

## CHAPTER VIII

### SOME COMMON IDIOMS AND PHRASES

#### A to D

The term idiom is derived from the Greek *idios*, meaning *own*, and is used to describe the forms of expression peculiar to a language. A *Dictionary of Modern Usage* by H.W. Fowler says that the closest possible translation of the Greek word 'idios' is '*a manifestation of the peculiar*'. These expressions cannot be literally translated.

'To carry out' may be taken as an example. Literally, it means to carry something out (of a room perhaps) but idiomatically it means to see that something is done, as 'to carry out a command'. The meaning of an idiomatic phrase is sometimes veiled in a metaphor. It consists in the use of a word or words in a metaphorical sense. Thus when we tell a person to *hold his tongue*, we do not mean that he should literally take hold of his tongue; it is a metaphor from holding a horse by the bit and is a figurative way of telling him to be *silent*. When we say that an incident *speaks volumes*, we say metaphorically that it conveys much information. 'To drive a sword home' means to drive it in up to the hilt, as when it is driven fully into its home, the scabbard.

Idiom is expressive of the living speech of a people. It is the life-blood of the language, vigorous and vital as compared to the dry bones of grammar which, after all, are mere codifications from established usage.

English is a language particularly rich in idioms and the beginner is sure to be puzzled by the peculiar nature of some of them. Thus you may be *cool as cucumber* but not as pumpkin. The country may *go to the dogs* but not to the cats. You may see *eye to eye* (agree entirely) with a person but not nose to nose. You may *bury the hatchet* but not the axe. Your arguments may *hold water*, but not beer or wine. You may *laugh in your sleeve*, but not in your pocket or your collar. You may *rob Peter to pay Paul* but not Paul to pay Peter. Finally somebody may *go mad* and then it would be *all up* with him, for no grammarian would let him go sane again.

All idioms are not admissible in good prose. Some are colloquial and are allowed only in conversation. Such expressions as *cook a man's goose*, *dirt cheap*, *go the whole hog* are really slang and are, therefore, to be avoided in writing.

The knowledge of idiom is not to be acquired without some trouble. The best advice to the beginner is to read widely and to keep a notebook in which to set down all idiomatic expressions, he comes across with their meaning, and to study their use. He should also consult on every possible occasion a good Dictionary of Idioms and familiarise himself with the ways of the language. He will find this both entertaining and instructive. Z

English idiom is the racy, unaffected English which it is natural for a normal Englishman to speak or write. Grammar and idiom are independent categories being applicable to the same material. They sometimes agree and sometimes disagree. The most that can be said is that what is idiomatic is far more grammatical than ungrammatical because it has the sanction of established usage. The so-called purists and preservers of English speech nail up the ungrammatical idioms such as 'It's me', 'Who did you see', 'The room I slept in', 'The times we live in' as noxious birds and vermin. 'It's I', 'Whom did you see', 'The room in which I slept', 'The times in which we live' are grammatically correct but are not idiomatic. 'It's me', 'Who did you see', 'The room I slept in', 'The times we live in' are idiomatically correct. The ways of the language pronounce the final verdict and the established usage is the ultimate arbiter. In these cases, the idiom has overridden grammar.

As has been illustrated above, the idiom sometimes overrides grammatical rules and has been defined as 'the peculiar spirit of a language'. Even where grammatical forms are strictly observed, metaphorical idioms have come through years to have a form, colour and power peculiarly English so that these effective phrases are now embodied in the language, definitely and completely, as single words, and may be termed idiomatic. English swarms with such idiomatic expressions as these:

'Dash one's hopes', 'lose one's ground', 'steal a march', 'fall to the ground', 'in full swing', 'pave the way to success', 'fly in the face of facts', 'a ray of hope', 'a fair field and no favour', 'in easy circumstances' and many another.

It was De Quincey who said, "Would you desire at this day to read our noble language in its native beauty and *idiomatic* propriety, steal the mail bags and break open all the letters in female handwriting. "The best examples of idiomatic English are to be found in the writings of Shakespeare, Milton, Lamb, Cardinal Newman, Cowper and Longfellow. Modern prose-writers such as Robert Lynd, E.V. Lucas, Hilaire Belloc, and A.G. Gardiner show a strong tendency towards the idiomatic style as it gives them a freedom and familiarity they would not otherwise possess. Cardinal Newman says of a great author: "He expresses what all feel, but all cannot say and his sayings pass into proverbs among his people and his phrases become household words and *idioms* of their daily speech."

The idioms in English cannot be mastered by a careful study of grammar. They sometimes override grammar. They depend on habit and association and can only be mastered by long-continued experience in hearing and reading sound English. In the words of Fowler: 'Good reading with the idiomatic eye open is essential. No one can use a language effectively who is not a master of its idiomatic usage'.

#### Correct Idiom

To *fly in* the face of  
 To laugh *in* one's sleeve  
 To lie stretched *at full length*  
 To *pick* a quarrel with anyone  
 To *pocket* an insult.  
 The matter *trembled* in the balance  
 To *throw* dust in man's eyes  
*Out of* the frying-pan into the fire  
 His *better* half (i.e. wife)  
 To go to *ruin*

#### Incorrect Idiom

To *fly at* the face of.  
 To laugh *up* one's sleeve.  
 To lie *fully* stretched.  
 To *pick up* a quarrel with anyone.  
 To *pocket* up an insult.  
 The matter *shook* in the balance.  
 To *give* dust in a man's eyes.  
*From* the frying-pan to the fire.  
 His *dear* half.  
 To go to *ruins*.

Idiom denotes a peculiarity in the general structure of a language. Thus English idiom is different from Urdu idiom. If a Pakistani student wished to indicate that the bench on which he sat was full, he would say in Urdu ( یہاں جگہ نہیں ). Putting the remark in English he is apt to say: 'There is no place here' whereas he ought to say: 'There is no room here' since *room* is the English word which in this sentence idiomatically corresponds to the Urdu word ( جگہ ). Idioms are special forms of speech that for some inscrutable reason have proved congenial to the instinct of a particular language. To neglect them shows a writer to be no linguist and condemns him more clearly than grammatical blunders themselves.

There is a steady tendency in writing English to develop a simple, vigorous, idiomatic style, and to get rid of stilted, high-flown composition. In learning English idioms, therefore, the student should carefully study good modern authors. Periodicals and radio talks may also prove useful. We would say to the student who wishes to acquire the habit of using English idioms correctly, 'Read much; note idiomatic peculiarities; commit idiomatic expressions to memory; compare passages in which the same idiomatic phrase occurs and endeavour by translation into your own language to find out the precise force and scope of the idiom. When opportunity occurs, listen to an educated Englishman speaking, and endeavour to catch the exact expressions he uses. And write much, getting your compositions corrected by a competent person, and attend carefully to the corrections'. Perseverance in this course will in time give the student power in using English fluently and idiomatically.

Idioms are as varied as life itself. They have different sources. English like all living languages has generally drawn upon national and international sources.

This section of the book is not meant to be exhaustive. It only explains such idioms as are in current and frequent use.

## IDIOMS

### A

**A1 (Colloquial)**--excellent, best, of highest quality, in excellent health. A as the first letter of the alphabet, with 1 as the first number was used to denote a first class ship in Lloyd's register and so came to be used adjectively; in a general sense, for excellent:  
We have had an A1 dinner.

I am feeling A1 (in excellent health).

Considering the quality of the short story, *The Gift of the Magi* by O. Henry is A1.

**Achilles' heel** -- the one weak spot in a man's circumstances or character. According to legend, Thetis, the mother of Achilles, tried to make her son invulnerable by dipping him in the river Styx, and succeeded except that the heel by which she held him, not being immersed, remained vulnerable. In the Trojan War, Achilles was wounded by an arrow in this spot by Paris and died of the wound. Figuratively, it means the only weak or vulnerable point: Egypt seemed not unlikely to prove the *Achilles' heel* of England.

To *'bruise the heel of Achilles'* is to attack a person or a nation at the weakest point.  
To *'bruise the heel of Achilles'* the allies invaded Italy from the south.

The fall of Singapore to the Japanese proved the *Achilles' heel* of the British power and prestige in South-East Asia.

**ABC**--the rudiments of any subject; the simplest facts of a subject, to be learnt first, e.g., He is not even conversant with the ABC of politics.

He pretends to be a great singer. As a matter of fact, he does not know even the ABC of music.

**Abound in, Abound with**--have in great numbers or quantity:

The river *abounds in* fish.

The hut *abounded with* vermin.

**Keep abreast of**--to advance at an equal pace with; not to fall behind; to know the latest ideas, discoveries, events etc.:

We must read the newspapers to *keep abreast of* the times.

He found abundance of time to *keep abreast of* all that was passing in the world.

You should read this journal, if you want to *keep abreast of* the latest literary trends.

**Within an ace of--**escaping by a hair's breadth: He was *within an ace of* death means he escaped death by a hair's breadth.

**Have a nodding acquaintance with--**have a slight acquaintance with a person or subject:

I have only *a nodding acquaintance* with him.

**Adamant to--**(Adjective) like a hard substance that cannot be cut or broken: He was *adamant to* their prayers means that he refused to be moved by them. On this point I am *adamant--*Nothing can change my decision.

**Address oneself to--**apply oneself to; be busy with:

It is time we *addressed ourselves to* the business in hand.

This is a riddle to the solution of which every statesman should *address himself*.

**Take advantage of something--**use something profitably for one's own benefit.

He *took the fullest advantage* of his success.

He always *takes full advantage of* the mistakes made by his rivals.

**In the air--**spreading about. To be widely or generally rumoured:

There are rumours *in the air* that war is imminent.

These questions are *in the air*. They are likely to be set in the examination paper.

**On the air--**broadcast:

The Prime Minister will be *on the air* (will be broadcasting) at 9-15 p.m.

**Give oneself airs; put on airs--**behave in an unnatural way in the hope of impressing people. To be conceited or arrogant in behaviour:

He makes a fool of himself by *putting on airs*.

He *gives himself airs* to such an extent that he becomes a laughing stock.

**Establish an alibi--**to prove that one was at another place at the time of an alleged act, especially a crime:

The accused was able to *establish an alibi*.

**All in all--**of supreme or exclusive importance; all-powerful:

The Head Clerk is *all in all* in this office.

**All the same to--**a matter not causing inconvenience; a matter of indifference to:

It is *all the same to* you whether the pull-over is home-knit or bazaar-made.

It is *all the same to* me whether you go or stay.

**Allow for--**take into consideration:

It will take thirty minutes to get to the station, *allowing for* traffic delays.

**Let or leave somebody or something alone--**abstain from touching or interfering with:

You had better *leave that dog alone*; It will bite you if you tease it.

**Let alone--**Without referring to or considering:

He cannot find money for necessities, *let alone* such luxuries as wine and tobacco.

**Take something amiss**--to be offended by a thing; to be hurt in one's feelings:

Do not *take it amiss* if I point out your errors.

He *took his remarks amiss* and dismissed him at once.

**Tied to one's apron-strings**--too long or too much under the control of somebody:

He is *tied to his wife's apron-strings*.

**Keep somebody at arm's length**--to avoid too much familiarity:

Many of our Zamindars have been compelled to *keep themselves at arm's length* from the District authorities.

He is a dangerous agitator. *Keep him at arm's length*.

**With open arms**--warmly: with enthusiasm; affectionately:

I shall welcome him *with open arms*.

**To make an ass of oneself**--to do something that exposes one to ridicule; to act stupidly or foolishly:

Do not *make such an ass of yourself* as to suppose that everybody is a gentleman unless he proves himself to be a scoundrel.

**An apple of discord**--a subject of envy and strife; cause of contention. The origin of the term is the mythological story which tells that Eris--the goddess of discord--threw a golden apple among the gods and goddesses at the marriage of Thetis and Peleus to which she had not been invited. The words inscribed on this golden apple were:

"For the fairest"

The goddesses Juno, Minerva and Venus contended for it. It was adjudged to Venus and Paris gave it to her as the most beautiful of the three goddesses, from which action resulted indirectly the Trojan War:

The Shahid Ganj mosque turned out to be *an apple of discord* between the Sikhs and the Muslims.

The newly-created seat in the Provincial Assembly threatens to prove a veritable *apple of discord*.

**Add fuel to fire**--to say or do something which contributes to increase the rage of a person already enraged; to give a fresh incitement or provocation e.g., Avoid bandying words with a superior when he is incensed lest it should *add fuel to the fire*.

**Add insult to injury**--to affront or insult a person in addition to the injuries inflicted upon him e.g., The subsequent action of the officer was calculated to aggravate the offence and *add insult to injury*.

**The apple of one's eye**--a much prized treasure. A thing delightful for a person to contemplate, and therefore very dear to that person. The apple of eye is the eye-ball so called from its round shape; any cherished object; the most sensitive and precious part of the eye: 'Keep me as *the apple of thy eye*, hide me under the shadow of thy wings'--*Psalms*.

Being an only son, Salman was *the apple of his father's eye*.

**Apple-pie order**--in perfect order; perfectly neat or methodical arrangement. The phrase lends itself to a simple explanation. A

good cook will tell us that, for an apple-pie to look, as well as taste well, the apples must be carefully cut and arranged and packed in the pie-dish:

The Principal made his presence felt and soon everything in the College was *in apple pie order*.

The new Superintendent hated confusion and disorder, therefore, everything was soon in *apple-pie order* in the office.

**To have an axe to grind**--to have a personal interest in the matter; to have a private motive or end. The story is told by Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) that when he was a boy in his father's yard, a pleasant-spoken man came up to him and made himself very agreeable. Among other things, the visitor praised the grindstone and asked young Franklin to let him see how it worked. He then got Franklin to turn the grindstone while he sharpened an axe he had with him. The boy was flattered with his compliments and honeyed words and worked till his hands were blistered. When the man was satisfied, he sent the boy off with an oath. That man *had an axe to grind*--he had a concealed reason for his conduct. All his politeness was prompted by selfish motives.

*Examples:*

He was interested in the release of political prisoners because *he had an axe to grind*. His son was in jail.

Officials complain plaintively that they are bothered by a constant stream of callers who have all their little *axes to grind*.

**At a pinch**--in an emergency; in difficulty; under necessity; in default of anything better; when hard pressed:

We can utilise the library as our meeting place *at a pinch*.

This knife will do *at a pinch*, but we ought to have a better one.

**Above-board**--honest and straightforward; openly; without trickery.

Dr. Johnson in his Dictionary defined the term as 'In open sight; without artifice or trick'. This is a figurative expression borrowed from gamblers. The man who cheats at cards keeps his hands under the table or board:

The secret of his popularity was that he was *above-board* in all his dealings.

**The schoolmaster is abroad**--education is becoming popular; good education is spreading everywhere.

*Examples:*

It is gratifying to note that *the schoolmaster is abroad* in Pakistani villages.

'Let the soldier be abroad if he will, he can do nothing in this age.

There is another personage--a personage less imposing; in the eyes of some perhaps insignificant. *The schoolmaster is abroad*, and I trust to him, armed with his primer, against the soldier in his full military array' --Lord Brougham.

**Aladdin's lamp**--a lamp which gave its owner or rather the person who rubbed it, everything he wished. Anything which helps a person in

realising his desire in a very short time. See *Arabian Night's Entertainments*.

*Examples:*

The execution of this plan will take time. I have no *Aladdin's lamp* to do it overnight.

Goodwill in business is almost as expeditious and effectual as *Aladdin's lamp*.

**All and sundry**--everyone without distinction:

He invited *all and sundry* to partake freely of the cake and pastry that he had brought from Shezan.

**Alpha and omega**--the beginning and the end. These are the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet.

*Examples:*

I am *Alpha and Omega*, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord--Rev 1, 8.

Interrogation of nature is the *alpha and omega* of science.

**Animal spirits**--the liveliness that comes from health and physical exhilaration; natural buoyancy:

She had high *animal spirits* --*Jane Austen*.

The villagers seemed to be inspired by sheer *animal spirits* at the fair.

**Keep up appearances**--to put up outward show; to behave in a seemly way before others; to conceal the real state of things by wearing an outward show of normalcy:

He lived beyond his means simply to *keep up appearances*.

In trying to *keep up appearances*, the people are everywhere bringing themselves to ruin.

He was cut to the quick, but continued smiling to *keep up appearances*.

**To cleanse the Augean stables**--to perform a great work of purification.

To bring about a drastic reform in some public evil.

The allusion is to the fifth labour of Hercules, of cleaning in one day the stables of Augeas. P. Augeas was a fabulous king of Elis, who imposed on Hercules the task of cleansing his stables, where three thousand oxen had lived for thirty years without any purification. Hercules performed this task in one day by letting two rivers flow through the stables. Augean stable has come to mean an accumulation of corruption or filth almost beyond the power of man to remedy.

*Examples:*

To abolish these evil customs is like cleansing the proverbial *Augean stables*.

In short, Malta was an *Augean stable* and Ball had all the inclination to be a Hercules --*S.T. Coleridge*.

Every effort should be made to *cleanse the Augean stable* of this department.

**To entertain an angel unawares**--to be hospitable to a guest whose good qualities are unknown.



See the Bible (Genesis XVIII) for the origin of the phrase. It gives an account of Abraham entertaining angels. The Holy Quran also gives this episode, but while the angels eat the flesh of the calf served in the Bible, they avoid it in the Quran, because they are angels. Read the second ( سورة الذريرت ركوع ).

**Examples:**

In the course of the evening some one informed her that *she was entertaining an angel unawares*, in the shape of a composer of the greatest promise.

When she knew that he was a great painter, she felt astonished; it seemed that *she had been entertaining an angel unawares*.

**Against a rainy day**--for a rainy day; in provision for evil times; a rainy day in its metaphorical meaning is a time of adversity, a time of trouble and difficulty.

**Examples:**

A prudent man does not spend all he earns but lays up something *for a rainy day*.

We should put by something *against a rainy day*.

**The Almighty dollar**--money by which almost everything can be accomplished in the material world.

The Americans, worshippers though they be of the *Almighty dollar*, spent large sums of their own on educating the Filipinos (natives of the Philippine Islands).

The idea contained in the phrase has been expressed in the following Persian couplet:

اے زر تو خدا آ و لین بخدا

ستار عیوب و قاضی الحاجاتی

O gold, you are not God, but by God you possess the attributes of drawing a veil on men's sins and supplying their needs.

**As ill-luck would have it**--unfortunately e.g., There is a ray of heaven in John Ruskin. But, *as ill-luck would have it*, John Ruskin is not earnestly studied and cultivated in Pakistan.

**As old as the hills**--very ancient, very old:

My dear child, this is nothing new to me-to any one. What you have experienced is *as old as the hills*.--*Florence Marryat*.

The information is nothing new; it is *as old as the hills*.

**As plentiful as blackberries**--numerous e.g., Patriots now-a-days are *as plentiful as blackberries*.

**As the crow flies**--directly; without any deviation from the straight line to one's destination; in a straight line e.g., We went *as the crow flies* through hedge and ditch never pausing to draw breath.

**At a discount**--poorly esteemed; not in demand, e.g., Morality is *at a sad discount* in our Schools and Colleges.

**At a premium**--much sought after; highly valued e.g.,  
1. 'Suicide is *at a premium here*' (the men here are fond of committing suicide)--*Charles Reade*.

2. Servants are *at a great premium*, masters at a discount, in the colony.

3. There are no gentlemen now-a-days; the age of chivalry is gone; vice is *at a premium*; virtue at a hopeless discount.

**At a white heat**--in intense excitement or passion; very angry or excited.  
All that we claim for Tipu Sultan is that in him we find the spirit of independence *at a white heat*.

**To be at daggers drawn**--is said to be of two persons or parties between whom there is as much enmity as if they stood face to face with daggers drawn, ready to stab each other; bitterly hostile to:  
The quarrel between these two men has unhappily grown more bitter till now they are *at daggers drawn*.

**To be at home in a subject**--is to be fully acquainted with it; perfectly conversant or familiar with a subject:  
A discussion arose about the moral teachings of Socrates, but only one person in the company was *at home* in the subject.

**To be at home with a person**--to be on friendly and familiar terms with a person; to be on easy terms with a person:  
He received me so cordially that I was *at home* with him at once.

**At large**--without restraint or confinement; free, at liberty:  
His dog is chained in the day time, but *at large* at night.

The Mitchell Fruit Concern near Renala Khurd makes use of every portion of the citrus fruit for profitable purposes. *All is grist that comes to their mill.*

### B

**Back out (of)**--withdraw from a promise or undertaking; to retreat cautiously from a difficult position:

He promised to help me but *backed out* at the eleventh hour.

He is trying to *back out of* his bargain (escape from the agreement).

He was determined that Morris should not *back out of* the scrape so easily. --Scott.

**Backbone**--figuratively--chief support: \

Such men are *the backbone* of the country.

**Backbone**--strength, firmness:

He hasn't enough *backbone*. = he is weak in character.

**To the backbone**--thoroughly, in every way:

He is British *to the backbone*.

He is a Socialist *to the backbone*.

**Back-date**--date back to a time in the past.

The wage increases are to be *back-dated* to January.

**Go bad**--become unfit to eat:

Fish and meat soon *go bad* in hot weather.

**Make a bee-line for**--go by the shortest way.

• Bee-line means a straight line between two points.

As she spoke, he *made a bee-line for* the door.

**To have a bee in one's bonnet**--to be obsessed by an idea; to be slightly crazy or unbalanced mentally; to be slightly out of wits:

He is always labouring under the delusion that he is being pursued by C.I.D. He *has a bee in his bonnet*.

Don't take his remarks seriously, he does not ~~know what he is~~

**To beard the lion in his den**--to attack a dangerous or much-feared person boldly in his own quarters:

Miss Masterman returned to the inn for lunch and then prepared for her momentous visit to the clergy-man's house for she had resolved *to beard the lion in his den* (attack her enemy in his own house) and to denounce him in the presence of his family as a hypocrite--Chamber's Journal.

Fierce he broke forth--"An dar'st thou then

*To beard the lion in his den*

The Douglas in his hall?"--Scott: *Marmion*.

**In all its bearings**--in all its relations and aspects:

We must consider the question *in all its bearings*.

**To beat about the bush**--to avoid a direct statement of what must be said; to convey one's meaning in a roundabout fashion; to approach a matter indirectly as in conversation or investigation: A man comes to me with a request, but before stating it, he enters into a long explanation, until growing weary of his tediousness, I say, "You need not *beat about the bush*; come to the point at once".

Why *beat about the bush* ? Let me have a direct reply to my question.

**As you make your bed, you must lie on it**--(Proverb) you must accept the consequences of your deliberate actions; suffer the consequences of one's acts, specially misdeeds:

You are responsible for this riot. You must lie *in the bed you have made*.

**Beg the question**--assume the truth of the matter that is in question; to take for granted the very thing which requires to be proved e.g., To say of any one that he could not steal because he was honest is *to beg the question*.

**To beggar description**--make words seem poor and inadequate. A scene in nature or in human life is said to beggar description when it is of such a kind as to be beyond one's power to describe adequately:

According to Shakespeare, the charm of Cleopatra *beggars all description*.

**To hit below the belt**--give an unfair blow; fight unfairly. A pugilist is not allowed by the rules of boxing to hit his opponent under the waist-belt. The belt is a significant part of a boxer's attire:

Only a coward like him *can hit below the belt* in a quarrel like this.

To refer to his private distresses in a public discussion was *hitting below the belt*.

*Explanation*--It was unfair, in public discussion, to refer to his private distresses.

**Besetting sin**--a sin which is habitually attending a person; a prevailing or predominant vice.

**Beside the mark, beside the question, beside the point**--all these three phrases mean wide of the mark; having nothing to do with what is being discussed.

His financial position is *beside the mark* when we are discussing his moral and intellectual worth.

**Get the better of**--overcome; defeat:

His shyness *got the better* of him.

*Explanation*--He was so overcome by shyness that he could not express himself.

**See better days**--Orlando has *seen better days*.

*Explanation*--He has not been always so poor or unfortunate as he is now.

**Know better**--be wise or experienced enough to do something:

You ought to *know better* than to go out without an overcoat on such a cold day.

**Know better**--refuse to accept a statement.

He says that he didn't cheat but I *know better* (feel sure that he did).

**Had better**--would find it more suitable; more to your advantage:

We *had better* be starting back now.

I *had better* begin by explaining that all that I have said is in good faith.

**Bid fair to**--seem likely to ; to give fair prospect of:

Our plan *bids fair to* succeed.

His health is so good that he *bids fair to* live till he is seventy.

These trees *bid fair to* outgrow those planted five years ago.

**Once bitten twice shy**--a person who has been cheated once is likely to be cautious afterwards.

I have seen through his intentions and cannot be taken in by him again. *Once bitten twice shy*.

**Blow over**--pass by; (figurative) be forgotten; pass away without injurious effect:

The storm (scandal) will soon *blow over*.

We have to bear the brunt of the severe measures adopted in different parts of the country. But we are certain all this *will blow over*.

**Keep body and soul together**--to keep alive; to maintain bare existence; to keep from starving:

He earns scarcely enough *to keep body and soul together*.

One of the maids having fainted three times, the last day of Lent, we put a morsel of roast beef into her mouth *to keep body and soul together*. (Lent is a period of fasting and penitence among Christians).

He is very poor and it is with great difficulty that he *keeps body and soul together*.

**Boil down**--make less by boiling; figuratively condense.

*Boil down* this long article to two hundred words (make a precis of it).

**Out of bounds**--outside the limits of areas that one is allowed to enter (used especially of places that the school children at boarding schools or that soldiers must not visit).

Most of the bars had been placed *out of bounds* to troops.

The College premises have been placed *out of bounds* to students on Saturday evenings and Sundays.

**Bound up with**--closely connected with:

The welfare of the individual is *bound up with* the welfare of the community.

**Bow down with**--The branches were *bowed down with* the weight of snow.

**Backstairs influence**--is influence exerted secretly and in a fashion not legitimate; private influence of an unworthy nature, underhand intrigue at court. A backstairs minister is one who is not trusted by the country, but is supported by domestic influence in the king's household.

The Earl of Bute was despised as a backstairs minister, because he owed his position to the favour of George the Third's mother.

This accusation was easier to get quashed by *backstairs influence* than answered.--*Carlyle*.

There must have been some *backstairs influence* in the disposal of this vacancy.

**Bad blood**--angry and vindictive feelings:

The assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King has helped to create *bad blood* between the two races.

**Bag and baggage**--completely; leaving no property behind. The phrase was originally used of the complete evacuation by an army of an enemy's territory, and is now employed generally to signify the wished for departure of an unwelcome guest.

Sir G. Sprigg, the Cape Premier, seems to have gone over, *bag and baggage*, to the Bond party.

The *bag and baggage policy* of Gladstone in relation to the Turks was meant to drive them completely out of Europe. But Kamal Ataturk came forward as the hero and saviour of his country at the crucial moment. He not only routed the enemy but also won a position of lasting honour and glory for his nation. The Muslim world is rightly proud of him.

**Balance of power**--a just proportion of power among the States that does not allow one nation to preponderate so as to endanger the safety or independence of another:

If Russia or Britain had been allowed to conquer Turkey, it would have disturbed *the balance of power* in Europe.

**Bask in the sunshine of**--enjoy the genial influence shed by e.g., Those whose great ambition in life is to *bask in the sunshine of* official favour, abstain from all independent political activities.

**Be carried away by**--under the guidance of emotion and not of reason; overcome by emotion; be influenced by; be charmed by:

There was none but was *carried away* by the eloquence of the speaker.

- He was not *carried away* by the popular prejudice because he had an honest and sincere mind.
- Be Greek to one** — (Colloquial)--be unintelligible to one:  
The lecture which he delivered was all *Greek to me*.  
See Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* Act I Scene 2:  
"Cassius--Did Cicero say anything?"  
Casca--Ay, he spoke Greek.  
Cassius--To what effect?  
Casca--Those that understood him smiled at one another and shook their heads but for mine own part, it was *Greek to me*.
- Be in a person's good books**--be in the good graces of a person; be in favour with him:  
The Muslims were not in the good books of the English Officials after the War of Independence in 1857.
- Be in bad odour**--to incur unpopularity by giving offence. *III* spoken of; having a bad reputation:  
The British rule was in *bad odour* everywhere in India after the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy.  
He was in *bad odour* with women because of his shady character.
- Be master of the situation**--have the situation under control:  
Jim Hawkins was *the master of the situation* in his fight with Israel Hands in Stevenson's *Treasure Island*.  
The moral victory is with the people but the government is *the master of the situation*.
- To be oneself again**--to be in one's normal state of health after illness; to be restored to one's normal state of health or of composure:  
Last night you were in such a passion that you seemed to have taken leave of your wits; I am glad to see *you are yourself again* today.
- Be the order of the day**--be the rule or fashion; be the common feature; what every one is striving after:  
Committees and Conferences are *the order of the day*.  
Dress yourself as best as you can because dress is *the order of the day*.
- To bear or have a charmed life**--to escape death in almost a miraculous manner; have a life which is fortified against all evil by charms or supernatural influences. To bear a charmed life is said of one who passes through grave dangers without receiving injury.  
The phrase is derived from the old notion that charms or spells could render one invulnerable to danger. This superstition is exploded, but the phrase remains.  
Up and down the ladders, upon the roofs of buildings, over floors that quaked and trembled with his weight, in every part of that great fire was he, but he *bore a charmed life* and had neither scratch nor bruise.--*Dickens*.  
Here is a nurse who has attended all kinds of infectious diseases and yet has never caught any infection. She *has a charmed life*.