

THE OXFORD  
DICTIONARY OF  
ENGLISH  
PROVERBS

THIRD EDITION  
REVISED BY F. P. WILSON

WITH AN INTRODUCTION  
BY JOANNA WILSON

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## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

THE arrangement of a collection of proverbs in such a way that the inquirer may readily find the proverb he is looking for is a matter of some difficulty. The difficulty arises from the fact that many proverbs have not a precise, invariable, and generally known and accepted form. On the contrary, there are frequently variant or uncertain versions, particularly in the opening words and in respect of the use of the definite or indefinite article, the choice between 'He that' and 'He who', the inclusion or exclusion of the first 'as' in proverbs of the type of 'As red as a rose', and similar points of doubt. Who shall say whether it is 'A burnt child' or 'The burnt child' who dreads the fire, or whether, according to the true version, it is 'You' or 'A man' who may lead a horse to the water but cannot make him drink? It follows that no convenient arrangement of proverbs in alphabetical order is possible if the proverbs are set out in their ordinary form.

The proverbs in this collection are arranged in the alphabetical order of some (usually the first) significant word in each, the part (if any) of the proverb preceding the significant word being transferred to the end of the proverb, or, if more convenient, to an intermediate point in it. The transferred part begins with a capital letter, and if placed in the middle of the proverb is terminated by an upright hair-stroke. Thus

                                    To give a Roland for an Oliver,  
becomes

                                    Roland for an Oliver, To give a ;  
and

                                    When you are at Rome, do as Rome does,  
becomes

                                    Rome, When you are at | do as Rome does.

Some proverbs have only one significant word (e.g. 'Blood will have blood'), or a significant word so dominant that, if the inquirer does not know it, he cannot know the proverb at all (e.g. 'Curses like chickens come home to roost'). In these cases nothing further is required. But where, as is more frequent, there are two or more words in a proverb of comparable significance, an inquirer may be uncertain which of these, on the above system, has been chosen as the opening word; or again he may know only the general tenor of the proverb, not its precise wording. Accordingly, under any other word of importance in the proverb a cross-reference has been given showing the opening word under which the proverb appears, together with so much of the rest of it as will indicate its general sense. Thus if the proverb 'He that will play at bowls must expect to meet with rubbers' is looked for under 'Bowls', it will not be found there, but, instead, a cross-reference: 'Bowls, *see* Play at b. must expect rubbers', and the proverb with the relevant quotations will be found under 'Play at bowls'. These

cross-references, which are very numerous, should make it possible to trace without difficulty any proverb in the collection.

The cross-references under any word have as a rule been placed immediately after the last proverb beginning with that word. Some slight departures from strict alphabetical order occur here and there, where this appears convenient; but in general the order may be exemplified as follows:

Dog . . .  
 Dog's . . .  
 Dogged . . .  
 Dogs . . .  
 Dogs' . . .  
 Dog(s) (cross-references).

It may further be noted that when the alphabetical position of any proverb was being settled, any parenthesis, whether between brackets or between a comma and a vertical stroke, was disregarded.

Thus

Necessity (Need) has no law

is placed before

Necessity is a hard dart;

and

Rome, When you are at | do as Rome does

is placed before

Rome was not built in a day.

A certain number of proverbs (mostly Scottish) which appeared in the original edition of *The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* have been omitted from the present work because of their somewhat trivial character, and have been replaced by others of greater interest. For many of the latter the publishers are indebted to Professor F. P. Wilson, whose profound knowledge of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English literature and extensive collections of proverbs and quotations have furnished a multitude of instances of the appearance of proverbs at earlier dates than had previously been recorded. Professor Wilson has also given invaluable advice and assistance on many bibliographical and other points. A number of proverbs and interesting quotations have also been drawn from a collection made by the late G. G. Loane and from notes by Mr. Vernon Rendall.

In the present edition acknowledgement is also due to G. L. Apperson's *English Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases*, published by Messrs. J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd. in 1929, for some early examples which Mr. Apperson's careful researches first made available. These are indicated by (A) after the reference.

P. H.

## INTRODUCTION

'Wise men make proverbs and fools repeat them': so says a proverb, but the proverb telling what a proverb is cannot be discovered and men who have worked for years on the subject have hardly bettered the dictionary definition.<sup>1</sup> To G. L. Apperson, the first editor with a historical approach, a proverb is a crystalized summary of popular wisdom or fancy, whilst M. P. Tilley could find no satisfactory definition, nor could he distinguish between proverbs, proverbial phrases, and proverbial similes; he resorted to reliance on our ancestors' understanding and an acceptance of what they included in their collections.

To turn from the hopeless task of their definition to the age of proverbs: their use is centuries old, dating probably from the time when wisdom and precept were transmitted by story and song. Their acceptance and eventual general rejection is a comment on the history of manners, educational development, and morals. In medieval times and later they were constantly on men's lips as accepted wisdom, in the sixteenth and much of the seventeenth century they were an essential ornament in a fashionable writer's or talker's equipment, until from the end of the seventeenth century onwards they deteriorated into 'vulgar sayings', only fit for ignorant men. Yet every day we still hear proverbs, many of ancient origin, many transmitted in print, many debased to clichés. From time to time new ones are coined, to meet the need of a 'pithy saying' for some development or discovery.

The antiquity of proverbs is recognized by our ancestors. Thus Lyly: 'I haue heard my great grandfather tell how his great grandfather should saie, that it was an olde prouerbe, when his greate grandfather was a childe, that it was a good winde that blew a man to the wine.'<sup>2</sup> Or Nashe speaks of a 'hackney prouerb in mens mouths euer since K. Lud was a little boy'.<sup>3</sup> Their wisdom too is attested. 'Why speaks he Prouerbes?' is asked in *Two Angry Women of Abingdon*—'Because he would speak trueth, And proverbes youle confesse, are ould said socth.' 'Proverbs bear age, and he who would do well may view himself in them as in a Looking-glass' is a comment by Mapletoft as late as 1707, although by then their down-grading had begun. Eventually they were dismissed by Jane Austen as 'gross and illiberal',<sup>4</sup> or as the 'reckless maxims of our worthy grandsires' by Blackmore.<sup>5</sup>

A justification for the study of proverbs, if any is needed, may be found in its usefulness for philology, psychology, folk-lore, the history of manners, and for literary studies, to help to establish a text or interpret a meaning.<sup>7</sup> Some have

<sup>1</sup> *O.E.D.*: 'a short pithy saying in common recognized use.'

<sup>2</sup> *Mother Bomie*, II. v. 4 (1594).

<sup>3</sup> *Have with you to Saffron Walden*, iii. 129 (1596).

<sup>4</sup> *Two Angry Women of Abingdon*, II. 499–501 (1597).

<sup>5</sup> *Sense and Sensibility*, ch. 9 (1811).

<sup>6</sup> *Perlycross*, ch. 15 (1894).

<sup>7</sup> See F. P. Wilson, 'The Proverbial Wisdom of Shakespeare', his Presidential Address to Modern Humanities Research Association (1961).

changed their form with changing habits. 'Do not spoil the hog for a halfpenny-worth of tar' is recorded in 1600, 'hog' becomes 'sheep' in 1651, and by 1823 the present usage of 'ship' is established. To give another example, the current 'I would not touch him with a barge-pole' was in earlier times 'I would not touch him with a pair of hedging-mittins'. What, we may ask, will be substituted for a barge-pole when it no longer exists? Several proverbs are restricted to one type of society. 'To drive a coach and horses through' is parliamentary, recurring in politicians' speeches. Many are coined by the Services, who have their own dictionaries of proverbs and of slang. Regional examples are numberless and many still keep within their original boundaries.

In England the appearance of proverbs in manuscripts and books naturally varied according to the interest in the subject. Janet Heseltine, in her *Introduction* to the first edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs*, has pointed out that proverbial sayings, generally of a sententious nature, can be found in religious manuscripts from the first half of the eighth century onwards, with, occasionally, brief collections of proverbs inserted half in the vernacular, the whole in Latin, presumably to facilitate the teaching of Latin to a novice. But more important was the influence of the rhetoricians, who illustrated their dicta by proverbs, a fashion which spread from a narrow trickle to the wide channel of Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate, in whose works proverbs new and old reflect life in cottage and court, in foreign countries or in the smallest English hamlet, where the saws of husbandry, many still current today, were passed through the years from father to son.

By the beginning of the sixteenth century the channel was becoming a torrent, and eventually a flood which, overreaching itself, nearly brought destruction. The *Adagia* of Erasmus, published in 1500, consisting of strings of proverbs which illustrate the opinions of classical philosophers, was ravenously devoured by men hungry for knowledge and for novelty. Heywood in his *Dialogue of Proverbs* (1545), 'conteynyng the nomber in effect of all the prouerbes in the englishe tongue', clothed his advice from an older man to a younger in narrative form and embroidered it with innumerable 'old said saws' in the accepted and popular manner. But the height of fashion was reached in 1579 by Lyly, whose habit in his *Euphues* of wrapping a phrase in golden tissue added a new word to our language. His influence was enormous, an overgilded style in an overgilded age. Camden, Fergusson, Draxe, Herbert, and other collectors followed, each borrowing from the other according to his interest in rhetoric, morals, or antiquity. Arrangement is as fancy dictates, although a theme such as Seasons, Philosophy, Wisdom is sometimes roughly followed. There were contributions too from abroad, particularly during the latter half of the sixteenth century, by, among others, Sanford, Minsheu, Stepney, Florio, and Howells. These enriched our language, for many proverbs of foreign origin were quickly absorbed into English life and these have a rightful place in an English dictionary.

In the second half of the seventeenth century Torriano provided some kind of index for his *Italian Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases* (1666). Ray (1670 and 1678) is both more scholarly and more original, in that he gives his sources

and adds examples that have not appeared before. His method was to read all former collections, and then for ten years listen to talk, and gather contributions from friends in several parts of England. He begins alphabetically and afterwards classes his excerpts under subject matter, with the inevitable result that he repeats himself. He excludes improper proverbs, not wishing to be guilty of 'administring fewel to lust, which I am sensible needs no incentives, burning too eagerly of it self'. He admits, however, that some proverbial phrases using 'dirty words' are most witty and significant, and in these cases he compromises with the initial letter only for the offending word. Probably it is these 'indecent sayings' that Apperson rejected in 1929.

The eighteenth century reflects a varying attitude. Thomas Fuller the physician in 1732 was of the opinion that 'Sentences and Sayings . . . are usual and useful in Conversation and Business', with the warning that they 'are to be accounted only as Sauce to relish Meat with', and that to apply them wrongly is 'abominably foppish, ridiculous, and nauseous'. He is modest about the value of his collection, which he endearingly describes as a 'vast confus'd heap of unsorted Things, Old and new, which you may pick over and make use of, according to your Judgment and Pleasure'. James Kelly's attitude is different. His *Scottish Proverbs* (1721) is prefaced with extraordinary statistics; he tells us how from memory he jotted down 1,200 examples before he even began to think of his volume, thus having a head-start over his fellow-countryman Fergusson who published only 945. Kelly has a high opinion of proverbs, quoting on the title-page Bacon's dictum that the 'Genius, Wit, and Spirit of a Nation, are discovered by their Proverbs'. They are, Kelly says, 'accomodated to the Principal Concerns of Life . . . especially used among the better Sort of the Commonalty'. He is interested to find that many which he thought were genuine Scottish proverbs originated in other countries, and he observes that the mind of man concerning elemental things is much the same the world over.

Polite writers, however, in the eighteenth century despised these 'vulgar sayings', and Swift pilloried them. The tide had turned against them, though in plays and novels they abound, particularly when low life is depicted. By the nineteenth century they were used more self-consciously, in legions by Scott, frequently by Dickens and Trollope, and in search of old times by Hardy. There were further Scots collections, and W. C. Hazlitt in 1869 published his extensive contribution, which was marred as usual by uncertain arrangement and an untrustworthy index. More shapeless still was Lean's monumental work (1902-4), which, like others, may possibly have stemmed from an awareness that with an increase in reading and greater sophistication proverbs were beginning to change or die and should be recorded for posterity.

In 1929 there was a new approach, with the publication of Apperson's dictionary. This is historical and on it the *Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs* may be said to be based, its purpose being to cite for each entry the earliest literary reference in manuscript or book, with a few examples from later centuries. Medieval proverbs of which there is no literary evidence in a later period are only admitted if they are of special interest in themselves or by reason of the



text in which they occur. The first edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs* was published in 1935, compiled by W. G. Smith; a second edition, revised by Sir Paul Harvey, appeared in 1948. The present edition is the result of F. P. Wilson's lifelong interest in proverbs, which began with his early work on Dekker and continued with his wide and deep knowledge of Elizabethan literature. This study was for him a relaxation from more arduous work, and as time went on he likened his course to that of James Kelly, who pursued his way 'without any Regard either to Honour or Profit, but only to give myself a Harmless, Innocent, Scholar-like Divertisement in my declining years'.

In 1950 M. P. Tilley's *Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* was published. The unrestricted use of this work, which is exemplary for clarity, for references, particularly to Shakespeare, and for paucity of errors, was generously granted by the University of Michigan to the Clarendon Press. Shortly before his death in 1963 F. P. Wilson finished collating Tilley's dictionary with the second edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs*, adding many proverbs to the projected new edition, and many earlier examples of those already there, partly from Tilley, partly from his own extensive reading. The principle of the second edition is largely adhered to, that proverbs should be listed according to the first significant word. It is hoped that a more liberal entry of cross-references to words will facilitate the labour of searching. Let those who look in vain be reminded that this collection is selective, and also, if this brief Introduction may end, as it began, with a proverb, that 'In many words the truth goes by . . . a lye or twayne sone maie escape'.

In 1959, when a third edition of this dictionary was planned, a team of ten contributors agreed to submit examples of proverbs, some new, and some earlier versions of those in the second edition. F. P. Wilson was grateful for the assistance of Professor J. A. W. Bennett, Mr. R. W. Burchfield, the late Professor J. Butt, the late Mr. J. Crow, the late Professor H. J. Davis, Professor Norman Davis, Professor the Revd. James Kinsley, Mr. J. C. Maxwell, Mr. A. G. Rigg, and Professor James Sutherland.

In addition I am grateful for suggestions made by Mrs. Jean Bromley and Miss Gwyneth Lloyd Thomas. I am particularly indebted to Mr. J. C. Maxwell both for his advice on proverbial matters and for his help with proof-reading and the arduous task of preparing this volume for the press.

JOANNA WILSON

# BOOKS REFERRED TO BY AUTHOR, COMPILER, OR ABBREVIATED TITLE ONLY AND NOTES OF THE EDITIONS USED

\* after a date indicates that later dates are quoted for later works.

c. 1594	BACON	Francis Bacon, <i>Promus</i> .
1736	BAILEY	Nathan Bailey, <i>Dictionarium Britannicum</i> , 2nd edn., 1736.
1547	BALDWIN	William Baldwin, <i>A treatise of Morall Phylosophie, containyng the sayynges of the wyse</i> .
1559*	BARCLAY	Alexander Barclay, <i>Ship of Fools</i> , ed. Jamieson (1874). <i>Eclogues</i> , E.E.T.S.
1572*	BARET	John Baret, <i>An Alveary or Triple Dictionary, in Englishe, Latin, and French</i> .
1714	BERTHELSON	Andreas Berthelson, <i>An English and Danish Dictionary</i> .
1702	BLAU	Robert Blau, <i>The Locutions of the Latin Tongue</i> .
1629	<i>PK. The F. L.</i>	<i>The Book of Merry Riddles</i> .
1634*	BOYER	Abel Boyer, <i>The Compleat French-Master, for Ladies and Gentlemen</i> .
1520-18	BRETINOR	Thomas Bretnor, Yearly almanacs. His lists of good and evil days are reprinted by J. Crow in <i>Elizabethan and Jacobean Studies</i> , presented to F. P. Wilson (1959).
1556*	BRETTON 1 and 2	Nicholas Breton, <i>Crossing of Proverbs</i> , in two Parts.
	<i>Soothing</i>	
1526	BRETTON 1 and 2	Nicholas Breton, <i>Soothing of Proverbs: With only True forsooth</i> , in two Parts.
1582	BRIDGE	J. C. Bridge, <i>Cheshire Proverbs</i> .
1554	BULLINGER	H. Bullinger, <i>Christian State of Matrimony</i> , tr. M. Coverdale. Quotations are from the edition of 1543.
1543	BURNE	C. S. Burne, <i>Shropshire Folk-lore</i> .
1550*	CAMDEN	William Camden, <i>Remaines Concerning Britaine</i> .
1550-58	CARMICHAELL	<i>The James Carmichaell Collection of Proverbs in Scots, from the Original Manuscript in the Edinburgh University Library</i> , ed. M. L. Anderson (1957).
1558	CATO <i>Precepts</i>	<i>Precepts of Cato, with annotations of D. Erasmus</i> , tr. R. Barrant.
1552	CHAMBERLAIN	F. L. Chamberlain, <i>A Glossary of West Worcestershire dialects</i> .
1358*	CHAUCER	Geoffrey Chaucer, <i>Works</i> , ed. F. N. Robinson (1957).
1590	CHÉVROT	A. Chévat, <i>Proverbs, Proverbial Expressions, and Popular Rhymes of Scotland</i> .
1620	CLARKE	John Clarke, <i>Paræmiologia Anglo-Latina</i> .
1604	CODRINGTON	Robert Codrington, <i>A Collection of Many Select and Excellent Proverbs out of Severall Languages</i> .
1565*	COOPER	Thomas Cooper, <i>Thesaurus linguae Romanae et Britannicae</i> .
1611	COTGRAVE	Randle Cotgrave, <i>A Dictionary of the French and English Tongues</i> .
1578	<i>Courtly Controv.</i>	Jacques Yver, <i>A courtly controversie of Cupids Cantles</i> , tr. H. Wotton.

- 1894 COWAN F. Cowan, *Dictionary of the Proverbs . . . of the English Language relating to the Sea.*
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- 1654 GAYTON Edmund Gayton, *Pleasant Notes upon Don Quixote.*
- c. 1450-1500 *The Gd. Wife* *The Good Wife taught her Daughter. The Good Wife would a Pilgrimage. The Thewis of Good Women*, ed. T. F. Mustanoja, *Annales Academiae Scientiarum, Fennicae B LXI*, 2, Helsinki (1948).
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- 1785\* GROSE Francis Grose, *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue.*
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- 1590\* MARLOWE Christopher Marlowe, *Works*, ed. Case (1930-33).
- 1583 MELBANCKE Brian Melbancke, *Philotimus. The Warre betwixt Nature and Fortune*.
- 1525-40 *Merry Dial.* Erasmus, *A merry Dialogue, declaringe the propertyes of shrowde shrewes, and honest wyues*, ed. H. de Vocht (1928).
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- 1638 MÏÈGE Guy Miège, *The Great French Dictionary. In two Parts.*  
 1599 MINSHEU John Minshew, *A Dictionarie in Spanish and English.*  
 Part of the same book, but with separate title-pages, are  
*A Spanish Grammar and Pleasant and Delightfull Dialogues.*  
 1559\* *Mirror for Mag.* *The Mirror for Magistrates.* References are to the edition  
 by L. R. Campbell (1938).  
 1603 MONTAIGNE *Essays of Michael Lord of Montaigne Translated by John*  
*Florio.* References are to T.C. edn., 6 vols.  
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*and Spanish.*  
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 (1904-10).  
 1892 NORTHALL G. F. Northall, *English Folk-Rhymes.*  
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 Sec. 3, 77.  
 1566-7 PAINTER William Painter, *The Palace of Pleasure*, 2 vols. Quotations  
 are from the edition of J. Jacobs, 3 vols. (1890).  
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*significant English, Scotch and Foreign Proverbs.*  
 1530 PALSgrave John Palsgrave, *L'éclaircissement de la langue françoise*,  
 ed. F. Genin (1852).  
 1540 PALSgrave John Palsgrave, *Acolustus*, ed. P. L. Carver, E.E.T.S.  
 1576 PETTIE George Pettie, *A Petite Pallace of Pettie his Pleasure.*  
 Quotations are from the edition of I. Gollancz, 2 vols.  
 (1908).  
 1597 *Politeuphuia* *Politeuphuia Wits Commonwealth.*  
 1586\* LA PRIMAUDAYE P. de la Primaudaye, *The French Academie*, tr. by T.  
 F. Jones].  
 c. 1500 *Proverbs at Leconfield* (Wressell) printed from British Museum MS. Bibl.  
 Reg. 13. D. 11, in F. Grose, T. Asple, et al., *Antiquarian*  
*Repertory* iv (1859).  
 1737 RAMSAY Allan Ramsay, *A Collection of Scots Proverbs.*  
 1695 RAVENSCKROFT Edward Ravenscroft, *The Canterbury Guests; Or, A*  
*Engaine Broken. A Comedy.*  
 1670\* RAY John Ray, *A Collection of English Proverbs.*  
 1581 ROBERTSON W. Robertson, *Phraseologia Generalis.*  
 1621 ROBINSON Bartholomew Robinson, *Adagia in Latine and English.*  
 1563 ROPER W. Roper, *Weather Sayings.*  
 c. 1550 *Rylands Latin MS.* Latin MS. 304 in the John Rylands Library, Manchester.  
 Proverbs printed by W. A. Pantin in *Bulletin* IV (Jan.  
 1930).  
 1573 SANFORD James Sanford, *The Garden of Pleasure: Containing most*  
*pleasant Tales... Dore out of Italian into English, by James*  
*Sanfords Gent. Wherein are also set forth dainty Verses*  
*and Sentences in Italian, with the English to the same.*  
*A New Dictionary English and Dutch.*  
 1691 SEWELL William Shakespeare, *Works*, ed. Peter Alexander (1951).  
 1590\* SHAKES. William Shakespeare, *Works*, ed. Peter Alexander (1951).  
 1612-20 SHELTON Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, tr. by Thomas  
 Shelton. References are to book and chapter and also to  
 the edition in Macmillan's Library of English Classics,  
 first issued in 1900.  
 1489\* SKELTON John Skelton, dates as given in W. Nelson's *John Skelton*  
 (New York, 1939).

- c. 1640 SMYTH John Smyth, *Berkeley MSS.*  
 1663 STAMPOY 'Pappity Stampoy', *A Collection of Scotch Proverbs.*  
 (A plagiarism of one of the editions of Fergusson.)  
 1591 STEPNEY William Stepney, *The Spanish Schoole-master.*  
 1706 STEVENS J. Stevens, *A New Spanish and English Dictionary.*  
 1692\* SWIFT Jonathan Swift, *Works*, ed. H. J. Davis (1939-67).  
 1738 SWIFT Jonathan Swift, *A Complete Collection of Genteel and Ingenious Conversation . . . in Three Dialogues*, E.L. edn. (1911).  
 c. 1532 *Tales* *Tales and quicke answeres, very merry, and pleasant to rede.*  
 1539 TAVERNUR *Proverbes or adagies with newe addicions gathered out of the Chiliades of Erasmus by Richard Tauermer. Hereunto be also added Mimi Publiani.*  
 1632\* TORRIANO Giovanni Torriano, *Select Italian Proverbs.*  
 1659 TORRIANO John Florio, *Vocabolario Italiano & Inglese . . . whereunto is added a Dictionary English & Italian, with severall Proverbs . . . by Gio: Torriano.*  
 1666 TORRIANO Giovanni Torriano, *Piazza universale di Proverbi Italiani Or, A Common Place Of Italian Proverbs And Proverbial Phrases.*  
 1883 TRENCH R. C. Trench, *On the Lessons in Proverbs* (1894 edn.).  
 1557\* TUSSEK Thomas Tusser, *A Hundreth good pointes of husbandrie.* Enlarged editions appeared in 1573, 1577, and 1580. The edition of 1580 was called *Fiue hundreth points of good Husbandrie.*  
 1534 UDALL Nicholas Udall, *Floures for Latine speakyng selected and gathered out of Terence.*  
 1573 VICYRA A. Vicyra, *A Dictionary of the Portuguesz and English Languages*, 2 vols.  
 1670 WALKER William Walker, *Idiomatologia.*  
 1672 WALKER William Walker, *Paraemiologia Anglo-Latina Or, English and Latin Proverbs, and Proverbial Sentences and Sayings matched together.*  
 1771\* WESLEY John Wesley. References are to the editions of the *Works* (1872); of the *Letters*, ed. J. Telford (1931); of the *Journal*, ed. N. Curnock (1909, 1938); and of the *Sermons*, ed. E. H. Sugden (1921, 1935).  
 c. 1576 WHYTHORNE Thomas Whythorne, *Autobiography*, ed. Osborn (1961).  
 1581\* WITHALS John Withals, *A short dictionary most profitable for young beginners: the thirde time corrected and augmented.* Important additions were made in 1584 by Abraham Fleming, in 1602 by William Clerk, and in 1616.  
 1622 WODROEPHE John Wodroephe, *The spared houres of a souldier. Or, the true narrowe of the French tongue.*

## ABBREVIATIONS

Arb.	Arber
B.S.	Ballad Society
C.U.P.	Cambridge University Press
E.D.S.	English Dialect Society
E.E.T.S.	Early English Text Society
E.L.	Everyman's Library
<i>E.P.P.</i>	<i>Early Popular Poetry</i> (ed. Hazlitt)
F.L.S.	Folk Lore Society
Gros.	Grosart
H.M.C.	Historical Manuscripts Commission
Hunt. Cl.	Hunterian Club
Merm.	Mermaid Series
<i>N. &amp; Q.</i>	<i>Notes and Queries</i>
New Sh. S.	New Shakespeare Society
OE	Old English
<i>O.E.P.</i>	<i>Old English Plays</i> (ed. Hazlitt)
O.H.S.	Oxford Historical Society
O.U.P.	Oxford University Press
P.S.	Parker Society
Roxb. Cl.	Roxburghe Club
Sér.	Series
Sp. S.	Spenser Society
S.T.S.	Scottish Text Society
s.v.	<i>sub voce</i> , under the word
T.C.	Temple Classics
<i>T.L.S.</i>	<i>Times Literary Supplement</i>
T.T.	Tudor Translations
W.C.	World's Classics

## NOTES ON REFERENCES

The letter and number in brackets immediately following a proverb refers to M. P. Tilley's *Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*.

When possible the date cited refers to the first edition, with a note when a quotation comes from a later edition. A double date, the first in square brackets, indicates that the work was known to have been composed some years earlier than it was published.

Plays are referred to by act and scene, or by act only. Other works are referred to by page unless otherwise indicated. Volumes are referred to by lower-case numerals, pages by number only, omitting 'p'.

The absence of a quotation following a reference means that in the passage referred to the proverb is given without significant change. This is indicated by omission marks (. . .) where an addition to the quotation follows.

Titles are usually modernized, but not quotations. Contractions are expanded.



# A

Ab, *see* Make ab or warp of the business.

Abbey, *see* Bring an a. to a grange; Bury an a.

Abbot, *see* Horner, Popham . . . when the a. went out.

A-bed, All are not | that shall have ill rest. (A 114)

1509 BARCLAY *Ship of Fools* i. 13. All are nat in bed whiche shall haue yll rest. 1546 HEYWOOD II. vii. K 1<sup>v</sup> But take vp in tyme, or els I protest, All be not abedde, that shall haue yll rest. 1670 RAY 60 All that are in bed, must not have quiet rest.

Abed, *see also* Lies long a.; Name is up (His), he may lie a. till noon.

Aberdeen and twelve miles round, Take away | and where are you?

1896 CHEVIOT 309. 1911 *Brit. Wkly.* 27 Jul. 419 A country that has as good a conceit of itself as Scotland, and a city where the best-known proverb is 'Tak' awa' Aberdeen and twal' mile round about it, an' far' are ye?' [where.]

Abide a bad market, He that cannot | deserves not a good one. (M 673)

1678 RAY 173.

Abide, *see also* Grin and a. it.

Ability, *see* Gentility without a.; Nobility without a.

A-bleeding, *see* All (Love) lies a.

Above, *see* Comes from a. let no man question; Things that are a. us are nothing.

Above-board. (D 128)

a. 1607 T. MIDDLETON *Family of Love* III. i. Play fair yet above board. 1616 BRAUM. & FL. *Cust. Country* I. i. 145 Yet if you play not fair Play, and above-board too, I have a foolish gin here. 1617 BRATHWAIT *Solemn Disputation* 45 Faire play above boord. 1788 BURKE *Sp. agst. Hastings*, Wks. xiii. 293 All that is in this transaction is fair and above-board.

Abra(ha)m, *see* Sham A.

Abraham's bosom, In. (A 8)

[LUKE xvi. 23 He seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.] c. 1533 J. FRITH *Disp.*

of Purgatory K8<sup>v</sup> Abrahams bosome were nothing els then Abrahams fayth. 1550 *Answer to the Commons* Camden Soc. ed. N. Pocock 1884 173 The souls of them that die in the state of grace . . . sleep in Abraham's lap. 1586 A. FLEMING *Epitaph upon William Lambe* A8 His soule in Abrahams bosome restes, in quietnesse I truste. [1592] 1597 SHAKES. *Rich. III* IV. iii. 38 The sons of Edward sleep in Abraham's bosom. 1599 *Id. Hen. V* II. iii. 10 He's in Arthur's bosom, if ever man went to Arthur's bosoma [malapropism]. a. 1797 WALPOLE *Letters* Toynbee VI. 310 Two or three old ladies, who are languishing to be in Abraham's bosom.

Abroad, *see* All a. and nothing at home; Argus a. and mole at home; Children hear at home, (What) soon flies a.; Saint a., devil at home; Schoolmaster is a.; Turns lie dead and one ill deed report a. does spread, (Ten good).

Absence sharpens (hinders) love, presence strengthens it. (A 10)

1557 TOTTEL *Songs and Sonnets* Rollins i. 224 Absence works wonders. 1572 E. PASQUIER tr. G. FENTON *Monophylo* 29<sup>v</sup> Absence reuieth our affection, enforceth our desire, and redoubleth our hope. 1581 W. AVERELL *Charles and Julia* B7<sup>v</sup> Three things there be that hinder Loue, that's Absence, Feare, and Shame. 1589 Letter of SIR H. WOTTON [Pearsall Smith i. 232] Nothing able to add more to it [affection] than absence. 1591 ARIOSTO *Orl. Fur.* Harington XXXI. 3 Long absence grieues, yet when they meet againe, That absence doth more sweet and pleasant make it. 1597 *Politeuphuia* 127 Absence in loue, makes true loue more firme and constant. a. 1633 G. HERBERT *Priest to Temple* 284 Absence breeds strangeness, but presence love. 1732 FULLER no. 755. 1850 T. HAYNES BAYLY *Isle of Beauty* Absence make the heart grow fonder.

Absence, *see also* Salt water and a. wash away love.

Absent are always in the wrong, The. (P 86)

c. 1440 LYDGATE *Fall of Princes* III. l. 3927 For princis ofte . . . Will cachche a quarel . . . Ageyn folk absent. 1640 HERBERT no. 318 The absent partie is still faultie. 1710 S. PALMER 51 The Absent Party is always to Blame. 1736 FRANKLIN July The absent are never without fault, nor the present without excuse. [Fr. *Les absents ont toujours tort.*]

Absent without fault, nor present without excuse, He is neither. (F 109)

1616 DRAXE no. 488. 1659 HOWELL *Span. Prov.* 6.