression "subject, verb and object") leads to a hopeless muddle and makes all serious syntactic investigation impossible. It must, however, be pointed out that in some cases distinction between the two levels proves to be a very difficult task indeed. We will try in such cases to point out whatever can be urged in favour of each of the diverging views and to suggest a solution of the problem.

3. The problem of the meaning of prepositions

It is common knowledge that prepositions are a most important element of the structure of many languages, particularly those which, like Modern English, have no developed case system in their nominal parts of speech.

We have briefly discussed the problem of the meaning of prepositions but here we shall have to consider it at some length.

It is sometimes said that prepositions express the relations between words in a sentence, and this is taken as a definition of the meaning of prepositions. If true, this would imply that they do not denote any relations existing outside the language. However, this is certainly not true, and two or three simple examples will show it. If we compare the two sentences: *The book is lying on the table*, and *The book is lying under the table*, and ask ourselves,

[5] Koshevaya I.G. The Theory of English Grammar. Moscow “Prosvesheniye”, 1982.211p.

what do the prepositions express here, it will at once be obvious that they express relations (in space) between the book (the thing itself) and the table (the thing itself). The difference in the situations described in the two sentences is thus an extralinguistic difference expressed by means of language, namely, by prepositions. It would certainly be quite wrong to say that the prepositions merely express the relations between the word *book* and the word *table,* as the definition quoted above would imply. The same may be said about a number of other sentences. Compare, for instance, the two sentences, *He will come before dinner,* and *He will come after dinner.* It is absolutely clear that the prepositions denote relations between phenomena in the extralinguistic world (time relations between "his coming" and "dinner"), not merely relations between the word *come* and the word *dinner.*

We must add that there are cases in which a preposition does not express relations between extralinguistic phenomena but merely serves as a link between words. Take, for instance, the sentence *This depends on you.* Here we cannot say that the preposition *on* has any meaning of its own. This is also clear from the fact that no other preposition could be used after the verb *depend* (except the preposition *upon,* which is to all intents and purposes a stylistic variant of *on).* Using modern linguistic terminology, we can say that the preposition *on* is here predicted by the verb *depend.* The same may be said about the expression *characteristic of him.* If the adjective *characteristic* is to be followed by any prepositional phrase at all the preposition *of* must be used, which means that it is predicted by the word *characteristic.* Returning now to our examples *The book is lying on the table* and *The book is lying under the table,* we must of course say that neither the preposition *on* nor the preposition *under* is predicted by the verb *lie.* If we put the sentence like this: *The book is lying ... the table,* the dots might be replaced by a number of prepositions: *on, in, under, near, beside, above,* etc. The choice of the preposition would of course depend on the actual position of the book in space with reference to the table. Similarly, if we are given the sentence *He will come . . . the performance,* the

dots may be replaced by the prepositions *before, during, after,* according as things stand. Now, in defining the meaning of a preposition, we must of course start from the cases where the meaning is seen at its fullest, and not from those where it *is* weakened or lost, just as we define the meaning of a verb as a part of speech according to what it is when used as a full predicate, not as an auxiliary.[6]

We need not go further into the meanings of various prepositions in various contexts, since that is a problem of lexicology rather than grammar. What we needed here was to find a definition based on the real meaning of prepositions.

The next point is the syntactical functions of prepositions. Here we must distinguish between two levels of language: that of phrases and that of the sentence and its parts. As far as phrases are concerned, the function of prepositions is to connect words with each other. [1] On this level there are patterns like "noun + preposition + noun", "adjective + preposition + noun", "verb + preposition + noun", etc., which may be exemplified by numerous phrases, such as *a letter from my friend, a novel by Galsworthy, fond of children, true to life, listen to music, wait for an answer,* etc.

On the sentence level: a preposition is never a part of a sentence by itself; it enters the part of sentence whose main centre is the following noun, or pronoun, or gerund. We ought not to say that prepositions connect parts of a sentence. They do not do that, as they stand within a part of the sentence, not between two parts.[7]

The connection between the prepositions," the word which precedes it, and the word which follows it requires special study. Different cases have to be distinguished here. The question is what predicts the use of this or that preposition. We have already noted the cases when it is the preceding word which determines it (or predicts it). In these cases the connection between the

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[6] Ilysh B.A.”The structure of Modem English” Moscow, Leningrad, 1971.235 p.

[7] . Ilysh B.A.”The structure of Modem English” Moscow, Leningrad, 1971.305 p.

two is naturally strong. In the cases where the use of a preposition is not predicted by the preceding word the connection between them is looser, and the connection between the preposition and the following word may prove to be the stronger of the two. This difference more or less corresponds to that between objects and adverbial modifiers expressed by prepositional phrases. Thus, in a sentence like *This depends on him* the preposition is predicted by the verb and the phrase *on him is* of course an object, whereas in a sentence like *The book is lying under the table* the preposition is not predicted by the verb and the phrase is an adverbial modifier. However, this criterion does not hold well in all cases.

Sometimes the boundary line between a preposition and another part of speech is not quite clear. Thus, with reference to the words *like* and *near* there may be doubtful cases from this viewpoint. For instance, there certainly is the adjective *near,* used in such phrases as *the near future.* On the other hand, there is the preposition *near,* found in such sentences as *they live near me.*

The adjective has degrees of comparison, and the preposition of course has none. In this connection let us examine the following sentence, which presents us with a whole bundle of problems involving both that of parts of speech and that of subordinate clauses:

Ex: *When they had finished their dinner, and Emma, her shawl trailing the floor, brought in coffee and set it down before them, Bone drew back the curtains and opened wide the window nearest where they sat.*

The question about the word *nearest* is closely connected with that about the ties between the *where*-clause and the main clause. As to the word *nearest,* there are obviously two ways of interpreting it: it is either an adjective in the superlative degree, or a preposition. Each of the two interpretations has its difficulties. If we take *nearest* as an adjective in the superlative degree, it will follow that this adjective (that is, the adjective *near)* can take an object clause, in the same way as it takes an object within a clause, e. g. *near our house, near midnight,* etc., and this would mean that the

subordinate clause *where they sat* is treated very much like a noun. If, on the other hand, we take *nearest* as a preposition, we should have to state that there is a special preposition *nearest* in Modern English: it would obviously not do to say that the preposition *near* has degrees of comparison. There would appear to be no valid reason to prefer the one or the other of the two views, and a third possibility seems to present itself, viz. saying that we have here a borderline case of transition between an adjective in the superlative degree and a preposition.

This is one more example of language phenomena requiring a careful and wholly undogmatic approach: it would be futile to expect that every single language fact would fit easily into one pigeonhole or another prepared for it in advance. Language phenomena have as it were no obligation to fit into any such pigeonholes and it is the scholar's task to approach them with an open mind, to take into account their peculiarities, and to adjust his system as best he can to receive such "unorthodox" facts. Another example of this kind has been considered above: it concerned the status of the words *many, much, few,* and *little*.

A special case must now be considered. In some phrases, which are not part of a sentence, a preposition does not connect two words because there is no word at all before it, and so its ties are -sided: they point only forwards, not back.

As characteristic examples we may quote the titles of some poems and novels:

Ex: *"To a Skylark" ,"On a Distant Prospect of Eton College", "Of Human Bondage", "Under the Greenwood Tree"*.

The syntactical function of the prepositions in cases of this type is a peculiar one. The preposition either expresses a relation between the thing expressed by the noun and something not mentioned in the text (as in *"To a Skylark"),* or it gives the characteristic of the place where something not specified takes place *("Under the Greenwood Tree").*

It is evident that in such cases the preposition has only a one-sided connection, namely with the noun following it, but we may ask whether it has not also some reference to something not expressed which may be imagined as standing before the preposition.

Let us, for instance, compare the actual title of W. Somerset Maugham's novel, *"Of Human Bondage"*, with a possible variant *"Human Bondage"*, without the preposition. In this way the meaning and function of the preposition become clear: the preposition *of* is here used as it is used in the phrases *speak of something, think of something*, etc. In the title as it stands, the preposition implies that the author is going to speak of human bondage, that is, human bondage is going to be discussed.

We shall arrive at a similar conclusion if we compare the actual title of Th. Hardy's novel, *"Under the Greenwood Tree"*, with the possible variant *"The Greenwood Tree"*. The preposition implies that we shall be reading about something happening under the tree, rather than about the tree itself. So it will probably be right to say that something is implied (very vaguely, it must be admitted).

We should especially note some peculiar uses of the preposition *about*, namely in such sentences as, *There were about twenty people in the room*, which of course means that the number is given approximately. The preposition here has only a one-sided connection, namely with the numeral, and has no connection at all with the preceding verb. It certainly does not express any relation between *were* and *twenty*. Syntactically, it makes an element of the subject group *(about twenty people)*. Indeed we may be inclined to doubt whether the word *about* is a preposition at all in such a case. It rather approaches the status of a particle.

This is still more confirmed by examples in which the group introduced by *about* stands after another preposition, as in the sentence, *This happened at about three o'clock*. The group *about three o'clock* here follows the preposition *at* in quite the same way as the group *three o'clock* would follow it

in the sentence *This happened at three o'clock.* The group *about three o'clock* is a designation of a certain time as much as the group *three o'clock,* and to establish its relation with the verb *happened* it also requires the preposition *at* to be used.

We also find two prepositions close to each other in different contexts. Compare, for instance, the following sentence:

Ex*: He sat until past midnight in the darkness while grief and sorrow overcame him.*

Here also belongs the phrase *from under* in a sentence like *The cat stretched its paw from under the table.* It seems quite possible to take this in the same way as we took *at about* in the preceding example, and to say that *under the table* denotes a certain place and *from* indicates movement from that place. However, it is also possible to view this case in a somewhat different way, namely to suppose that *from under* is a phrase equivalent to a preposition, and then we should not have two prepositions following one another here. This problem should be further investigated.[8]

Prepositions can sometimes be followed by adverbs, which apparently become partly substantivised when so used. The groups *from there, from where, since then, since when* are too widely known to require illustrative examples. Another case in point is the following:

Ex*: She is beautiful with that Indian summer renewal of physical charm which comes to a woman who loves and is loved, particularly to one who has not found that love until comparatively late in life.*

Prepositions in English are less closely connected with the word or phrase they introduce than, say, in Russian. It would be impossible in English for a preposition to consist of a consonant only, that is, to be non-syllabic, which is the case with the three Russian prepositions *в, к, с.* This greater independence of English prepositions manifests itself in various ways.

There is the possibility of inserting, between a preposition and the word

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[8] . Ilysh B.A."The structure of Modem English" Moscow, Leningrad, 1971.311 p.

or phrase it introduces, another phrase, which can, in its turn, be introduced by a preposition. Here is an example of this kind:

Ex*: The first of these, "The Fatal Revenge", appeared in 1807, and was followed by, among other, "The Milesian Chief" ...*

The two prepositions, *by* and *among,* stand one after the other, but there is certainly no syntactic connection between them, and probably there is a pause, corresponding to the comma of the written text. The connection between *followed* and *by* appears to be closer than that between *by* and the phrase which it introduces, namely, *"The Milesian Chief".* Unless it were so, the preposition *by* would come after the inserted phrase *among others,* rather than before it. But that variant, though perhaps not impossible, would certainly be less idiomatic than that in the text.

This way of making one preposition come immediately after another, showing the independence of the first preposition, is also seen in some cases where the status of the second preposition may be doubted, that is, it may be doubted whether the word is really a preposition in that context (compare what has been said). The following sentence, which is fairly characteristic of modern usage, will show the essence of the phenomenon:

Ex: *His industry was marvellous, and its results remain embodied in about 40 books, of which about 25 are commentaries on books of Scripture.*

Of course all this is made possible by the fact that prepositions in English do not require the word they introduce to have a specified case form.

Sometimes even a parenthetical clause come between the preposition and the noun it introduces,

Ex: *Some weeks ago Mr Blessington came down to me in, as it seemed to me, a state of considerable agitation.*

The looseness of the tie between the preposition and the following noun can be offset by a closer tie between the preposition and the preceding word. This may be seen, for instance, in some passive constructions with the phrase "verb + noun + preposition" acting as a kind of transitive unit. Examples of

this use are well known. Compare the following sentence:

Ex: *Their conference was put an end to by the anxious young lover himself, who came to breathe his parting sigh before he set off for Wiltshire.*

The active construction would have been, *The young lover put an end to their conference,* where *an end* would be a non-prepositional, and *to their conference* a prepositional object. It might be argued, however, that *put an end* is something of a phraseological unit and should therefore be treated as the predicate. Be that as it may, the fact remains that the noun *end* is included into the passive form of the verb, and the subject of the passive construction is the noun which, in the active construction, would have been part of the prepositional object.

It should also be noted that a preposition does not necessarily connect the word which immediately precedes it with the one that follows. Cases are frequent enough in which there is no connection at all between the preposition and the preceding word.

For instance, in the sentence, *This beauty is a trifle dimmed now by traces of recent illness* there is no connection between the words *now* and *by*. The preposition *by* is of course connected with the passive participle *dimmed* and the adverb *now* could be left out without affecting the connections and the functions of the preposition: *This beauty is dimmed by traces of recent illness.*

The same may be said about the sentence *I get the same tale of woe from every one in our part of the country*; the preposition *from* is not connected with the noun *woe* which precedes it, it is connected with the verb *get,* which is separated from it by five other words. Many more examples of this kind might be given. This should warn us against an oversimplified understanding of the syntactical function of a preposition.

Special attention must be given to groups of words whose meaning and functions in the sentence are the same as those of prepositions. Here belong the groups *out of, as to, as for, instead of, in spite of,* etc. We cannot term these groups prepositions, since a preposition is a word, not a word group, and it is

essential to keep up the distinction between words and word groups; neglect of it would bring about a muddle both in grammar and in lexicology. The current haziness in the treatment of such groups and the vague terms "compound preposition" and the like are not conducive to a clear and consistent grammatical theory. Since much the same can be said about phrases equivalent in meaning and function to conjunctions, we will return to this problem after having considered the conjunctions.