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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<td>a</td>
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<td>AV</td>
<td>Authorized Version (of the Bible), 1611</td>
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A

see who SAYS A Must say B.

abhors
see NATURE abhors a vacuum.

a-borrowing
see he that GOES a-borrowing, goes a-sorrowing.

abroad
see GO abroad and you'll hear news of home.

ABSENCE makes the heart grow fonder
Cf. PROPERTIUS Elegies II. xxxiii\(^b\). I. 43 *semper in absentes felicior aestus amantes*, passion [is] always warmer towards absent lovers.

\(\text{\(\square\) } c\ 1850\) in Isle of Beauty (rev. ed.) iii. Absence makes the heart grow fonder.

1923 Observer 11 Feb. 9 These saws are constantly cutting one another's throats. How can you reconcile the statement that ‘Absence makes the heart grow fonder’ with ‘Out of sight, out of mind’?

1979 Rose in Darkness xi. ‘Oh, I couldn't go now!’ ‘Absence makes the heart grow fonder.’

1985 Dick & Jane 119 ‘Absence makes the heart grow fonder.’ ‘Some other organs, too. Like tha nose,’ Nick cracked.

1992 Rather English Marriage (1993) xi. 178 Absence may have made his heart grow fonder, but it hasn't done wonders for mine.

Absence; love

He who is ABSENT is always in the wrong
Cf. Fr. *les absents ont toujours tort*; c 1440 J. LYDGATE Fall of Princes (EETS) III. 1. 3927 For princis
oft, Wil cachche a qu[a]rel, Ageyn folk absent.

1640 Outlandish Proverbs no. 318 The absent partie is still faultie.
1710 Proverbs xxi. The absent party is always to blame.
1736 Poor Richard's Almanack (July) The absent are never without fault, nor the present without excuse.
1912 Unbearable Bassington iv. The absent may be always wrong, but they are seldom in a position to be inconsiderate.
1981 Soldier no More 57 I will quote first that fine old French saying—which covers any claim Charlie may or may not have on that cake—'he who is absent is always in the wrong.'

absence; error
absolutely
see POWER corrupts.

abundance
see out of the FULLNESS of the heart the mouth speaks.

ACCIDENTS will happen (in the best-regulated families)

1763 Deuce is in Him 1.22 Accidents, accidents will happen—No less than seven brought into our infirmary yesterday.
1819 Hermit in America i. Accidents will happen in the best regulated families.
1850 David Copperfield xxviii. ‘Copperfield,’ said Mr. Micawber, ‘accidents will occur in the best-regulated families; and in families not regulated by .. the influence of Woman, in the lofty character of Wife, they must be expected with confidence, and must be borne with philosophy.’
1859 Christmas Holiday x. Accidents will happen in the best regulated families, and .. if you find you've got anything the matter with you,.. go and see a doctor right away.
1879 Angels in your Beer xii. It would be so convenient if something happened to them ... Accidents do happen, as they say.

misfortune
There is no ACCOUNTING for tastes
It is impossible to explain why different people like different things (especially things that do not appeal to the speaker). Also now in the form there is no accounting for taste. The saying is a version of the Latin tag de gustibus non est disputandum, there is no disputing about tastes. Cf. 1599 J. MINSHEU Dialogues in Spanish 6 Against ones liking there is no disputing.

1794 Mysteries of Udolpho I. xi. I have often thought the people he disapproved were much more agreeable than those he admired;—but there is no accounting for tastes.
1889 Nether World II. viii. There is no accounting for tastes. Sidney .. not once .. congratulated himself on his good fortune.
1974 Porterhouse Blue x. ‘He was in the grip of Mrs Biggs.’ .. ‘No accounting for tastes,’ said the Dean.
1985 Doubting Thomas iv. ‘You're usually in here with a little guy, wears a rug. Looks like he gets his suits from Sears. Paisley ties ... There's no accounting for taste.’

idiosyncrasy; taste
accumulate
see if you don't SPECULATE, you can't accumulate.
accuse
see he who EXCUSES, accuses himself.
accuser
see a GUILTY conscience needs no accuser.
acorn
GREAT oaks from little acorns grow.

**ACTIONS speak louder than words**
First recorded in its current form in the United States.

1628 *Speech* 4 Apr. in Hansard *Parliamentary Hist. England* (1807) II. 274 ‘A word spoken in season is like an Apple of Gold set in Pictures of Silver,’ and actions are more precious than words.

1736 *Melancholy State of Province in Colonial Currency* (1911) III. 137 Actions speak louder than Words, and are more to be regarded.

1856 *Works* (1953) II. 352 ‘Actions speak louder than words’ is the maxim; and, if true, the South now distinctly says to the North, ‘Give us the measures, and you take the men.’

1939 *Dead Men sing no Songs* xii. Deeds speak louder than words. First she tells you the most damning things she can .., and then she begs you to believe he's innocent in spite of them?

1979 ‘’ Some die Eloquent xvii. ‘He's very sorry about it all.’.. ‘Actions speak louder than words.’

1995 *Washington Times* 21 May B3 Actions speak louder than words, especially when individual property rights are at stake.

### words and deeds

**When ADAM delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?**
The rhyme is particularly associated with the itinerant preacher John Ball, a leader of the 1381 ‘Peasants' Revolt’, who used it to incite the people against their feudal lords.

1340 in *Religious Pieces* (EETS) 88 When Adam dalf[e] [dug] and Eue spane .. Whare was than the pride of man?

1381 in & Index *Middle English Verse* (1943) 628 Whan adam delffid and eve span, Who was than a gentilman?

1562 *Aggeus & Abdias* I. ii. When Adam dalve, and Eve span, Who was than a gentle man? Up start the carle, and gathered good, And thereof came the gentle blood.

1874 *Short Hist. English People* v. A spirit fatal to the whole system of the Middle Ages breathed in the popular rime which condensed the levelling doctrine of John Ball: ‘When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?’

1918 *Leaves in Wind* 81 It is not only the humanising influence of the garden, it is the democratising influence too. When Adam delved and Eve span, Where was then the gentleman?

1979 *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* vi. When Adam delved and Eve span Who was then the gentleman? The question had ironic relevance for the arrivé.

### equality ; gentry

**As good be an ADDLED egg as an idle bird**

1578 *Euphues* I. 325 If I had not bene gathered from the tree in the budde, I should beeing blowne haue proued a blast, and as good it is to bee an addle egge as an idle bird.

1732 *Gnomologia* no. 681 As good be an addled Egg, as an idle Bird.

1974 *Ghost Writer* iii. The chickens are feeling the heat, poor creatures. I'm afraid I gave them a bit of a ticking off. As good be an addled egg, I told them, as an idle bird.

### action and inaction ; idleness

**ADVENTURES are to the adventurous**

1844 *Coningsby* III. 1. 244 ‘I fear that the age of adventures is past.’ … ‘Adventures are to the adventurous,’ said the stranger.

1914 ‘’ *Beasts & Super-Beasts* 264 Adventures, according to the proverb, are to the adventurous.

1952 ‘’ *Mr Nicholas* iv. He told himself that adventure was to the adventurous … If he could not make the
effort for the small he would miss the big adventure.

**boldness** ; **opportunity, taken** ; **risk**

**ADVERSITY** makes strange bedfellows

While the underlying idea remains the same, there has always been some variation in the first word of the proverb: see also **POLITICS** makes strange bedfellows.

□1611 **Tempest** II. ii. 37 My best way is to creep under his gaberdine; there is no other shelter hereabout. Misery acquaints a man with strange bedfellows.

1837 **Pickwick Papers** xli. (heading) Illustrative .. of the old proverb, that adversity brings a man acquainted with strange bedfellows.

1886 **Princess Casamassima** I. I. x. *She loathed them [the people] with the outspoken violence of one who had known poverty, and the strange bedfellows it makes.*

1927 **Times** 27 Aug. 12 The .. alliance of 1923–5 was an illustration of the adage that adversity makes strange bedfellows.

1982 **Times** 15 Mar. 9 (heading) Poverty makes strange bedfellows.

**adversity** ; **misfortune**

**afraid**

see he who **RIDES** a tiger is afraid to dismount.

**AFTER** a storm comes a calm

Cf. a **1250 Ancrene Riwle** (1962) 191 *Iblescet ibeo thu laverd the makest stille efter storm* [blessed are you, Lord, who makes a calm after the storm]; **1377 LANGLAND** *Piers Plowman* B. XVIII. 409 After sharpe shoures .. moste shene [bright] is the sonne.

□1576 **French Littleton** E1V After a storme commeth a calme.

1655 **Church Hist. Britain** ix. viii. *After a storm comes a calm. Wearied with a former blustering they began now to repose themselves in a sad silence.*

1851 **Moby Dick** III. xxviii. *The mingled, mingling threads of life are woven by warp and woof— calms crossed by storms, a storm for every calm.*

1979 " **Smiley's People** i. For the next two weeks nothing happened .. After the storm had come the calm.

**peace** ; **trouble**

**AFTER** dinner rest a while, after supper walk a mile

The sense turns on the fact that dinner is a heavy meal, while supper is a light one. The precept was current in medieval Latin: *post prandium stabis, post coenam ambulabis*, after luncheon you will stand still, after supper you will walk about.

□1582 **Heptameron of Civil Discourses** E3 After dynner, talke a while, After supper, walke a mile.

1584 **Haven of Health** cxc. *That olde English saying: After dinner sit a whyle, and after supper walke a myle.*

1876 **Cripps** III. xvi. *He neighed .. for he felt quite inclined for a little exercise .. 'After supper, trot a mile.'*

1979 **Daily Telegraph** 24 Dec. 3 "The physiological reaction to a heavy indigestible meal .. seems to be to sleep it off.' What it all seems to boil down to is the old adage: After dinner rest a while, after supper walk a mile.

**health**

after

see also it is easy to be **WISE** after the event.

Agamemnon
see **BRAVE** men lived before Agamemnon.

age

see **the age of MIRACLES** is past.

agree

see **BIRDS in their little nests agree; TWO of a trade never agree.**

alive

see if you want to **LIVE** and thrive, let the spider run alive.

**ALL good things must come to an end**
The addition of 'good' is a recent development. The earlier forms may be compared with *EVERYTHING has an end.*

___ c 1440 Partonope of Blois (EETS) I. 11144 Ye wote [know] wele of all thing moste be an ende.

1562 Accidence of Armoury 182 All worldly thinges haue an ende (excepte the housholde wordes, betwere man and wife).

1738 Polite Conversation 1. 85 All Things have an End, and a Pudden [a kind of sausage] has two.

1857 Puddle-ford Papers xxiii. All things must have an end, and the grand caravan, in time, came to its end.

1904 in Independent Review June 128 ‘En route!’ said the shrill voice of Mrs. Forman. ‘Ethel! Mr. Graham! The best of things must end.’

1924 ‘’ Scar xxv. All good things come to an end. The feast was over.

1980 First Gravedigger (1982) vi. Life with you .. is nirvana itself. But all good things must come to an end.

### finality ; good things

It takes **ALL sorts** to make a world

___1620** tr. Cervantes' Don Quixote II. vi. In the world there must bee of all sorts.

1767 Letter 17 Nov. (1952) I. 194 Some Lady surely might be found .. in whose fidelity you might repose. The World, says Locke, has people of all sorts.

1844 Story of Feather xxviii. Click can't get off this time?.. Well, it takes all sorts to make a world.

1975 Young Pattullo iii. ‘My father's a banker during the week and a country gent at week-ends. Takes all sorts, you know.’ ‘Takes all sorts?’ ‘To make a world.’

1993 Bachelor Brothers' Bed & Breakfast (1997) 74 There is no nightlife ... I suppose that what we have here is the working out of the adage that it takes all kinds to make a world.

### idiosyncrasy ; tolerance ; variety

**ALL things are possible with God**

With allusion to MATTHEW xix. 26 (AV)... with God all things are possible; cf. HOMER *Odyssey* x. 306

Φανερῶς οὕτως ἀπαντᾶτον, with the gods all things can be done.

___1694** tr. Rabelais' Pantagruel V. xliii. Drink .. and you shall find its taste and flavor to be exactly that on which you shall have pitched. Then never presume to say that anything is impossible to God.

1712 Letter 22 Nov. (1971) 117 However, take it again; all things are possible with God.

1826 Letter 11 June in Autobiography (1865) II. viii. Sometimes it seems as if persons had too much .. intellect to be converted easily. But all things are possible with God.

1965 Mandelbaum Gate vi. It would be interesting, for a change, to prepare and be ready for possibilities of, I don't know what, since all things are possible with God and nothing is inevitable.

### possibility and impossibility

**ALL things come to those who wait**
Cf. Fr. tout vient à celui qui sait attendre, all comes to him who knows how to wait.

**1530** Eclogues (EETS) II. 843 Somewhat shall come who can his time abide.
**1642** Select Italian Proverbs 26 He who can wait, hath what he desireth.
**1847** Tancred II. IV. viii. I have got it at last, everything comes if a man will only wait.
**1863** Poems (1960) 402 All things come to him who will but wait.
**1872** Tout vient à qui sait Attendre in From Dawn to Noon II. 85 Ah! ‘All things come to those who wait.’ .. They come, but often come too late.

**1931** Mapp & Lucia vi. There .. was a gay striped figure .. skipping away like mad .. Miss Mapp gave a shrill crow of triumph. All came to him who waited.
**1980** Leonardo & Others viii. Everything comes to those who wait. The theory fitted well into my lazy way of thinking.

**Patience and impatience**

all see also all's for the BEST in the best of all possible worlds; all CATS are grey in the dark; DEATH pays all debts; why should the DEVIL have all the best tunes?; don't put all your EGGS in one basket; all's FAIR in love and war; all is FISH that comes to the net; all that GLITTERS is not gold; all is GRIST that comes to the mill; when all you have is a HAMMER, everything looks like a nail; HEAR all, see all, say nowt; to KNOW all is to forgive all; there is MEASURE in all things; MODERATION in all things; to the PURE all things are pure; a RISING tide lifts all boats; all ROADS lead to Rome; the THIRD time pays for all; all's WELL that ends well; you can't WIN them all; all WORK and no play makes Jack a dull boy.

alone see **he TRAVELS fastest who travels alone.**

alter see **CIRCUMSTANCES alter cases.**

always see **he who is ABSENT is always in the wrong; there is always a FIRST time; ONCE a —, always a—; there is always ROOM at the top; the UNEXPECTED always happens.**

**Good AMERICANS when they die go to Paris**

The person alluded to in quot. 1858 was Thomas Gold Appleton (1812–84).

**1858** Autocrat of Breakfast-Table vi. To these must certainly be added that other saying of one of the wittiest of men: ‘Good Americans, when they die, go to Paris.’

**1894** Woman of no Importance I. 1. 16 They say .. that when good Americans die they go to Paris.

**1932** Topper takes Trip xxi. We are those good Americans who come to Paris when they die.

**Death : just deserts**

and see **if IFS and ands were pots and pans, there'd be no work for tinkers' hands.**

angel see **FOOLS rush in where angels fear to tread.**

anger see **never let the SUN go down on your anger.**

angry see **a HUNGRY man is an angry man.**

answer
see **ASK a silly question and you get a silly answer; a CIVIL question deserves a civil answer; a SOFT answer turneth away wrath.**

**anvil**

see **the CHURCH is an anvil which has worn out many hammers.**

**ANY port in a storm**

- **1749** Memoires of Woman of Pleasure II. 133 *It was going by the right door, and knocking desperately at the wrong one ...I told him of it: 'Pooh,' says he 'my dear, any port in a storm.'*
- **1821** Pirate I.iv. *As the Scotsman's howf [refuge] lies right under your lee, why, take any port in a storm.*
- **1965** Dover Three ii. *It was not quite the sort of company with which Dover would mix from choice but, as the jolly sailors say, any port in a storm.*
- **1983** Monsieur Pamplemousse iv. *On the principle of any port in a storm he made a dive for the nearest cubicle.*

**necessity ; trouble**

**If ANYTHING can go wrong, it will**

Commonly known as *Murphy's Law*, the saying has numerous variations. It is said to have been invented by George Nichols in 1949. Nichols was then a project manager working in California for the American firm of Northrop, and developed the maxim from a remark made by a colleague, Captain E. Murphy, of the Wright Field-Aircraft Laboratory. The contexts of the early quotations appear to support this explanation: **1955** Aviation Mechanics Bulletin May-June *11 Murphy's Law: If an aircraft part can be installed incorrectly, someone will install it that way.*

- **1956** Scientific American Apr. 166 *Dr. Schaefer's observation confirms this department's sad experience that editors as well as laboratory workers are subject to Murphy's Laws, to wit: I. If something can go wrong it will, [etc.].*
- **1958** Product Engineering 21 Apr. 32 *If anything can go wrong with an experiment—it will.*
- **1961** & Computer Programming Fundamentals viii. *What we desire is the presentation of the information in .. an accurate and complete form ... Recalling ‘Murphy's law’—‘If something can go wrong or be misinterpreted, it will’—should be enough stimulus for the goals we desire.*
- **1974** New York Times Magazine 8 Sept. 33 *‘If anything can go wrong, it will,’ says Murphy's law. In this computer age, the ‘law’ has been helped along by clever con men.*
- **1980** Midnight Men vii. *Of course, the up train was delayed. There was some vast universal principle. If anything can go wrong it will.*

**error**

**An APE's an ape, a varlet's a varlet, though they be clad in silk or scarlet**

A varlet was formerly a menial servant, but the word also took on the sense of ‘scoundrel’ or ‘rogue’. Scarlet was the colour of the official or ceremonial dress of various dignitaries, including judges. Cf. LUCIAN Adversus Indoctum 4 Πίθωκας Πίθωκας Κανξρισεκχσεύμβλοα, an ape is an ape .. even if it has gold insignia; ERASMUS Adages I. vii. *simia simia est, etiamsi aurea gestet insignia.*

- **1539** tr. Erasmus'Adages 21 *An ape is an ape although she were badges of golde.*
- **1586** Praise of Music ii. *You may cloath an Ape in golde, and an Infant in Hercules armour: doth an infant therfore change his age, or an Ape forgoe his nature?*
- **1659** Proverbs (English) I *An Ape's an Ape, A Varlett's a Varlett, Though they be cladd in silk, or scarlett.*
- **1732** Gnomologia no. 6391 *An Ape's an Ape: a Varlet's a Varlet, Tho' they be clad in Silk or Scarlet.*
1967 Naked Ape i. The naked ape is in danger of .. forgetting that beneath the surface gloss he is still very much a primate. (‘An ape's an ape, a varlet's a varlet, though they be clad in silk or scarlet.’) Even a space ape must urinate.

**appearance, deceptive ; nature and nurture**

ape

see also the HIGHER the monkey climbs the more he shows his tail.

**appear**

see TALK of the Devil, and he is bound to appear.

**APPEARANCES are deceptive**

A common US form is appearances are deceiving.

1666 Italian Proverbs 12 Appearance oft deceive.

1748 Gil Blas (1749) III. vii. i. Egad, appearances are very deceitful.

1784 in Collections of Massachusetts Hist. Society (1877) III. 186 The appearances in those mountainous regions are extremely deceptive.

1846 Typee xxiv. Appearances .. are deceptive. Little men are sometimes very potent, and rags sometimes cover very extensive pretensions.

1927 Lucia in London v. Mr. Merriall .. watched the three figures at Georgie's door. ‘Appearances are deceptive,’ he said. ‘But isn't that Olga Shuttleworth and Princess Isabel?’

1976 Kinflicks (1977) ii. Apparently she looked lost and in need … A ready convert. And in this case, appearances weren't deceiving.

**appearance, deceptive ; deception**

**APPETITE comes with eating**

Desire or facility increases as an activity proceeds. Cf. 1534 RABELAIS Gargantua I. 5 l'appétit vient en mangeant, appetite comes with eating; 1600–1 SHAKESPEARE Hamlet I. ii. 143 Why, she would hang on him As if increase of appetite had grown By what it fed on.


1721 Dialogues of Dead (1907) 227 But as we say in France, the Appetite comes in Eating; so in Writing You stil found more to writ.

1906 From Yalu to Port Arthur i. Appetite comes with eating. Having absorbed Port Arthur and begun on Manchuria, Russia saw no reason why she should not have Korea also.

1943 Congo Song xxiv. The appetite came with eating. The more he had of her, the more he wanted.

**wanting and having**

**appetite**

see also HUNGER is the best sauce.

An **APPLE a day keeps the doctor away**

1866 Notes & Queries 3rd Ser. IX. 153 A Pembrokeshire Proverb—‘Eat an apple on going to bed, And you'll keep the doctor from earning his bread.’

1913 Rustic Speech xiv. Ait a happle afore gwain to bed, An' you'll make the doctor beg his bread (Dev.); or as the more popular version runs: An apple a day keeps the doctor away.

1972 Tartan Touch iv. He gave me a truly wicked look … ‘An apple a day keeps the doctor away!’ he taunted me.

1991 Washington Post 24 Jan. B5 An apple a day keeps the doctor away. But wait! Has the apple been treated with Alar?

**doctors ; health**

The **APPLE never falls far from the tree**

www.EnglishPro.ir
Apparently of Eastern origin, it is frequently used to assert the continuity of family characteristics. Quot. 1839 implies return to one's original home. Cf. 16th-cent. Ger. *der Apfel fällt nicht gerne weit vom Baume*, the apple does not usually fall far from the tree.

1839 Letter 22 Dec. (1939) II. 243 As men say *the apple never falls far from the stem*, I shall hope that another year will draw your eyes and steps to this old dear odious haunt of the race.

1839 Body, Boots & Britches xix. As a .. farmer remarked, *‘If you breed a pa’tridge, you’ll git a pa’tridge.’* Another way of setting that truth forth is *‘An apple never falls far from the tree.’*

1981 Women's Journal Apr. 179 *He's a fool, Muffie, as his father was. The apple never falls far from the tree.*

1996 Washington Post 14 Jan. C7 Although Forbes has a lively sense of fun (his motorcycling, balloon-riding father, Malcolm, certainly had one, and the apple does not fall far from the tree), his lavishness .. has a civic purpose.

family; nature and nurture; origins

apple

see also the ROTTEN apple injures its neighbours; SMALL choice in rotten apples; STOLEN fruit is sweet.

An APPLE-PIE without some cheese is like a kiss without a squeeze

1929 Seven Hells v. 63 *Let me advise you to take a bit of cheese with it. They have a good proverb, these folks: ‘Apple pie without the cheese, is like the kiss without a squeeze.’*

1989 Courier-Journal (Louisville, KY) 2 July 4M *There was an old English rhyme popular about 1750 that went: An apple-pie without some cheese Is like a kiss without a squeeze.*

food and drink

APRIL showers bring forth May flowers

c 1560 in Songs & Ballads (1860) 213 *Aprell sylver showers so sweet Can make May flowers to sprynge.*

1570 Husbandry (rev. ed.) 22 *Swete Aprill showers, Do spring the May flowers.*

1670 English Proverbs 41 *April showers bring forth May flowers.*

1821 Kenilworth III. vii. *I believe .. if showers fall in April, that we shall have flowers in May.*

1846 Proverbs relating to Seasons, &c. 36 *March winds and April showers bring forth May flowers.*

1921 Sphere 14 May 152 *If there was anybody left to believe in the saying that ‘April showers bring forth May flowers’ their simple faith must have been rudely shattered by May’s behaviour this year.*

1984 Creative Kind of Killer xiv. *The sky was looking more threatening than it had before ... April showers. But no May flowers to follow, not in Manhattan's cement garden.*

1996 Windows Magazine May 309 *As the saying goes, ‘April showers bring May flowers.’ The three major online services are ready to help you deliver the wonderful scents of spring to a loved one.*

weather lore

architect

see EVERY man is the architect of his own fortune.

arm

see KINGS have long arms; STRETCH your arm no further than your sleeve will reach; YORKSHIRE born and Yorkshire bred, strong in the arm and weak in the head.

An ARMY marches on its stomach

The proverb has been attributed to both Napoleon and Frederick the Great; this figurative use of *on one’s stomach* is unusual in English.
These Napoleonic aphorisms have been increasingly appreciated by our War Office.

Good Cheer xxvi. ‘An army marches on its stomach,’ says the old proverb—and, of course, fights on it too.

Dead-Nettle x. ‘They say an army marches on its stomach,’ Gilbert Slack began to say. ‘You mean that Frank was a cook?’

Root into Europe ii.16 ‘Didn't see service as such. Supply and demand myself. Pay and personnel. Laundry and so forth. An army marches on its stomach.’

Washington Times 14 June A4 An army marches on its stomach, and you can't win a war on milk and toast.

food and drink; soldiers

see what GOES around comes around.

arrive

see it is BETTER to travel hopefully than to arrive.

ART is long and life is short

Hippocrates (Aphorisms I. I. ó ßí ó ßí ú ù µí) compared the difficulties encountered in learning the art of medicine or healing with the shortness of human life. Hippocrates' saying was alluded to by Seneca in his dialogue ‘On the Brevity of Life’ (De brevitate vitae I: vitam brevem esse, longam artem) and from this version the usual Latin form of the tag is derived: ars longa, vita brevis, art is long, life is short. Art is now commonly understood in the proverb in a less specific sense. In quot. 1958, it refers to (the durability of) a work of art.

c 1380 Parliament of Fowls I. 1 The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne.

1558 Government of Health 5V And although oure life be shorte, yet the arte of phisicke is long.

1581 tr. S. Guazzo's Civil Conversation I. 16 An art is long and life is short.

1710 Proverbs 380 Art is Long, Life Short. Our Philosophical Meditations on Time are very Obscure and Confus’d.

1869 Culture & Anarchy vi. If .. we take some other criterion of man's well-being than the cities he has built our .. Liberal friends .. take us up very sharply. ‘Art is long’, says the Times, ‘and life is short.’

1958 Balthazar IV. xiii. The shapely hand on his shoulder still wore the great ring taken from the tomb of a Byzantine youth. Life is short, art long.

1987 ‘” Dead Liberty viii. ‘The art is long,’ Sloan heard himself saying aloud … ‘And life is short. I know that.’ Dr. Bressingham completed the quotation brusquely.

life; mortality

ash

see when the OAK is before the ash, then you will only get a splash; beware of an OAK it draws the stroke.

ASK a silly question and you get a silly answer

With allusion to PROVERBS xxvi. 5 (AV) Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.

c 1300 South-English Legendary (EETS) 494 Ffor-sothe thou axest as a fol, and swich ansuere me schul the yive.

1484 Aesop (1967) V. xiii. 158 And thus they wente withoute ony sentence For to a folysshe demaunde behoueth a folysshe ansuere.

1551 tr. T More's Utopia I E4 For Salomon the wise sayeth: Answer a foole according to his foolishnes,
like as I do now.

1584 Campaspe II. 325 ‘Which was first, the day or the night?’.. ‘The day, by a day.’.. ‘Indeede straunge questions must have straung answeres.’

1600 Tarlton’s Jests (1638) E2

'The fellow seeing a foolish question had a foolish answere, laid his legges on his neck, and got him gone.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 35 A thraward [perverse] Question should a thraward Answer.

1929 Inclinations in Works II. 138 ‘Has anyone cast a doubt on your union, Mab, being legal?’.. ‘Don’t ask silly questions, Daisy, if you don’t want foolish answers,’ the Countess returned.

1934 Murder on Cliff vi. If you ask me damned silly questions, I’m going to give you damned silly answers.

1969 ‘’ Missing from her Home v. No, don’t bother to answer that. Ask a silly question and you get a silly answer.

1985 Harnessing Peacocks (1990) v. 46 ‘Are you happy at school?’ Ask a silly question. ‘It’s all right.’

‘What sort of answer is that?’ she cried in distress.

ASK no questions and hear no lies

1773 She stoops to Conquer III. 51 Ask me no questions and I'll tell you no fibs.

1818 Heart of Midlothian I. ix. If ye'll ask nae questions, I'll tell ye nae lees.

1900 Over Sliprails 135 ‘Where did you buy the steer, father?’ she asked. ‘Ask no questions and hear no lies.’

1906 Puck of Pook's Hill 252 Them that asks no questions isn't told a lie—Watch the wall, my darling, while the Gentlemen go by!

1970 Great Affair xii. ‘What has happened to Sarah?’.. ‘Ask no questions hear no lies.’

1985 Paradise Postponed xv. No questions, boy, then you won't get no lies.

1996 Washington Times 19 Feb. C11 There is wisdom in the very old ditty: ‘Ask me no questions, and I'll tell you no lies.’

1997 Evans Above vi. 65 Charlie put his finger to his nose. ‘Them that asks no questions, don't get told no lies, that's what my old mother used to say,’ he said.

ATTACK is the best form of defence

The usual US version is the best defense is a good offense. Cf. 1775 W. H. DRAYTON in R. W. Gibbes Documentary Hist. American Revolution (1855) I. 174 It is a maxim, that it is better to attack than to receive one.

1799 Writings (1940) XXXVII. 250 Make them believe, that offensive operations, often times, is the surest, if not the only .. means of defence.

1930 Murder on Bus xxxvii. Inspector Higgins fired his revolver at the sound, deeming attack the better part of defence, whilst someone from the other side of the room had a similar notion.

1965 Apple-Stone xi. ‘Attack’, she said, ‘is the best means of defence.’ She sounded so smug that I told her the thought was not original.

1980 Desouza in Stardust iv. Attack is the best form of defence, they say, and when politicians lose their principles they play a dirty game.
The reigning corporate strategy these days is that the best defense is a good offense.

In the case of the Redskins' two-minute defense, the best defense is a good offense. And Washington had that.

boldness; warfare

away

see when the CAT's away, the mice will play.

B

B
see who SAYS A must say B.

babe
see out of the MOUTHS of babes—.

baby
see don't THROW the baby out with the bathwater.

back
see GOD makes the back to the burden; what is GOT over the Devil's back is spent under his belly; it is the LAST straw that breaks the camel's back; you SCRATCH my back, I'll scratch yours.

A BAD excuse is better than none

1551 Rule of Reason S6 This is as the saie in English, better a badde excuse, then none at all.

1579 School of Abuse 24 A bad excuse is better, they say, then none at all. Hee, because the Frenchmen paid tribute every moneth, into xiii moneths devided the yeere.

1686 in Publications of Prince Society (1867) IV. 30 Philaret .. being loth to dye so early in the morning, would not leave his Cabin .. till he had found his Ruffles: (a bad Excuse, you know, Brother, is better than none).

1821 Letter 29 Aug. in Memoirs (1849) II. vii. The old fellow's look had a glimpse of passing cunning as much as to say, 'A bad excuse is better than none.'

1981 ‘Cassandra’ Bill xiii. What excuse is better than none?

BAD money drives out good

Commonly known as Gresham's Law, after Sir Thomas Gresham (c 1519–79), founder of the Royal Exchange. Gresham saw the economic need to restore the purity of the coinage, though there is no evidence that he actually used this expression. Quot. 1902 states that the principle, not the proverb, is mentioned in Gresham's letter to the Queen. (1858 H. D. MACLEOD Elements of Political Economy 477 He [Gresham] was the first to perceive that a bad and debased currency is the cause of the disappearance of the good money.)


1933 Letter 18 Nov. (1969) 438 Gresham's Law holds good in every field .. and bad politics tends to drive out good politics just as bad money drives out good money.

1952 Journal 16 June in Backbench Diaries (1981) 109 The one thing we all know is that, if you have
Government radio and sponsored radio side by side, the bad currency drives out the good.

1979 Times 12 Dec. 15 Bad money drives out good, by which is meant that a man who has both good and bad money will keep the good and use the bad to settle transactions.

1982 Prejudices 178 Genuine scholars receive grants too, but this misses the crucial point, which is that bad money drives out good, and that only a few years of such handouts to putterers will be enough to convince the American people that Everyman is a humanist.

BAD news travels fast

Cf. 1539 R. TAVERNER tr. Erasmus' Adages II. A4 Sad and heuy tydynges be easly blown abroade be they neuer so vaine and false and they be also sone beleued. In quotes. 1592 and 1694 news is construed as a plural noun, as was usual at this period.

1592 Spanish Tragedy I. B2"Euill newes flie faster still than good.

1694 Terence's Comedies made English 46 Bad News always fly faster than good.

1792 Road to Ruin II. i. All these bills .. brought .. this morning. Ill news travels fast.

1935 Julius Caesar Murder Case xxv. ‘Where’d you get it [a knife]?’ ‘On the Plains of Philippi.’ ‘Bad news travels fast,’ said Hercules.

1976 ‘Vets might Fly xxiii. They say bad news travels fast and I had hardly started my return journey when .. the loudspeaker asked me to report to the manager’s office.


A BAD penny always turns up

The proverb, also used allusively in simile and metaphor (see quotes. 1766 and 1979, second sentence), usually refers to the predictable, and often unwanted, return of a disreputable or prodigal person to his place of origin after some absence. Cf. 1766 A. ADAMS in L. H. Butterfield et al. Adams Family Correspondence (1963) I. 55 Like a bad penny it returnd, to me again.

1824 Redgauntlet II. ii. Bring back Darsie? little doubt of that—the bad shilling is sure enough to come back again.

1884 Fenton Family iii. Just like as not he'll be coming back one of these days, when he's least wanted. A bad penny is sure to return.

1922 Ulysses 149 Who's dead, when and what did he die of? Turn up like a bad penny.

1941 Hills look Down vi. ‘I miss Bart.’ ‘Oh, a bad penny always turns up again.’

1979 Mudflats of Dead iii. ‘Stop worrying. The bad pennies always turn up.’ ‘Oh, Adrian, I don't think she's a bad penny, not really.’

There is no such thing as BAD weather, only the wrong clothes

1980 Washington Post 15 Feb. D1 ‘There's no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothes,’ said Peterson. ‘You want to wear the least you can, and still not get frost-bitten.’

1992 Daily Telegraph 23 Sept. 13 As someone once said, there is no such thing as bad weather, only the wrong clothes.

1994 St. Louis Post-Dispatch 7 Aug. 1T Regarding any rain you may encounter, Muckley says, ‘There is no such thing as bad weather. Just bad clothes.’

A BAD workman blames his tools

Cf. late 13th-cent. Fr. mauvés ovriers ne trovera ja bon hostill, a bad workman will never find a good
tool.

1611 Dict. French & English s.v. Outil, A bungler cannot find (or fit himselfe with) good tooles.

1640 Outlandish Proverbs no. 67 Never had ill workeman good tooles.

1859 Self-Help iv. It is proverbial that the bad workman never yet had a good tool.

1940 Ask Me Tomorrow vii. I’ve read somewhere that a poor workman quarrels with his tools.

1979 Threat Signal Red xv. Damn! Dropped the screwdriver … Bad workmen blame their tools.

**efficiency and inefficiency ; work**

bad

see also give a DOG a bad name and hang him; FIRE is a good servant but a bad master; a GOOD horse cannot be of a bad colour; HARD cases make bad law; HOPE is a good breakfast but a bad supper; NOTHING so bad but it might have been worse; THREE removals are as bad as a fire.

bag

see EMPTY sacks will never stand upright; there's many a GOOD cock come out of a tattered bag.

bairn

see FOOLS and bairns should never see half-done work; the SHOEMAKER'S son always goes barefoot.

As you BAKE, so shall you brew

As you begin, so shall you proceed. Complementary to as you BREW, so shall you bake.

1577 Misogonus III. i. As thou bakst, so shat brewe.

1775 May-Day ii. To keep .. My bones whole and tight, To speak, nor look, would I dare; As they bake they shall brew.

1909 It never can happen Again I. V. Each one [i.e. young person] .. was .. the centre of an incubation of memories that were to last a lifetime. ‘As they bake, so they will brew,’ philosophized Mr. Challis to himself.

**action and con sequence**

bake

see also as you BREW, so shall you bake.

bare

see there goes more to MARRIAGE than four bare legs in a bed.

barefoot

see the SHOEMAKER'S son always goes barefoot.

bargain

see it takes TWO to make a bargain.

bark

see DOGS bark, but the caravan goes on; why KEEP a dog and bark yourself?

A BARKING dog never bites

Cf. Q. CURTIUS De Rebus Gestiis Alexandri Magni VII. iv. 13 canem timidum vehementius latrere quam mordere, a timid cur barks more furiously than he bites [said there to be a Bactrian saying]; 13th-cent. Fr. chacuns chiens qui abaie ne mort pas, the dog that barks does not bite.

1550 Thersytes E1 Great barking dogges, do not most byte And oft it is sene that the best men in the hoost Be not suche, that vse to bragge moste.

1595 Locrine (1908) IV. i. Soft words good sir … A barking dog doth sildome strangers bite.

1629 Book of Merry Riddles 22 A barking dog seldome bites.

1730 Traulus I. 5 Your barking Curs will seldom bite.

1837 Arethusa III. x. Our dogs which bark, Abdallah, seldom bite.

1980 Daily Telegraph 1 May 18 A canvassing candidate came to a house where there was an Alsatian
who barked ferociously. His agent said: ‘Just go in. Don't you know the proverb “A barking dog never bites”? ‘Yes,’ said the candidate, ‘I know the proverb, you know the proverb, but does the dog know the proverb?’

**words and deeds**

**BARNABY bright, Barnaby bright, the longest day and the shortest night**

St. Barnabas' Day, 11 June, was reckoned the longest day of the year under the Old Style calendar. Cf. 1595 SPENSER *Epithalamion* l. 266 This day the sunne is in his chiepest hight, With Barnaby the bright. □1659 Proverbs (English) 20 Barnaby bright, the longest day and shortest night. 1858 Notes & Queries 2nd Ser. VI. 522 In some parts of the country the children call the lady-bird Barnaby Bright, and address it thus:—‘Barnaby Bright, Barnaby Bright, The longest day and the shortest night.’

1906 Country Diary of Edwardian Lady (1977) 72 Barnaby bright All day and no night. 1921 Diary 11 June in Enemies of Promise (1938) xxi. Barnaby bright Barnaby bright The longest day And the shortest night. A bright day indeed. 1978 Calendar of Country Customs vii. Barnaby bright, Barnaby bright, The longest day and the shortest night, is a reminder that, before the change in the calendar in 1752, 11 June was the longest day of the year.

**calendar lore**

**basket**

see don't put all your EGGS in one basket.

**bathwater**

see don't THROW the baby out with the bathwater.

**battalion**

see PROVIDENCE is always on the side of the big battalions.

**battle**

see the RACE is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.

**BE what you would seem to be**

Cf. AESCHYLUS *Seven against Thebes* 1. 592 οὐδὲν καὶ ἑαυτὸς ἀπέχει, for he wishes not to appear but to be the best; SALLUST *Catilina* liv. Esse, quam videri, bonus malebat, he [sc. Cato] preferred to be good, rather than to seem good. □c 1377 Piers Plowman B. x. 253 Suche as thou semest in syghte, be in assay [trial] y-founde. 1547 Treatise of Moral Philosophy II.xi. Be the selfe same that thou pretendest. 1640 Outlandish Proverbs no. 724 Be what thou wouldst seeme to be. 1721 Scottish Proverbs 68 Be what you seem, and seem what you are. The best way! for Hypocrisy is soon discovered. 1865 ‘‘ *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* ix. It's a vegetable. It doesn't look like one, but it is …The moral of that is—‘Be what you would seem to be.’ 1980 in Winter Crimes 12 158 The Benningworth family motto Esse quam videri, ‘to be rather than to seem to be’.

**appearance**

**bean**

see CANDLEMAS day, put beans in the clay, put candles and candlesticks away.

**BEAR and forbear**

Cf. EPICTETUS Fragments x. ἅπαξ λαμβάνειν, ὑπάρχειν, be patient and endure; ERASMUS Adages II. vii. 13 sustine et abstine.
Both beare and forbeare, now and then as ye may, then wench God a mercy [reward you], thy husband will say.

To bear and forbear here, will tend to rest.

I know that in this world one must bear and forbear.

The golden rule of married life is, ‘Bear and forbear’.

You must take two bears two live with you—Bear and Forbear.

If you can't BEAT them, join them

Beat is usually replaced by lick in the US.

There is an old political adage which says ‘If you can't lick 'em, jine 'em’.

It was vital to him to get the reins back into his own hands again. He remembered an old adage: ‘If you can't lick 'em join 'em.’

I said, Running things, what's the point? He said, If you can't beat them, join them!

‘Well,’ he said, ‘as the old saying goes, Katie girl, if you can't lick 'em, join 'em.’

Having taken it on the chin so convincingly, brokers have decided that, If you can't beat 'em, join 'em.

One hair of a woman draws more than a hundred yoke of oxen.

Not ten yoke of oxen Have the power to draw us Like a woman’s hair.

Beauty draws me with a single hair if it's blonde enough.

The old adage .. that ‘beauty draws more than oxen.’

Beauty, gentlemen, is in the eye, I aver it to be in the eye of the beholder and
not in the object itself.

1847 Jane Eyre II. ii. Most true is it that ‘beauty is in the eye of the gazer’.
1878 Molly Bawn I. xiii. ‘I have heard she is beautiful—is she?’ ‘Beauty is in the eye of the beholder,’ quotes Marcia.
1940 Scott of Antarctic II. 48 ‘Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.’ The eye, which is the reflector of the external world, is also the mirror of the soul within.
1997 Washington Post 26 Sept. C5 Beauty—they say it’s in the eye of the beholder. But I question whether it really has that much to do with the eyes.

beauty; love; taste

BEAUTY is only skin-deep

Physical beauty is no guarantee of good character, temperament, etc. Cf. a 1613 T. OVERBURY Wife (1614) B8V All the carnall beautie of my wife, Is but skinne-deep.

1616 Select Second Husband B3 Beauty’s but skin-deepe.
1742 Pamela IV. Ix. Beauty is but .. a mere skin-deep perfection.
1829 Advice to Young Men III. cxxix. The less favoured part of the sex say, that ‘beauty is but skin deep’.. but it is very agreeable though, for all that.
1882 Bond & Free xiii. Mother used to say that beauty was only skin deep, but I never before realized that bones could be so fearfully repulsive.
1921 Traveller in Little Things iv. It is only the ugly (and bad) who fondly cherish the delusion that beauty .. is only skin-deep and the rest of it.
1978 ‘44 Vintage xix. Beauty is only skin-deep, but it's only the skin you see.

beauty

bed
see EARLY to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise; as you MAKE your bed, so you must lie upon it; there goes more to MARRIAGE than four bare legs in a bed.

bedfellow
see ADVERSITY makes strange bedfellows; POLITICS makes strange bedfellows.

beer
see he that DRINKS beer, thinks beer; LIFE isn't all beer and skittles; TURKEY, heresy, hops, and beer came into England all in one year.

Where BEES are, there is honey

1616 Adages 77 Where Bees are, there is honie.
1670 English Proverbs 60 Where Bees are, there is honey. Where there are industrious persons, there is wealth, for the hand of the diligent maketh rich. This we see verified in our neighbours the Hollanders.
1748 Word in Season 6 Take away the Bees, and .. you shall have no Honey in the Hive,.. but there always will be Honey where there are Bees.
1931 Cape Cod Mystery ix. It'd look .. like they was something afoot, bein’ as how there’s bees where's honey.

associates; diligence

beforehand
see PAY beforehand was never well served.

beget
see LENGTH begets loathing; LOVE begets love.

Set a BEGGAR on horseback, and he'll ride to the Devil
A proverb (now frequently used elliptically) with many variations, meaning that one unaccustomed to power or luxury will abuse it or be corrupted by it.

1576 Petit Palace 76 Set a Beggar on horsebacke, and he wyl neuer alight.
1591 Henry VI, Pt. 3 i. iv. 127 It needs not .. proud queen; Unless the adage must be verified, That beggars mounted run their horse to death.
1592 Pierce Penniless I. 174 These whelpes .. drawne vp to the heauen of honor from the dunghill of abiect fortune, haue long been on horseback to come riding to your Diuelship.
1616 Sacrifice of Thankfulness 6 He that serues the Flesh serues his fellow: And a Beggar mounted on the backe of Honour, rides post to the Diuell.
1669 New Help to Discourse 151 Set a Beggar on Horse-back, and he will ride to the Devil.
1855 North & South I. x. You know the proverb ...‘Set a beggar on horseback, and he'll ride to the devil,’—well, some of these early manufacturers did ride to the devil in magnificent style.
1923 Affair at Flower Acres ii. I should think your early days of forced economy would have taught you not to be quite so extravagant. But there's an old proverb—‘Set a beggar on horse-back—’ and so forth, that jolly well fits you.
1945 Enemy at Gate 21 The plebeians .. eventually attained to that comfortless pre-eminence .. which can only be experienced by beggars on horseback devoid of all aptitude .. for the precarious art of equitation.
1961 Scandalous Regent X. He had a good deal of the vulgarity and insolence of the beggar on horseback.

**good fortune ; pride**

beggar see also SUE a beggar and catch a louse; if WISHES were horses, beggars would ride.

**BEGGARS can't be choosers**
The substitution of can't for must not is a recent development. Cf. mid 15th-cent. Fr. qui empruncte ne peult choisir, he who borrows cannot choose.

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs I. X. D1 Folke say alwaie, beggers shulde be no choosers.
1579 Apology of School of Abuse in Ephemerides of Phialo 90V Beggars, you know, muste bee no chosers.
1728 Journey to London III. i. My Lords, says I, Beggars must not be Chusers; but some Place about a thousand a Year .. might do pretty weel.
1863 Hard Cash xxiii. The dustman .. grumbled at the paper and the bones, he did. So I told him beggars mustn't be choosers.
1888 Snatched from Poor House iv. Crawl out o' that bed! I'spose you do feel a little bad, but 'beggars can't be choosers!'
1939 Blanche Fury 72 ‘I suppose .. you would marry any man with a good character and a fine estate.’.. ‘Beggars can't be choosers, you mean!’
1985 Case of Hardboiled Dicks ix. It wasn't a good idea, but it was my first one in just over eight chapters and beggars can't be choosers.

**necessity ; poverty**

begin see CHARITY begins at home; LIFE begins at forty; the LONGEST journey begins with a single step; when THINGS are at the worst they begin to mend; also BEGUN.

beginning see a GOOD beginning makes a good ending.
see **the SOONER begun, the sooner done; WELL begun is half done.**

**beholder**
see **BEAUTY is in the eye of the beholder.**

**BELIEVE nothing of what you hear, and only half of what you see**

Cf. a 1300 Proverbs of Alfred (1907) 35 Gin thu neuere leuen alle monnis spechen, Ne alle the thinge that thu herest singen; 1770 C. CARROLL Letter 4 Sept. in Maryland Hist. Mag. (1918) XIII. 58 You must not take Everything to be true that is told to you.

□1845 in Graham's Mag. Nov. 194 You are young yet .. but the time will arrive when you will learn to judge for yourself ... Believe nothing you hear, and only one half that you see.

1858 Woman's Thoughts about Women viii. ‘Believe only half of what you see, and nothing that you hear,’ is a cynical saying, and yet less bitter than at first appears.

1933 “’ Slade of Yard xix. It's a good plan to believe half you see and nothing you hear.

1979 Green River High ii. I listened with the old magician's warning lively in my mind; believe nothing of what you hear—and only half of what you see!

**rumour ; trust and scepticism**

**believing**
see **SEEING is believing.**

**A BELLOWING cow soon forgets her calf**

An excessive show of grief (at a bereavement) quickly passes. Cf. 1553 T. WILSON Art of Rhetoric 42 The Cowe lackyng her Caulfe, leaueth Loweyng within three or foure daies at the farthest.

□1895 Household Tales 142 In the East Riding they say, ‘A bletherin' coo soon forgets her calf,’ meaning that excessive grief does not last long.

1928 London Mercury Feb. 439 Common proverb in the West Country is ‘A belving cow soon forgets her calf’.

1945 Lark Rise xxxiv. When a woman, newly widowed, had tried to throw herself into her husband's grave at his funeral .. some one .. said drily ..‘Ah, you wait. The bellowing cow's always the first to forget its calf.’

**forgetfulness ; words and deeds**

**belly**
see **what is GOT over the Devil's back is spent under his belly.**

**bent**
see **as the TWIG is bent, so is the tree inclined.**

**All's for the BEST in the best of all possible worlds**

This saying translates Voltaire's Tout est pour le mieux dans le meilleur des mondes possibles, the observation which the philosophical optimist Dr Pangloss in Candide (1759) persists in making, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

□1911 Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet 299 The administrative departments were consuming miles of red tape in the correctest forms of activity, and everything was for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

1943 Moving Finger xv. I agreed with happy Miss Emily that everything was for the best in the best of possible worlds.

1961 Ice in Bedroom ii. Fate had handed him the most stupendous bit of goose [luck] and .. all was for the best in this best of all possible worlds.

**content and discontent ; optimism**

The BEST is the enemy of the good
Also the GOOD is the enemy of the best. Cf. 1770 VOLTAIRE Questions sur L'Encyclopédie II. 250 c'est
bien ici qu'on peut dire Il meglio e l'inimico del bene, and 1772—La Béguéle in Œuvres Complètes (1877) X. 50 le mieux est l'ennemi du bien.

1861 Commentary on Epistles to Seven Churches in Asia p. v. ‘The best is oftentimes the enemy of the good’; and .. many a good book has remained unwritten .. because there floated before the mind’s eye .. the ideal of a better or a best.

1925 Times 1 Dec. 16 This is not the first time in the history of the world when the best has been the enemy of the good; .. one single step on .. solid ground may be more profitable than a more ambitious flight.

1960 Letter 1 June in Dai Greatcoat (1980) III. 182 Tom told me a very good Spanish proverb: ‘The best is the enemy of the good.’

1981 Times 2 Mar. 13 To maintain that all that a school provides must be provided free makes the best the enemy of the good.

### good things
The BEST-laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley
Often used allusively in shortened form (see quot. 1911 and 1982). Gang aft agley means ‘often go awry’.

1786 Poems 140 The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men, Gang aft agley.

1911 Letter 21 Sept. (1979) I. 305 I am sorry the bookbinding has gone pop. But there ‘The best laid schemes’ etc. etc.

1982 Murder at Tomorrow (1983) vii. I can't say I loved the man, but ... I didn't expect to see him murdered. Well, the best-laid plans of mice and men ... Who did it?


### Intentions ; wanting and having
The BEST of friends must part
Cf. c 1385 CHAUCER Troilus & Criseyde v. 343 Alwey frendes may nat ben yfere [may not be together].

1611 May-Day IV. 70 Friends must part, we came not all together, and we must not goe all together.

1685 in Publications of Prince Society (1867) 10 But the dearest friends must part.

1784 Tour in USA I. xxxvii. Sooner or later, all, even the dearest of friends, must part.

1821 Kenilworth I. xi. ‘You are going to leave me, then?’.. ‘The best of friends must part, Flibbertigibbet.’

1910 Sketches & Snapshots 212 But the best of friends must part, and it is time to take our leave of this .. high-souled cavalier.

1979 Darkness Visible ii. ‘Aren't there going to be any more lessons?’.. ‘The best of friends must part.’

### absence ; friends
The BEST of men are but men at best

1680 Letter 15 June in Brief Lives (1898) I. 12 I remember one sayeing of generall Lambert's, that ‘the best of men are but men at best’.

1885 Moon Lore 191 We can but repeat to ourselves the saying, ‘The best of men are but men at best’.

### human nature ; virtue
The BEST things come in small packages
Parcels sometimes replaces packages. Cf. 13th-cent. Fr. menue[s] parceles ensemble sunt beles, small packages considered together are beautiful; 1659 J. HOWELL Proverbs (French) 10 The best ointments are put in little boxes.
As the best things are (said to be) wrapped in small parcels (proverb), I select the smallest sheet of paper I can find .. to make you acquainted with the .. state of affairs.

The best things in life are free

The moon belongs to ev'ryone, The best things in life are free, The stars belong to ev'ryone, They gleam there for you and me.

In gloomy tones we need not cry: ‘How many things there are to buy!’ Here is a thought for you and me: ‘The best things in life are free.’

Someone once told them the best things in life are free, and so they've got in the habit of not paying.

‘That's the first time I ever paid anyone for a kiss,’ she said … ‘I didn't take the money.’ ‘The best things in life are free,’ she said.

The best things in life are free, The stars belong to ev'ryone, They gleam there for you and me.

Better is a dinner of green herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.

When you think of that amorous and herbivorous parish of Covent Garden, and compare it with my agricultural benefice, you will say, ‘Better is the dinner of herbs where love is, than the stalled ox,’ etc. etc.
of herbs than a stalled ox where hate is'.

1979 I saw Him Die viii. Lunch was a silent affair … I said, ‘‘Better a dinner of herbs than a stalled ox where hate is.”

content and discontent ; food and drink ; malice

BETTER a good cow than a cow of a good kind
A good character is better than a distinguished family.

1922 Huntingtower X. I'm no weel acquaint wi' his forbears, but I'm weel eneuch acquaint wi' Sir Erchie, and ‘better a guid coo than a coo o' a guid kind’, as my mither used to say.

family ; human nature

BETTER be an old man's darling, than a young man's slave

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs II. vii. 13 Many yeres sens, my mother seyd to me, Hyr elders wold saie, it ys better to be An olde mans derlyng, then a yong mans werlyng [object of scorn].

1721 Scottish Proverbs 74 Better an old Man's Darling, than a young Man's Wonderling, say the Scots, Warling, say the English.

1859 Love & Fortune 8 Let defeated rivals snarling, Talk of one foot in the grave. Better be an old man’s darling, Than become a young man’s slave.

1885 How to be Happy though Married v. Perhaps the majority of girls would rather be a young man's slave than an old man's darling.

1980 Marsh Blood ix. Find yourself an older man. Much better to be an old man's darling, than a young man's slave.

love ; wives and husbands

BETTER be envied than pitied

Cf. PINDAR Pythian Odes I. 163 , envy is stronger than pity; HERODOTUS Hist. iii. 52 , it is better to be envied than to be pitied; mid 15th-cent. Fr. trop plus vaut estre envié que plaint, it is much better to be envied than pitied; ERASMUS Adages IV. iv. 87 praestat invidiosum esse quam miserabilem.

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs I. xi. D2 Sonne, better be envied then pitied, folke sey.

1631 Poems (1633) 94 Men say, and truly, that they better be Which be envyed then pittied.

1902 Onlooker's Note-Book xxxiii. Her friend responded sympathetically, ‘My dear, I'd much rather be envied than pitied.’

malice ; pity

BETTER be out of the world than out of the fashion

1639 Paræmiologia Anglo-Latina 171 As good out of th' world as out o' th' fashion.

1738 Polite Conversation II. 117 ‘Why, Tom, you are high in the Mode.’..‘It is better to be out of the World, than out of the Fashion.’

1903 From Window in Chelsea IV. Women seem seldom hindered by lack of money when it is a case of follow-my-leader. ‘Better be out of the world than out of the fashion.’

1935 If I were Dictator i. Dictatorships are fashionable just now. There was an old-time song which said ‘If you are out of the fashion you had better leave the world.’

novelty

BETTER be safe than sorry

Now very often in the form better safe than sorry.

1837 Rory O'More II. xxii. ‘Jist countin' them,—is there any harm in that?’ said the tinker: ‘it's better
be sure than sorry’.

1933 Radio Times 14 Apr. 125 Cheap distempers very soon crack or fade. Better be safe than sorry. Ask for Hall’s.

1972 Hide & Seek vii. It’s not that I want to shut you in .. but—well, it’s better to be safe than sorry.

1984 Unexpected Developments XX. ‘Look, I don’t want this getting out, but better safe than sorry,’ he said, lowering his voice instinctively.

1995 And Hope to Die iii. 37 ‘It’ll have to be taken away,’ said Derek morosely. ‘Better be safe than sorry.’

1996 Death’s Autograph xiv. 143 ‘Until we know the reason for all this, you can’t be sure. Better safe than sorry.’

prudence; security

BETTER late than never

Cf. DIONYSIUS OF HALICARNASSUS Roman Antiquities ix. 9 καθοριστατικον παραειναι, it is better to start doing what one has to late than not at all; LIVY Hist. IV.ii. potius sero quam nunquam.

c 1330 in Die Mittelenglische Gregoriuslegende (1941) 146 A. Better is lat than neuer blinne [cease] Our soules to maken fre.

c 1450 Assembly of Gods (EETS) I. 1204 Vyce to forsake ys bettyr late then neuer.

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs I.x. C4 Things done, can not be vndoone,. But better late then neuer to repent this.

1708 Conquest of Syria I. 276 Whilst he was murdering the unhappy Aleppians, Caled (better late than never) came to their Relief.

1852 Two Guardians xviii. She obtained from Agnes some admiration for Caroline’s conduct, though in somewhat of the ‘better late than never style’.

1954 Letter 16 Sept. (1969) 711 I am sorry your holiday will have to be postponed so long; but better late than never.

1985 Embrace Wolf iii. It took my father ten years to get over the disappointment, but he did. Better late than never.

1997 Washington Post 30 Jan. A19 Well, better late than never. As the century closes, we have come upon a cure for the century's defining disorder, political zealotry.

lateness

BETTER one house spoiled than two

Said of two foolish or wicked people joined in marriage and troubling only themselves. spoiled or (spilled [destroyed]) is sometimes contrasted with filled (see quot. 1670 and 1805).

1586 tr. de la Primaudaye's French Academy xlvi. The wicked and reprobate, of whom that common proverbe is spoken, that it is better one house be troubled with them than twaine.

1587 Penelope's Web V. 162 The old proverbe is fulfild, better one house troubled than two.

1670 English Proverbs 51 Better one house fill'd then two spill'd. This we use when we hear of a bad Jack who hath married as bad a Jyll.

1805 Diary 28 May (1911) III. 161 One of the company discovering a disposition to speak much of his own wife .. the Gen. observed .. One house filled was better than two spoiled.

1924 Folk-Lore XXXV. 358 Better one house spoilt than two (said when a witless a man marries a foolish woman).

marriage

The BETTER the day, the better the deed
Frequently used to justify working on a Sunday or Holy Day. Cf. early 14th-cent. Fr. *a bon jour bone euvre*, for a good day, a good deed.

1607 Michaelmas Term III. i. Why, do you work a' Sundays, tailor? The better day the better deed, we think.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 328 The better Day, the better Deed. I never heard this used but when People say that they did such an ill thing on Sunday.

1896 Crown & Anchor xiii. The better the day, the better the deed. It was only the Pharisees who objected to any necessary work being done on the Sabbath.

1938 Circus is Coming x. It was Good Friday ... ‘Us for the station to fetch that box ... The better the day the better the deed.’

1971 Twinkle, twinkle, Little Spy ix. ‘Merry Christmas,’ I said. ‘The better the day, the better the deed.’

1989 Holy Treasure! xviii. I'm cooking between church services. Well, the better the day the better the deed.

1995 Death of Prodigal ‘And he was coming back here with us after, for Sunday lunch. I've just cleaned the car in his honour, too. The better the day, the better the deed, like.’

**action and inaction**

**BETTER the devil you know than the devil you don't know**

Cf. 1539 R. TAVENER tr. Erasmus' Adages 48 *Nota res mala, optima.* An euyl thynge knowen is best. It is good kepyng of a shrew [a scolding or ill-tempered woman] that a man knoweth; 1576 G. PETTIE Petit Palace 84 You had rather keepe those whom you know, though with some faultes, then take those whom you knowe not, perchaunce with moy faultes; 1586 D. ROWLAND tr. Lazarillo de Tormes H6V The olde prouerbe: Better is the euill knowne, than the good which is yet to knowe.

1857 Barchester Towers II. vii. ‘Better the d—you know than the d—you don't know,’ is an old saying .. but the bishop had not yet realised the truth of it.

1937 Letter 16 May in Young Man's Country (1977) ii. Habit has practically made me resigned to Madaripur—‘Better the devil you know than the devil you don't.’

1973 Devil you Don't 138 ‘Better the devil you know than the devil you don’t’... It makes good sense. Take your lot out, and we could have a right bastard move in and set up shop.

1983 Fool for Murder ix. The devil you know is better than the devil you don't know was a highly suspect concept, I realized suddenly. Both Aunt Maddy and I knew what would have happened to us if Davina had become the new Lady Creighleigh. Whereas the unknown quantity was less of a danger.

**familiarity**

It is BETTER to be born lucky than rich

1639 Paræmiologia Anglo-Latina 49 Better to have good fortune then be a rich mans child.

1784 New Foundling Hospital for Wit (new ed.) IV. 128 Estate and honours! mere caprich! Better be fortunate than rich: Since oft me find .. Is verify'd what proverbs prate.

1846 Denham Tracts (1892) I. 224 Better to be born lucky than rich.

1852 Clovernook 248 What good luck some people always have ... It's better to be born lucky than rich.

1926 in Harper's Bazaar July 97 ‘Then what is luck, mother?’ ‘It's what causes you to have money. If you are lucky you have money. That's why it's better to be born lucky than rich. If you're rich you may lose your money. But if you're lucky, you will always get more money.’

1980 Somerset Maugham XV. This was Maugham at his most lighthearted, exposing the fallacy of the moralist position. ‘I'm glad to be able to tell you that it has a moral,’ he said, ‘and that is: it's better to be born lucky than to be born rich.’

**luck ; riches**
It is BETTER to give than to receive

The AV form is also used: ACTS xx. 35 It is more blessed to give, than to receive.

1390 Confessio Amantis v. 7725 Betre is to yive than to take.

1527 tr. Erasmus' Sayings of Wise Men B2 It is better to gyue than to take, for he that takethe a gyfte of another is bonde to quyte [repay] it, so that his lyberte is gone.

1710 Proverbs 351 'Tis better to Give than to Receive, but yet 'tis Madness to give so much Charity to Others, as to become the Subject of it our Selves.

1968 “ Come to Dust xxiii. John Thatcher .. had been on the receiving end of too much discomfort lately. It is always more blessed to give than to receive.

1980 Times (Christmas Supplement) 15 Nov. p. i. There is no harm in reminding your relatives and friends that it is better to give than to receive.

BETTER to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all

1700 Way of World II. i. Say what you will, 'tis better to be left, than never to have lov'd.

1812 Tales xiv. Better to love amiss than nothing to have lov'd.

1850 In Memoriam xxvii. 44 'Tis better to have loved and lost Than never to have loved at all.

1938 Jane & Prudence i. One wondered if it was really better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all, when poor Prudence seemed to have lost so many times.

1980 Secret Servant xxviii. In politics, it is better never to have loved at all than to have loved and lost.

It is BETTER to travel hopefully than to arrive

1881 Virginibus Puerisque iv. 190 To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive, and the true success is to labour.

1918 in English Review Jan. 29 Love is strictly a travelling. ‘It is better to travel than to arrive,’ somebody has said.

1959 “ My Friend Muriel ii. 83 Remember,.. it is better to travel hopefully than to arrive. The satisfaction lies mainly in the travelling.

1981 Times Literary Supplement 7 Aug. 904 Faculty councils and the like—whose motto seems to be that it is better to travel hopefully than to arrive—.. don't want to hear about any change.

1997 Times 9 Aug. 18 Well, as that Edinburgh resident Robert Louis Stevenson noted: ‘To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive.’ The trouble with the festival is that it stopped travelling hopefully years ago.

It is BETTER to wear out than to rust out

It is better to remain active than to succumb to idleness: used particularly with reference to elderly people. Frequently attributed in its current form to Bishop Richard Cumberland (d. 1718). Cf. 1557 R. EDGEWORTH Sermons A1V Better it is to shine with laboure, then to rouste for idlenes; 1598 SHAKESPEARE Henry IV, Pt. 2 I. ii. 206 I were better to be eaten to death with a rust than to be scoured to nothing with perpetual motion.

1820 in Life of Wesley II. xxv. I had rather wear out than rust out.

1834 Helen II. xiii. Helen .. trembled for her health .. but she repeated her favourite maxim—‘Better to wear out, than to rust out.’

1947 Victim xvii. It was better to wear out than to rust out, as was often quoted. He was a hard worker himself.
1972 Times 24 May 16 ‘A man will rust out sooner’n he’ll wear out’ is one of his oft-repeated maxims.

action and inaction; old age

BETTER wed over the mixen than over the moor

It is better to marry a neighbour than a stranger. For mixer, see quot. 1661.


a 1661 Worthies (Cheshire) 174 Better Wed over the Mixon [midden] then over the Moor .. that is, hard by or at home, Mixon being that heap of Compost which lyeth in the yards of good husbands.

1818 Heart of Midlothian III. vi. He might hae dune waur [worse] than married me …Better wed over the mixen as over the moor, as they say in Yorkshire.

1874 Far from Madding Crowd I. xxii. ‘That means matrimony.’ .. ‘Well, better wed over the mixen than over the moor,’ said Laban Tall.

familiarity; marriage

better

see also DISCRETION is the better part of valour; the GREY mare is the better horse; a LIVE dog is better than a dead lion.

BETWEEN two stools one falls to the ground

Inability to choose between, or accommodate oneself to, alternative viewpoints or courses of action may end in disaster. Now more common in the metaphorical phrase to fall between two stools. Cf. medieval L. labitur enitens sellis herere duabus, he falls trying to sit on two seats; also current in early 16th-cent. German (woodcut in Thomas Murner’s Schelmenzunft, 1516).

® c 1390 Confessio Amantis IV. 626 Thou farst [farest] as he betwen tuo stoles That wolde sitte and goth to gronde.

® c 1530 Commonplace Book (EETS) 129 Betwen two stolis, the ars goth to grwnd.

1731 Tom Thumb II. x. While the two Stools her Sitting Part confound, Between 'em both fall Squat upon the Ground.

1841 Old Curiosity Shop I. XXXIII. She was .. still in daily occupation of her old stool opposite to that of her brother Sampson. And equally certain it is, by the way, that between these two stools a great many people had come to the ground.

1907 Alice-for-Short xvi. Your mother wants to put it off on me …But I won't be let into saying anything …Charles saw that between the two stools the young couple wouldn't fall to the ground, but would go to the altar.

1979 Nancy Cunard xxi. Politically, Nancy had fallen between stools.

decision and indecision

beware

see let the BUYER beware; beware of an OAK it draws the stroke.

BIG fish eat little fish

a 1200 Old English Homilies (EETS) 2nd Ser. 179 The more [bigger] fishes in the se eten the lasse [smaller].

c 1300 in English Metrical Homilies (1862) 136 Al this werld es bot a se,.. And gret fisches etes the smale. For riche men of this werld [world] etes, That pouer [the poor] wit thair travail getes.

1608 Pericles II. i. 27 Master, I marvel how the fishes live in the sea. —Why, as men do a-land—the great ones eat up the little ones.

1979 New Society 6 Dec. 557 The state today .. seems like nothing so much [as] a huge aquarium …Big fish eat little fish, and the great fish eat the big.
BIG fleas have little fleas upon their backs to bite them, and little fleas have lesser fleas, and so ad infinitum

1733 Poems II. 651 The Vermin only teaze and pinch Their Foes superior by an Inch. So Nat’ralists observe, a Flea Hath smaller Fleas that on him prey, And these have smaller Fleas to bite’ em, And so proceed ad infinitum.

1872 Budget of Paradoxes 377 Great fleas have little fleas upon their backs to bite’ em, And little fleas have lesser fleas, and so ad infinitum. And the great fleas themselves, in turn, have greater fleas to go on; While these again have greater still, and greater still, and so on.

1979 Posthumous Paper ii. There will be a long article in the Sunday Chronicle .. and I’m afraid the Sunday Grub has got onto the story as well. Big fleas and little fleas, you know—.

associates; great and small

big
see also PROVIDENCE is always on the side of the big battalions.

The BIGGER they are, the harder they fall
Commonly attributed to the boxer Robert Fitzsimmons, prior to a fight c 1900 (see quot. 1902). (Come is sometimes used instead of are.) A similar form is however found in earlier related proverbs, such as: 1493 H. PARKER Dives & Pauper R7V It is more synne in the man For the higher degre [position] the harder is the fal; 1670 J. RAY English Proverbs 102 The higher standing the lower fall. The idea can be traced back at least as far as the 4th-cent. AD Latin poet Claudian (In Rufinum I. 22 Tolluntur in altum Ut lapsu graviore ruant, men are raised on high in order that they may fall more heavily).

1902 National Police Gazette 27 Sept. 6 ‘If I can get close enough,’ he [Fitzsimmons] once said, ‘I’ll guarantee to stop almost anybody. The bigger the man, the heavier the fall.’

1927 ‘’ Mosaic Earring i. ‘I haven’t seen .. even an imitation of the blossom I would have to find before I surrender my sweet freedom.’ ‘The bigger they are, the harder they fall.’

1942 Footsteps behind Her IV. 157 Those guys don’t bother me. The bigger they are, the harder they fall.

1971 (song-title) The bigger they come the harder they fall.

1981 Promises to Keep ix. ‘I thought a big, beautiful place like this would be an exception to the general decline.’ ‘Sometimes,’ Mrs. Benjamin said sagely, ‘the bigger they are, the harder they fall.’

great and small; misfortune

bill
see DEATH pays all debts.

billet
see every BULLET has its billet.

bind
see SAFE bind, safe find.

binding
see you can’t tell a BOOK by its cover.

A BIRD in the hand is worth two in the bush
Parodied by the American actress Mae West (1892–1980) in the 1934 movie Belle of the Nineties: ‘A man in the house is worth two in the street.’ It is better to accept what one has than to try to get more and risk losing everything. Cf. 13th-cent. L. plus valet in manibus avis unica quam dupla silvis, one bird in the hands is worth more than two in the woods.

1450 Life of St. Katharine (EETS) II. iii. It is more sekyr [certain] a byrd in your fest, Than to haue three in the sky a-boue.
1470 Harley MS 3362 f.4 Betyr ys a byrd in the hond than tweye in the wode.
1581 Conflict of Conscience IV.i. You haue spoken reasonably, but yet as they say, One Birde in the hande, is worth two in the bush.
1678 Pilgrim's Progress I. 42 That Proverb, A Bird in the hand is worth two in the Bush, is of more Authority with them, then are all . testomemies of the good of the world to come.
1829 Boxiana 2nd Ser. II. 507 We have stated thus much to show how the London Fancy [boxing fans] were 'thrown out' of the above fight; likewise, to bear in mind, in future, ‘that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush’.
1973 Honorary Consul II. iii. We have an expression in English—A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. I don’t know anything about that ‘afterwards’. I only know I would like to live another ten years.


prudence ; risk

A BIRD never flew on one wing
Mainly Scottish and Irish. Now frequently used to justify a further gift, esp. another drink.
1721 Scottish Proverbs 308 The Bird must flighter [flutter] that flies with one Wing. Spoken by them who have Interest only in one side of the House.
1824 Inheritance III. xxxii. ‘The bird maun flichter that flees wi' ae wing'— but ye's haud up your head yet in spite o' them a'.
1914 Folk of Furry Farm ii. He held out a shilling to Hughie. ‘A bird never yet flew upon the one wing, Mr. Heffernan!’ said Hughie, that was looking to get another shilling.
1925 Juno & Paycock III. 89 Fourpence, given to make up the price of a pint, on th' principle that no bird ever flew on wan wing.

food and drink

bird
see also as good be an ADDLED egg as an idle bird; you cannot CATCH old birds with chaff; the EARLY bird catches the worm; FINE feathers make fine birds; it's an ILL bird that fouls its own nest; in vain the NET is spread in the sight of the bird.

There are no BIRDS in last year's nest
Circumstances have altered.
1620 tr. Cervantes' Don Quixote II. lxxiv. I pray you go not on so fast, since that in the nests of the last yeere, there are no birds of this yeere. Whilom [formerly] I was a foole, but now I am wise.
1732 Gnomologia no. 4863 There are no Birds this Year, in last year's Nest.
1845 Poems 62 All things are new .. even the nest beneath the eaves;—There are no birds in last year's nest.
1926 Times 19 Jan. 15 Things may not be as they were; ‘there are no birds in last year's nest’, and there may be no fish in the old rivers.
1946 Unkindly Cup I.ii. 23 ‘I am not as bad, or as unfeeling as I sound. It was my memory that was groaning—not the other part of my anatomy.’ “There are no birds in last year's nests”, Bland quoted sententiously.

change ; circumstances

BIRDS in their little nests agree
A nursery proverb, also used as a direction, which states that young children should not argue among themselves.
1715 Divine Songs 25 Birds in their little Nests agree; And 'tis a shameful Sight, When Children of one Family Fall out, and chide, and fight.
1868 Little Women i. ‘Birds in their little nests agree,’ sang Beth, the peacemaker.
1941 Little Town on Prairie xiv. ‘Birds in their little nests agree,’ she said, smiling. She knew nothing at all about birds.

1961 Winter of our Discontent I.i. ‘Birds in their little nests agree,’ he said. ‘So why can't we?..You kids can't get along even on a pretty morning.’

1980 Birds of Air 52 Her mother used to say to her and Mary: ‘Birds in their little nests agree.’

harmony

BIRDS of a feather flock together

People of the same (usually, unscrupulous) character associate with one another, as do birds of the same species. Cf. Ecclesiasticus xxvii. 9 (AV) The birds will resort unto their like, so will truth return unto them that practise in her.

1545 Rescuing of Romish Fox B8 Byrdes of on kynde and color flok and flye allways together.

1599 Spanish Grammar 83 Birdes of a feather will flocke together.

1660 Nonsuch Professor 81 Our English Proverb.. That birds of a feather will flock together. To be too intimate with sinners, is to intimate that you are sinners.

1828 Pelham III. xv. It is literally true in the systematised roguery of London, that ‘birds of a feather flock together.’

1974 Child in Forest 14 Birds of a feather flock together, and in our village the few feckless .. tended to live at one end; the prim .. and prosperous at the other.

1983 “Sleepers of Erin xviii. Maybe it really was the one that had been parked next to Michael Fenner's grand posh Rover outside his bookseller's place ... Well, birds of a feather and all that.

associates; human nature; similarity and dissimilarity

Little BIRDS that can sing and won't sing must be made to sing

1678 English Proverbs (ed. 2) 343 The bird that can sing and will not sing must be made to sing.

1846 Cricket on Hearth ii. ‘The bird that can sing and won't sing, must be made to sing, they say,’ grumbled Tackleton. ‘What about the owl that can't sing, and oughtn't to sing, and will sing?’

1888 Troy Town i. ‘A little music might perhaps leave a pleasant taste.’..‘Come, Sophy! Remember the proverb about little birds that can sing and won't sing?’

1904 Napoleon of Notting Hill II. i. When the disdainful oligarchs declined to join in the songs of the men of the Broadway ..., the great Republican leader, with his rough humour, said the words which are written in gold upon his monument, ‘Little birds that can sing and won't sing, must be made to sing.’

1952 Little Benders 18 Heaven wasn't so far away when you could do your own singing about it. Mama believed that and many a time she said, ‘A body who can sing and won't sing ought to be made to sing.’

obstinacy; speech and silence

bite

see (noun) a BLEATING sheep loses a bite; every DOG is allowed one bite; (verb) a BARKING dog never bites; BIG fleas have little fleas upon their backs to bite them; DEAD men don't bite.

bitten

see ONCE bitten, twice shy.

black

see the DEVIL is not so black as he is painted; FEBRUARY fill dyke, be it black or be it white; TWO blacks don't make a white.

blame

see a BAD workman blames his tools; COMMON fame is seldom to blame.

A BLEATING sheep loses a bite
Opportunities are missed through too much chatter.

Dialogues in Spanish 20 That sheepe that bleateth looseth a bit [mouthful].

A bleating sheep loseth her pasture.

Tom Brown at Oxford II. vii. He said something about a bleating sheep losing a bite; but I should think this young man is not much of a talker.

Most Secret War xlv. I thought of reminding him [Churchill] of an adage that I had learnt from my grandfather: ‘Every time a sheep bleats it loses a nibble.’

**Opportunity, missed; speech and silence**

**BLESSED is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed**

Letter 6 Oct. (1956) II. 453 I have .. repeated to you, a ninth Beatitude .. ‘Blessed is he who expect nothing, for he shall never be disappointed.’

Poor Richard's Almanack (May) Blessed is he that expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed.

Times Literary Supplement 5 Oct. 359 Evidently Sir Edwin's hope is not too roseate, and he is among those who are accounted blessed because they expect little.

Emerald Necklace xix. ‘When I get back .. I shall expect to find all our luggage in the hall.’ ‘Blessed is he that expecteth nothing,’ said Louis, ‘for he shall not be disappointed.’

Fortnight by Sea xix. ‘We'll soon see,’ he said pleasantly. ‘Expect nothing, then you'll never be disappointed. I dare say some perspicacious Chinaman said that at some time or other.’

Washington Times 28 Feb. C16 My dear grandmother .. gave me a plaque many years ago that contains a motto to live by: ‘Blessed are those who expect nothing, for they will not be disappointed.’

**blessings; disappointment**

**blessed**

see also it is BETTER to give than to receive; blessed are the DEAD that the rain rains on.

**BLESSINGS brighten as they take their flight**

Cf. 1732 T. FULLER Gnomologia no. 989 Blessings are not valued, till they are gone.

Night Thoughts II. 37 How blessings brighten as they take their flight.

What Katy Did xi. Blessings brighten as they take their flight. Katy began to appreciate for the first time how much she had learned to rely on her aunt.

Square Mark i. It has been said that one never knows one's blessings until one has lost them.

**blessings; gains and losses**

There's none so BLIND as those who will not see

Parallel to there's none so DEAF as those who will not hear. In both proverbs, will not has the force of ‘does not wish to’ or ‘refuses to’.

Dialogue of Proverbs II. ix. K4 Who is so deafe, or so blynde, as is hee, That wilfully will nother here nor see.

Answer to Gardiner 58 There is no manne so .. blynd as he that will not see, nor so dull as he that wyll not vnderstande.

Examen Historicum 145 Which makes me wonder .. that having access to those Records .. he should declare himself unable to decide the doubt ... But none so blind as he that will not see.

Polonius 58 ‘None so blind as those that won't see.’.. A single effort of the will was sufficient to exclude from his view whatever he judged hostile to his immediate purpose.

Murder by Yard i. There's none so blind as he who will not see any one except his wife.

Dover beats Band xv. ‘If a highly trained copper .. can't tell who the murderer is—’ ‘There's none
ignorance; obstinacy

When the BLIND lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch
Now more common in the metaphorical phrase, the blind leading the blind. With allusion to MATTHEW xv. 14 (AV) Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

c 897 Gregory's Pastoral Care (EETS) i. Gif se blinda thone blindan læt, he feallath begun [both] on énne pytt.
c 1300 Body & Soul (1889) 49 Ac hwanne the blinde lat the blinde, In dike he fallen bothe two.
1583 Philotimus 165 In the ditch falls the blind that is led by the blind.
1678 Pilgrim's Progress I. 99 That Ditch is it into which the blind have led the blind in all Ages, and have both there miserably perished.
1836 Sartor Resartus II. iii. It is written, When the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch ... May it not sometimes be safer, if both leader and led simply—sit still?
1908 Olde permaquid 12 If the blind lead the blind, the ditch is but a little way on.
1947 Eustace & Hilda xvi. To get Hilda out of the house was a step forward, even in a Bath chair .. even if they could see nothing beyond their noses, the bind leading the blind.

ignorance; rulers and ruled

A BLIND man's wife needs no paint

1659 Proverbs (Spanish) 4 The blind mans wife needs no painting.
1736 Poor Richard's Almanack (June) God helps them that help themselves. Why does the blind man's wife paint her self?
1892 Old Woman's Outlook in Hampshire Village 166 His [the schoolmaster's] copies too were remarkable. One was ‘A blind man's wife needs no paint.’ ‘Proverbs, sir, Proverbs,’ he answered, when asked where it came from.

appearance; wives and husbands

blind

see also in the COUNTRY of the blind, the one-eyed man is king; a DEAF husband and a blind wife are always a happy couple; LOVE is blind; a NOD'S as good as a wink to a blind horse; NOTHING so bold as a blind mare.

bliss

see Where IGNORANCE is bliss,' tis folly to be wise.

You cannot get BLOOD from a stone

Frequently uses, as a resigned admission, to mean that it is hopeless to try extorting money, etc., from those who have none. Other unyielding or unlikely substances are sometimes substituted for stone, as in 1836 MARRYAT Japhet iv. There's no getting blood out of a turnip. An early variant was c 1435 J. LYDGATE Minor Poems (EETS) 666 Harde to likke honey out of a marbil stoon, For ther is nouthir licour nor moisture.

1666 Italian Proverbs 161 There's no getting of bloud out of that wall.
1850 David Copperfield xi. Blood cannot be obtained from a stone, neither can anything on account be obtained .. from Mr. Micawber.
1925 False Scent ix. ‘You'll never get it ..’ ‘He'll have to pay me when he loses!’ ‘You can't get blood out of a stone.’
1945 Lark Rise xix. They can't take nothing away from us, for you can't get blood from a stone.
1979 Daily Telegraph 9 Mar. 3 In a paradoxical variation of the adage that you cannot get blood from a
stone, the .. Revenue Service wants to extract money from a Miami woman's rare and lucrative blood.

meanness ; possibility and impossibility

**BLOOD is thicker than water**

Predominantly used to mean that a family connection will outweigh other relationships. Cf. 12th-cent. Ger. ouch hoer ich sagen, daz sippebluot von wassere niht verdirbet, also I hear it said that kin-blood is not spoiled by water; **1412 LYDGATE Troy Book (EETS) III. 2071** For naturaly blod will ay of kynde Draw un-to blod, wher he may it fynde.

**1813** English Proverbs (ed. 5) 281 Blood's thicker than water.

**1815** Guy Mannering II. xvii. Weel—blood's thicker than water—she's welcome to the cheeses.

**1895** Woman who Did xi. At moments of unexpected danger, angry feelings between father and son are often forgotten, and blood unexpectedly proves itself thicker then water.

**1914** Man upstairs & Other Stories 115 But though blood, as he was wont to remark while negotiating his periodical loans, is thicker then water, a brother-in-law's affection has its limits.

**1933** From View to Death iv. Really .. And then they say that blood is thicker than water. They know perfectly well that I have had hayfever.

**1960** Adventures of Christmas Pudding 240 It's exactly like a serial. .. Reconciliation with the nephew, blood is thicker than water.

**1992** Rather English Marriage (1993) xiii. 230 Blood's thicker than water. .. and I have to put those boys first.

**family**

The **BLOOD of the martyrs is the seed of the Church**

The Church has thrived on persecution. Cf. **TERTULLIAN Apologeticus l. semen est sanguis Christianorum**, the blood of Christians is seed.

**1560** Aggeus the Prophet U4\V Cipriane wrytes that the bloud of Martirs is the seede of the Church.

**1562** De Neutralibus & Mediis M8\V It is a very goodly and a most true saying: Christian mennes bloud is a sede, and in what felde so euer is sowed, ther spring vp Christian men most plenteously thick.

**1655** Church Hist. Britain I. iv. Of all Shires in England, Stafford-shire was .. the largest sown with the Seed of the Church, I mean, the bloud of primitive Martyrs.

**1889** Pleasures of Life II. xi. The Inquisition has even from its own point of view proved generally a failure. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.

**1979** Church Times 15 June 10 It is not merely that ‘the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church’; it is that a little persecution is good for you.

**adversity ; Christianity**

**BLOOD will have blood**

Violence begets violence. Cf. **GENESIS ix. 6 (AV)** Who so sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.

**a 1449** Minor Poems (EETS) 512 Blood will have wreche [vengeance], that wrongfully is spent.

**1559** Mirror for Magistrates (1938) 99 Blood wyll haue blood, eyther fyrst or last.

**1605–6** Macbeth III. iv. 122 It will have blood; they say blood will have blood.

**1805** Madoc I. vii. Blood will have blood, revenge beget revenge.

**1974** Cricket Term i. ‘Blood will have blood,’ quoted Lawrie smugly.

**revenge ; violence**

**BLOOD will tell**

Family characteristics or heredity cannot be concealed.

**1850** World a Mask IV. in Glaucus (1940) 38 He looked like the tiger in the Zoological, when I punch him with my stick. .. Game to the backbone—blood will tell.
‘Blood will tell, sir. Your gentleman’s son is a match for any ragamuffin.

Once a Pittsburgh millionaire, always a Pittsburgh millionaire.

The blood said: attack. .. Stern faced, he plunged. Blood will tell, in the end.

Blood will tell. Once a Pittsburgh millionaire, always a
Pittsburgh millionaire.

The blood said: attack. .. Stern faced, he plunged. Blood will tell, in the end.

A northern proverb comparable to DISTANCE lends enchantment to the view. Green is sometimes found instead of blue. Cf. the GRASS is always greener on the other side of the fence.

‘What's it sayin',’ they would mutter, ‘a green hill when far away from me; bare, bare, when it is near.’

‘Blue are the hills that are far away’ is an overcome [common expression] in the countryside.

‘Blue are the faraway hills,’ runs the Gaelic proverb.

It is the habit of the Celt to create fanciful golden ages in the past—‘Blue are the faraway hills,’ runs the Gaelic proverb.

It was so much like the attitude of the habitual stay-at-home. They say that ‘distant hills are always the greenest.’

a RISING tide lifts all boats.

CORPORATIONS have neither bodies to be punished nor souls to be damned.

a WATCHED pot never boils.

NOTHING so bold as a blind mare.

it is too late to shut the STABLE-door after the horse has bolted.

an ENGLISHMAN'S word is his bond.

what's BRED in the bone will come out in the flesh; you BUY land you buy stones; a DOG that will fetch a bone will carry a bone; HARD words break no bones; the NEARER the bone, the sweeter the meat; STICKS and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me; while TWO dogs are fighting for a bone, a third runs away with it.

You can't tell a BOOK by its cover

You can't judge a book by its binding.
This is a nice respectable street, wouldn't you say, sir? .. Unfortunately, sir, you can't tell a book by its cover.

Unfortunately, sir, you can't judge a book by its cover. My pappa used to say, look, child, look beyond a tender smile.

Appreciate your allowing me to participate, but you should be less trusting, Ellie—can't always judge a book by its cover.

The old saying goes that you can't judge a book by its cover. Now that's even true of the ones labeled 'Holy Bible.'

- appearance, deceptive

If you're BORN to be hanged then you'll never be drowned

Commonly used to qualify another's apparent good luck. Cf. mid 14th-cent. Fr. noyer ne peut, cil qui doit pendre, he cannot drown who must hang; c 1503 A. BARCLAY tr. Gringore's Castle of Labour (1506) A8 He that is drowned may no man hange.

He thats borne to be hangd shall neuer be drownde.

He had a Proverb in his Favour, and he got out of the Water .. not being born to be drown'd, as I shall observe afterwards in its place.

Don't tumble into it .. though you never were born to be drowned, that I'll swear.

You have a proverb .. that those who are to hang will not drown.

There is another picture, and underneath it says .. If you're born to be hanged, then you'll never be drowned.

- fate and fatalism ; luck

- born

- borrow

- borrowing

- bottle

- bottom

- bought

- bowls

You can take the BOY out of the country but you can't take the country out of the boy

Chiefly known in North America, where it has generated a large variety of humorous by-forms (see quot.s.).

You can take a boy out of the country but you can't take the country out of a boy.

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1950 So Young a Body vii. ‘You can take the girl out of the country, but you can’t take the country out of the girl,’ Remington interjected casually. ‘Ginnie's from a crossroads in Vermont, and she's still a small-town kid at heart.’

1978 Leonardo’s Law X. ‘He was just something I picked up off the counter.’ She smiled. I guess you can take the girl out of the chorus line but you can’t take the chorus line out of the girl.

1987 Washington Post 27 Apr. C2 Back in the good old days, when eager young rubes were descending upon the great metropolises in search of fame and fortune, it used to be said that you can take the boy out of the country but you can’t take the country out of the boy.

1991 Times 31 Dec. 29 You can take darts out of the pub .. but you’ll never take the pub out of darts.

1997 Times 19 Sept. 33 And, while you can take Björk out of Iceland, it seems you cannot take Iceland out of Björk's music.

nature and nurture ; origins

Never send a BOY to do a man's job

□1931 Great Mouthpiece xii. Mr. Alfred J. Talley .. took command of the .. prosecution. He was an able man … ‘It’s about time they gave me a run for the money,’ Fallon said. ‘The People shouldn't send boys on men's errands.’

1941 ‘’ Our Second Murder xxvii. Never send a boy to do a man's work.

1951 You can’t catch Me ii. ‘This fat character is smart, you understand. Do you send a boy out on a man's job?’ .. ‘That's why we need a man like you.’

1967 Hearse with Horses vi. He blushed. Piron thought that he shouldn't have sent a boy to do a man’s job.

1987 Washington Post 21 Jan. D10 Research proves that in more than 99 percent of these cases, the defender who has overruffed endears himself by uttering the old cliche, ‘Never send a boy to do a man's job.’

efficiency and inefficiency ; work

Two BOYS are half a boy, and three boys are no boy at all

The more boys that help, the less work they do.

□ holes 1930 Country Calendar 114 Their parents do not encourage the joining of forces … We have a proverb here: ‘Two boys are half a boy, and three boys are no boy at all.’

1971 New York Times 31 Jan. IV. 12 Rural New England of the mid-nineteenth century, not commonly sophisticated in mathematics but witty enough about man's condition, used to [say] .. ‘One boy helping, a pretty good boy; two boys, half a boy; three boys, no boy.’

□ assistance ; efficiency and inefficiency ; work

BOYS will be boys

Occasionally girls will be girls.

□ 1601 Plain Man's Pathway 64 Youth will be youthfull, when you haue saide all that you can.

1826 Granby II. vii. Girls will be girls. They like admiration.

1848 Vanity Fair xiii. As for the pink bonnets .. why boys will be boys.

1964 Frozen Assets iii. I tried to tell him that boys will be boys and you're only young once.

1986 Nice Class of Corpse xxx. He appealed to his mother for approbation and was rewarded by an indulgent ‘boys will be boys’ smile.

human nature

brae (slope, hill-side):

see put a STOUT heart to a stey brae.

BRAG is a good dog, but Holdfast is better
Tenacity and quietness of manner are preferable to ostentation. Cf. 1580 A. MUNDAY Zelauto 146 Brag is a good Dogge, whyle he will holde out: but at last he may chaunce to meete with his matche; 1599 SHAKESPEARE Henry V II. iii. 52 And Holdfast is the only dog, my duck.

1752 Rambler 4 Feb. VIII. 92 When I envied the finery of any of my neighbours, [my mother] told me, that ‘brag was a good dog, but holdfast was a better’.

1889 Pictorial Proverbs for Little People 11 Brag’s a good dog, but Holdfast is better.

1916 It's Far Cry xxi. In golf, as in life .. the exceptional has no staying qualities. To quote a Southern [US] saying, ‘Brag is a good dog, but Holdfast is better’.

1923 Some Part of Myself vii. I remember my mother's repeating once after he left an old proverb: ‘Brag’s a good dog, but Hold Fast is a better.’

boasting ; words and deeds

brain
see an IDLE brain is the Devil's workshop.

brass
see where there's MUCK there's brass.

None but the BRAVE deserve the fair
The pair referred to in Dryden's poem (Alexander's Feast) are Alexander the Great and the Athenian courtesan Thaïs.

1697 Poems (1958) III. 148 Happy, happy, happy Pair!..None but the Brave deserves the Fair.

1829 Boxiana 2nd Ser. II. 354 The tender sex .. feeling the good old notion that ‘none but the brave deserve the fair’, were sadly out of temper.

1873 Phineas Redux II. xiii. All the proverbs were on his side. ‘None but the brave deserve the fair,’ said his cousin.

1878 Praxis xii. She frequented the cafe where the Rugger set hung out, and on a Saturday, after closing hours, could be seen making for the downs, laughing heartily and noisily in the company of one or other of the brave, who clearly deserved the fair.

courage ; just deserts

BRAVE men lived before Agamemnon
The exploits of Agamemnon, king of Mycenae, in the Trojan War were celebrated by Homer and by the tragic poets of ancient Greece. The point, made first by Horace, was that heroes need writers to commemorate them if they are to achieve eternal fame: HORACE Odes IV. ix. 25 vixere fortes ante Agamemnona multi, many brave men lived before Agamemnon. Cf. 1616 JONSON Forest VIII. 114 There were braue men, before Aiax or Idomen, or all the store That Homer brought to Troy.

1819 Don Juan I. V. Brave men were living before Agamemnon And since, exceeding valorous and sage.

1980 Times 23 June 16 Brave men lived before Agamemnon, lots of them. But on all of them .. eternal night lies heavy, because they have left no records behind them.

courage ; fame and obscurity

brave
see also (adjective used as noun) FORTUNE favours the brave; (verb) ROBIN Hood could brave all weathers but a thaw wind.

The BREAD never falls but on its buttered side
A formulation of Murphy's Law; cf. if ANYTHING can go wrong, it will.
Beyond Mississippi iii. His bread never fell on the buttered side.

Beast & Man x. We express the completeness of ill-luck by saying, ‘The bread never falls but on its buttered side.’

Dead Nigger xix. Didn't her bread and butter always fall butter downwards?

Guardian 3 Dec. 12 Murphy's (or Sod's) Law …Murphy's many relatives always quote it as ‘Buttered bread falls buttered side down—and if it's a sandwich it falls open.’

lack ; misfortune

bread
see also HALF a loaf is better than no bread; MAN cannot live by bread alone.

break
see (noun) never give a Sucker an even break; (verb) HARD words break no bones; if it were not for HOPE, the heart would break; it is the LAST straw that breaks the camel's back; OBEY orders, if you break owners; STICKS and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me; also BREAKING, BROKEN.

breakfast
see HOPE is a good breakfast but a bad supper; SING before breakfast, cry before night.

breaking
see IGNORANCE of the law is no excuse for breaking it; you cannot make an OMELETTE without breaking eggs.

What's BREED in the bone will come out in the flesh
Lifelong habits or inherited characteristics cannot be concealed (cf. BLOOD will tell). The form and emphasis of the proverb have been altered in recent years by the omission of a negative. Cf. medieval L. osse radicatum raro de carne recedit, that which is rooted in the bone rarely comes out from the flesh.

c 1470 Morte d'Arthur (1947) I. 550 Sir Launcelot smyled and seyde, Harde hit ys to take oute off the fleysshe that ys bredde in the bone.

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs II. viii. K2 This prouerbe prophecied many yeres agone, It will not out of the fleshe, thats bred in the bone.

1603 tr. Montaigne's Essays III. xiii. They are effects of custome and vse: and what is bred in the bone will never out of the flesh.

1832 Swallow Barn III. v. What is bred in the bone—you know the proverb.

1909 Epistle to Romans 231 ‘You cannot expel nature with a fork,’ said the Roman. ‘What's bred in the bone won't come out of the flesh,’ says the Englishman.

1923 Chambers's Journal June 432 I know the clan … What's bred in the bone will out, and they'll be high-steppers to the end.

a 1957 First Four Years (1971) iv. We'll always be farmers, for what is bred in the bone will come out in the flesh.

1981 Last Ferry iv. There's bad blood there … What's bred in the bone comes out in the flesh.

family ; habit ; human nature

bred
see also YORKSHIRE born and Yorkshire bred, strong in the arm and weak in the head.

breed
see FAMILIARITY breeds contempt; LIKE breeds like.

BREVITY is the soul of wit
In quot. 1600–1 soul of wit should be understood as ‘essence of wisdom’; wit is now commonly understood in its modern sense, the ‘(power of giving sudden intellectual pleasure by) the unexpected,
quick, and humorous combining or contrasting of ideas or expressions’ (COD).

1600–1 Hamlet II. ii. 90 Since brevity is the soul of wit .. I will be brief.
1833 Tom Cringle's Log II. v. Brevity is the soul of wit, —ahem.
1946 Maiden Voyage x. I will not repeat myself, since brevity is the soul of wit.
1981 Times 18 Sept. 27 Mr Carrott .. has yet to learn that brevity is often the soul of wit, but he has little to learn about the vast vocabulary of body language.
1996 Washington Post 8 Sept. C5 Clinton is Southern and given to garrulousness while brevity, as they say, is the soul of wit.

*brevity and long-windedness*

As you BREW, so shall you bake

Cf. As you BAKE, so shall you brew. Medieval usage makes the connection between brewing and drinking rather than between brewing and baking, as in the following: 1264 in C. Brown English Lyrics of XIIIth Century (1932) 131 Let him habbe ase he brew, bale [misery] to dryng [drink] a 1325 Cursor Mundi (EETS) 1. 2848 Nathing of that land [is not submerged], Suilk [such] als thai brued now ha thai dronken. c 1450 Towneley Play of Second Shepherd (EETS) 1. 501 Bot we must drynk as we brew And that is bot reson.

c 1570 Disobedient Child D8\(^V\) As he had brewed, that so shulde bake.
1766 & Clandestine Marriage I. 3 As you sow, you must reap—as you brew, so you must bake.
1922 Ovington's Bank xxiii. No, you may go, my lad. As you ha' brewed you may bake.

*action and consequence*

brew

see also as you BAKE, so shall you brew.

You cannot make BRICKS without straw

Nothing can be made or performed without the necessary materials. Frequently used as a metaphorical phrase, to make bricks without straw. A (misapplied) allusion to EXODUS v. 7 (AV) Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves. Cf. 1624 BURTON Anatomy of Melancholy (ed. 2) I. ii. (Hard taske-masters as they [patrons] are) they take away their straw, & compell them to make their number of bricke.

1658 Letter in Verney Memoirs (1904) II. xxxviii. I have made the enclosed. It is an hard task to make bricks without straw, but I have raked together some rubbish.

1737 in Publications of Prince Society (1911) III. 170 Let Men be never so willing and industrious, they can't make Brick without Straw.

1883 Disarmed I. i. Your task from today will be to make bricks without straw.

1909 Literary Taste iv. You can only acquire really useful general ideas by first acquiring particular ideas …You cannot make bricks without straw.

1934 12.30 from Croydon xxiv. ‘I never thought we had any chance,’ Heppenstall declared. ‘Can't make bricks without straw,’ Quilter pointed out cheerily.

1995 Simeon's Bride xxxii. 208 ‘What would you have us do, sir?’ Jack asked. ‘We can't make bricks without straw.’

*possibility and impossibility ; work*

Happy is the BRIDE that the sun shines on

An equivalent superstition is blessed are the DEAD that the rain rains on.

1648 Hesperides 129 Blest is the Bride, on whom the Sun doth shine. And thousands gladly wish You multiply, as doth a fish.

1787 Provincial Glossary (Superstitions) 61 It is reckoned a good omen, or a sign of future happiness, if the sun shines on a couple coming out of the church after having been married …Happy is the bride that...
the sun shines on.

1926 ‘Happy's the bride that the sun shines on,’ is how the proverb goes. But where there's real true love .. there's always sunshine in a manner of speaking.

1984 And the weather is cooperating! ‘Blessed the bride that the sun shines on!’

Always a BRIDESMAID, never a bride

Always a maiden [bridal attendant], never a wife.

1903 Three times bridesmaid, never a bride.

1917 ‘Why am I always the Bridesmaid?’ (song) Why am I always the bridesmaid, Never the blushing bride?

1951 Then they'd leave me .. and go off and buy candy and orchids for the other girls … Often a bridesmaid but never a bride.

It is good to make a BRIDGE of gold to a flying enemy

The rationale is ‘an enemy closely pursued may become desperate …By all means, then, let the vanquished have a free course’ (T. Fielding Proverbs of all Nations (1824) 14). The idea is attributed to Aristides (480 BC), who warned Themistocles not to destroy the bridge of boats which Xerxes had built across the Hellespont in order to invade Greece (PLUTARCH Themistocles xvi). Cf. ERASMUS Apophthegms viii. Hostibus fugientibus pontem argenteum exstruendum esse, for a fleeing enemy one should construct a bridge of silver.

1576 It was well sayde of one .. If thine enemie will flye, make him a bridge of Golde.

1642 He [the good general] makes his flying enemy a bridge of gold, and disarms them of their best weapon, which is necessity to fight whether they will or no.

1889 You may have heard a military proverb: that it is a good thing to make a bridge of gold to a flying enemy. I trust you will take my meaning.

bridge

see also don't CROSS the bridge till you come to it; everyone SPEAKS well of the bridge which carries him over.

brighten

see BLESSINGS brighten as they take their flight.

bring

see NIGHT brings counsel; the WORTH of a thing is what it will bring.

If it ain't BROKE, don't fix it

Principally known in North America; the British equivalent is LET well alone.

1977 Bert Lance [President Carter's Director of the Office of Management and Budget] believes he can save Uncle Sam billions if he can get the government to adopt a single motto: ‘If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.’

1984 If it aint broke, don't fix it: Don't mess with a clock that runs on time.

1988 The sleep pattern you have worked out is normal for you, and since you have been fairly successful in planning your life around it, why change? ‘If it aint broke, don't fix it.’

1996 If it ain't broke, don't fix it. Wise words, but in the world of computers, they generally fall on deaf ears.

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broken
see PROMISES, like pie-crust, are made to be broken; RULES are made to be broken.
broom
see NEW brooms sweep clean; SWEEP the house with broom in May, you sweep the head of the house away.
broth
see TOO many cooks spoil the broth.
built
see ROME was not built in a day.

**Every BULLET has its billet**
Fate determines who shall be killed; quot. 1922 implies more generally that fate plays a part in all human affairs.

- 1575 Fruits of War I. 155 Suffiseth this to proove my theame withall, That every bullet hath a lighting place.
- 1765 Journal 6 June (1912) V. 130 He never received one wound. So true is the odd saying of King William [III], that ‘every bullet has its billet’.
- 1846 Romance of War II.iii. 'Tis the fortune of war:—every bullet has its billet,—their fate to-day may be ours tomorrow.
- 1922 Ulysses 366 The ball rolled down to her as if it understood. Every bullet has its billet.
- 1932 Public School Murder xi. iv. 237 It is said that every bullet finds its billet. I am afraid this is yet another instance of a shaft at random sent finding a mark the archer never meant.

death; fate and fatalism

**A BULLY is always a coward**

- 1817 Ormond in Harrington & Ormond III. xxiv. Mrs. M’ Crule, who like all other bullies was a coward, lowered her voice.
- 1826 Elia in New Monthly Magazine XVI. 25 A Bully is always a coward … Confront one of the silent heroes with the swaggerer of real life, and his confidence in the theory quickly vanishes.
- 1853 Wise Saws iv. I never saw a man furnished with so much pleasure in my life. A brave man is sometimes a desperado. A bully is always a coward.
- 1981 Times 9 May 2 The old adage holds good: all bullies are cowards, and most cowards are bullies.

**cowardice**

bung-hole
see SPARE at the spigot, and let out at the bung-hole.

burden
see GOD makes the back to the burden.

burned
see ONCE bitten, twice shy.

**A BURNT child dreads the fire**

- c 1250 Proverbs of Hending in Anglia (1881) IV. 199 Brend child fuir fordredeth [is in dread of].
- c 1400 Romaunt of Rose 1. 1820 ‘For evermore gladly,’ as I rede, ‘Brent child of fier hath mych drede.’
1580 Euphues & his England II. 92 A burnt childe dreadeth the fire ... Thou mayst happily forswear the thy selfe, but thou shalt neuer delude me.

1777 Journey I. xviii. He then observed, that a burnt child dreads the fire;.. that a Jew had lately passed thro' France, who had put off false Bank notes, and that I might .. have taken some.

1889 Pictorial Proverbs for Little People 5 She will not touch a match or a lighted candle .. which proves that the proverb is true which says: a burnt child dreads the fire.

1948 Uncle Dynamite II. vii. The burnt child fears the fire, and bitter experience had taught Pongo Twistleton to view with concern the presence in his midst of Ickenham's fifth earl.

1984 Newsweek 5 Nov. 98 The burned child fears the fire and when dawn breaks next Tuesday voters may pull the covers over their ringing heads and refuse to get out of bed.

experience
burnt
see also if you PLAY with fire you get burnt.
bury
see let the DEAD bury the dead.
bush
see a BIRD in the hand is worth two in the bush; GOOD wine needs no bush.
The BUSIEST men have the most leisure
Complementary to IDLE people have the least leisure. Cf. 1866 S. SMILES Self-Help (new ed.) i. Those who have most to do .. will find the most time.

1884 Canon's Ward II. xxxiv. It is my experience that the men who are really busiest have the most leisure for everything.

1911 Times Literary Supplement 6 Oct. 365 The busiest men have always the most leisure; and while discharging the multifarious duties of a parish priest and a guardian he found time for travelling.

BUSINESS before pleasure
The two nouns are frequently contrasted in other, non-proverbial, expressions, Cf. c 1640 Grobianas Nuptials (MS Bodley 30) 15 Well to the business.—On; businesse is senior to complement; 1767 T. HUTCHINSON Diary & Letters (1883) I.v. Pleasure should always give way to business.

1837 Stokeshill Place III. vi. ‘Business before pleasure’ is a golden rule which most of us regard as iron.

1943 Down among Dead Men v. This is business, Sarge. You know what business comes before.

1976 & M.A.S.H. goes to San Francisco xiii. ‘Oh, how nice! And I think about you, too, But business before pleasure, as I always say.’

1986 Strangled Prose vi. Douglas drifted past with the department chairman, engrossed in conversation. He gave me a quick nod, but steered his captive toward a sofa. Business before pleasure.

1997 Evans Above xxii. 232 ‘I think I should buy you a drink first.’.. ‘Business before pleasure, major,’ Evan said.

business ; work

business
see also EVERYBODY'S business is nobody's business; PUNCTUALITY is the soul of business.

busy
see if you WANT something done, ask a busy person.
butter
see (noun) there are more WAYS of killing a dog than choking it with butter; (verb) FINE words butter no parsnips.
buttered
see the BREAD never falls but on its buttered side.

BUY in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest

1595 Fig for Momus H2 Buy cheape, sell deare.
1862 Unto this Last II.60 Buy in the cheapest market?—yes; but what made your market cheap?..Sell in the dearest?..But what made your market dear?
1880 Bunyan vii. ‘To buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest’ was Mr. Badman’s common rule in business …In Bunyan's opinion it was knavery in disguise.

You BUY land, you buy stones; you buy meat, you buy bones
Cf. 1595 Pedler's Prophesy B4V You shall be sure to haue good Ale, for that haue no bones.
1670 English Proverbs 211 He that buys land buys many stones; He that buys flesh buys many bones; He that buys eggs buys many shells, But he that buys good ale buys nothing else.
1721 Scottish Proverbs 172 He that buys Land, buys Stones; He that buys Beef, buys Bones; He that buys Nuts, buys shells; He that buys good Ale, buys nought else.
1970 Countryman Autumn 172 Welsh butcher to customer complaining of bony meat: ‘Well, missus, you buy land, you buy stones; buy meat, you buy bones.’

Let the BUYER beware
A warning that the buyer must satisfy himself of the nature and value of a purchase before proceeding with the transaction. The Latin tag caveat emptor is also frequently found: (caveat emptor, quia ignorare non debuit quod jus alienum emit, let the purchaser beware, for he ought not to be ignorant of the nature of the property which he is buying from another party.) See also the next proverb.

1523 Husbandry 36 And [if] he [a horse] be tame and haue ben rydden vpon than caveat emptor be ware thou byer.
1592 Pierce Penniless I. 155 Sed caueat emptor, Let the interpreter beware.
1607 Fleire II. C4 They are no proverb breakers: beware the buyer say they.
1927 Times 29 Sept. 10 We dislike very much, whether it is put in Latin or in English, the phrase ‘Let the buyer beware!’
1974 Knock Down xi. ‘Caveat emptor,’ I said. ‘What does that mean?’ ‘Buyer beware.’ ‘I know one buyer who'll beware for the rest of his life.’
1983 Treasure Preserved xvii. ‘All he or his lawyers had to do was read our lease.’ ‘I agree. A case of buyer beware.’
1998 Modern Maturity Jan.–Feb. 36 Caveat emptor (let the byer beware) is clearly good advice to people shopping around for a managed-health plan.

The BUYER has need of a hundred eyes, the seller of but one
Cf. It. chi compra ha bisogna di cent' occhi; chi vende n'ha assai di uno, he who buys needs a hundred eyes; he who sells but one.

1640 Outlandish Proverbs no. 390 The buyer needes a hundred eyes, the seller not one.
1745 Poor Richard's Almanack (July) He who buys had need have 100 Eyes, but one's enough for him that sells the Stuff.
1800 Parent's Assistant (ed.3) III. 86 He taught him .. to get .. from customers by taking advantage of
their ignorance … He often repeated ..‘The buyer has need of a hundred eyes, the seller of but one.’

1843 Handley Cross I. xiii. The buyer has need of a hundred eyes, the seller of but one, says another equestrian conjurer.

1928 Illustrated Sporting & Dramatic News 7 Jan. 27 (caption) The buyer has need of a hundred eyes. The seller of but one.

buying and selling ; caution

CAESAR's wife must be above suspicion

Julius Caesar replied thus (according to Plutarch) when asked why he had divorced his wife Pompeia. He considered his honour and position compromised, since she was indirectly associated with Publius Clodius’ trial for sacrilege. Cf. 1580 LYLY Euphues & his England II. 101 Al women shal be as Caesar would haue his wife, not onelye free from sinne, but from suspition.

1779 Letter 4 Jan. in et al. Adams Family Correspondence (1973) III. 148 It is a very great misfortune that persons imployed in the most important Departments should .. have seperate interests from the publick whom they profess to serve. Caesars wife ought not to be suspected.

1847 Guesses at Truth (ed. 3) 1st Ser. 263 Caesar's wife ought to be above suspicion … Caesar himself ought to be so too.

1930 Strong Poison xxi. You've got a family and traditions, you know. Caesar's wife and that sort of thing.

1965 Dusty Death xxi. Policemen .. are like .. candidates for the Church of England ministry, … and Caesar's wife … Not only they, but all their relations, must be above suspicion.

1990 Washington Times 9 July D2 He [i.e. Governor D. Wilder] ought to bear in mind the maxim of one of Caligula's more lucid predecessors: Caesar's wife must be above suspicion. And so should Caesar.

associates ; conduct

cake
see you cannot HAVE your cake and eat it.

calf
see a BELLOWING COW soon forgets her calf.

call
see call no man HAPPY till he dies; he who PAYS the piper calls the tune.

called
see MANY are called but few are chosen.

calm
see AFTER a storm comes a calm.

camel
see it is the LAST straw that breaks the camel’s back.

He who CAN, does; he who cannot, teaches

There are many (frequently humorous) variations on this proverb.

1903 Maxims for Revolutionists in Man & Superman 230 He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches.

1979 Daily Telegraph 6 Aug. 8 A version of an old adage came to me—those who can, do, those who
can't, attend conferences.

1981 Living Dog i. He who can, does sang the train wheels, he who cannot, teaches.
1995 Washington Post 29 Oct C1 George Bernard Shaw, who once observed that 'he who can does; he who can't, teaches,' might be surprised to see what teachers are doing in politics these days.

- efficiency and inefficiency ; work
candle
see CANDLEMAS day, put beans in the clay, put candles and candlesticks away.
candlelight
see never CHOOSE your women or your linen by candlelight.

If CANDLEMAS day be sunny and bright, winter will have another flight; if Candlemas day be cloudy with rain, winter is gone, and won't come again

In the Church calendar, the feast of the Purification of the Virgin Mary and the Presentation of Christ in the Temple falls on 2 February, which is known as Candlesmas Day because candles are blessed at church services on that festival. In North America, 2 February is popularly known as Groundhog Day; the very similar weather prediction associated with it arises through the notion that if the groundhog emerges from its burrow on that day into bright sunlight and is frightened by its own shadow it will go back for a further six weeks' hibernation. The superstition was known from at least as early as the early sixteenth century: cf. 1523 SKELETON Works I. 418 Men were wonte for to discerne By candlemas day what wedder shulde holde. Quot. 1584's version of the rhyme is close to the Latin lines in quot. 1678.

1584 Witchcraft XI. xv. If Maryes purifieng daie, Be cleare and bright with sunny raie, The frost and cold shalbe much more, After the feast than was ante.

1678 English Proverbs (ed. 2) 51 If Candlesmas day be fair and bright Winter will have another flight: If on Candlesmas day it be showre and rain, Winter is gone and will not come again. This is a translation .. of that old Latin Distich; Si Sol splendescat Maria purificante, Major erit glacies post festum quam fuit ante.

1906 Country Diary of an Edwardian Lady (1977) 13 If Candlesmas Day be fair and bright Winter will have another flight But if Candlesmas Day be clouds and rain Winter is gone and will not come again.

1980 Times 2 Feb. 11 Today is Candlesmas Day. So let us see if the old legend holds good again as it did last year. 'If Candlesmas day be sunny and bright, winter will have another flight; if Candlesmas day be cloudy with rain; winter is gone and won't come again.'

- weather lore
CANDLEMAS day, put beans in the clay; put candles and candlesticks away

For Candlesmas Day see preceding proverb.

1678 English Proverbs (ed. 2) 344 On Candlesmas day throw candle and candlestick away.

1876 British Popular Customs 55 From Candlesmas the use of tapers at vespers and litanies, which had continued through the whole year, ceased until the ensuing All Hallow Mass .. On Candlesmas Day, throw candle and candlestick away.

1948 Still glides Stream ii. Broad beans were planted .. on Candlesmas Day. Candlesmas Day, stick beans in the clay, Throw candle and candlestick right away, they would quote.

1974 Folklore of Cotswolds ii. Candlesmas Day was the time .. when lights were extinguished … An old rhyme said: Candlesmas Day, put beans in the clay: put candles and candlesticks away.

- calendar lore ; garden lore
If the CAP fits, wear it

Used with reference to the suitability of names or descriptions as demonstrated by the behaviour of the person concerned. Cf. if the SHOE fits, wear it. The cap in question was originally a dunce's cap, as is shown by the following: 1600 N. BRETON Pasquil's Fools-Cap A3 Where you finde a head fit for this
Cappe, either bestowe it vpon him in charity, or send him where he may haue them for his money.

1732 Gnomologia no. 2670 If any Fool finds the Cap fit him, let him wear it.

1750 Clarissa (ed. 3) VII. ii. If indeed thou findest .. that the cap fits thy own head, why then .. clap it on.

1854 Hard Times II. vii. ‘Mercenary ... Who is not mercenary?’.. ‘You know whether the cap fits you .. If it does, you can wear it.’

1985 ‘’ Pearlhanger xi. Little crooks get chased. Big crooks .. get knighted and freedom. I don't mean bankers and insurance syndicates, incidentally, though if the cap fits ...

conduct; reputation
capacity
see GENIUS is an infinite capacity for taking pains.
caravan
see DOGS bark, but the caravan goes on.

Where the CARCASE is, there shall the eagles be gathered together
With allusion to MATTHEW XXIV. 28 (AV) Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the Eagles be gathered together. Modern translations read ‘vultures’ for ‘eagles’.

c 1566 tr. Curio's Pasquin in Trance 33 Where the caraine [carrion] is, thither do the Eagles resort.
1734 Poor Richard's Almanack (Jan.) Where carcasses are, eagles will gather, And where good laws are, much people flock thither.

1929 Perfect Murder Case x. On the way he explained his appearance at the inquest on the twin lines of busman's holiday and that where the carcass is there will the vultures be gathered together.

1979 ‘’ Proceed to Judgement 190 [He] was surprised to find Sir Nicholas and Vera, as well as Roger and Meg, having tea with Jenny. ‘Where the carcase is, there shall the eagles be gathered together,’ he commented, not very politely.

associates
card
see LUCKY at cards, unlucky in love.

CARE killed the cat
Cf. CURIOSITY killed the cat. There is some shift in meaning between care = worry, grief and care = carefulness, caution, and in quot. 1962 the meaning is ‘care lavished on the cat’, rather than care exercised by it.

1598–9 Much Ado about Nothing v. i. 133 Though care kill'd a cat, thou hast mettle enough in thee to kill care.

1726 Poems II. 761 Then, who says care will kill a cat? Rebecca shews they're out in that.

1890 ‘ Miner's Right II. xxiii. He was always ready to enjoy himself ... ‘Care killed a cat.’

1949 Holiday xii. We must be careful of that. Care killed the cat, said Caz.

1962 Mirror Crack'd xxii. Care killed the cat, they say ... You don't want kindness rubbed into your skin... do you?

1979 Sergeant Verity & Blood Royal xx. ‘Pretty sure, Mr. Crowe? I was bloody near ten feet short of it, that's all!’... ‘Come on now, Verity. Care Might kill a cat! Look to the future!’

stress
care
see also CHILDREN are certain cares, but uncertain comforts; the DEVIL looks after his own; take care of the PENCE and the pounds will take care of themselves.
careful
see if you can't be GOOD, be careful.
A CARPENTER is known by his chips

1533 Hist. Arthur (1582) 162b I know well my lorde Arthur hath been here ... He is a good carpenter, for he hath made here a faire sight of chips.

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs I. vii. 14 Muste she not (quoth he) be welcome to vs all, Amonge vs all, lettyng suche a farewell fall? But such carpenters, such chips. Quoth she folke tell.

1738 Polite Conversation II. 153 ‘You have eaten nothing.’ .. ‘See all the Bones on my Plate: They say, a carpenter's known by his Chips.’

1962 Washington Daily News 24 July 14 In the idiom of the Middle West, you can tell a wood chopper by his chips. President Kennedy's economic report .. was based on the scientific estimates of his Council of Economic Advisers.

appearance; human nature

carry
see a DOG that will fetch a bone will carry a bone; everyone SPEAKS well of the bridge which carries him over.

case
see CIRCUMSTANCES alter cases; HARD cases make bad law; no one should be JUDGE in his own cause.

Ne'er CAST a clout till May be out
A warning not to leave off old or warm clothes until the end of May. The Proverb does not refer to May blossom, as is sometimes assumed.

1706 Spanish & English Dict. s.v. Mayo, Hasta passado Mayo no te quitas el sayo, Do not leave off your Coat till May be past.

1732 Gnomologia no. 6193 Leave not off a Clout [item of clothing], Till May be out.

1832 Scottish Proverbs 154 Cast ne'er a clout till May be out.

1948 White Goddess x. In ancient Greece, as in Britain, this [May] was the month in which people went about in old clothes—a custom referred to in the proverb ‘Ne'er cast a clout ere May be out,’ meaning ‘do not put on new clothes until the unlucky month is over.’

1970 Thursday's Child xxv. I still wear four petticoats .. Ne'er cast a clout till May be out.

1996 Murder on Flying Scotsman i. 7 Brought up on ‘Ne'er cast a clout till May be out’ (May month or may blossom? she had always wondered), Daisy was wearing her green tweed winter coat.

calendar lore; dress

cast
see also COMING events cast their shadows before; OLD sins cast long shadows; do not throw PEARLS to swine.

castle
see an ENGLISHMAN'S house is his castle.

A CAT in gloves catches no mice
Restraint and Caution (or ‘pussyfooting’) achieve nothing. Cf. 14th-cent. Fr. chat engaunté ne surrizera ja bien, a gloved cat will never mouse well.

1573 Garden of Pleasure 105 A gloued catte can catche no myse.

1592 French Alphabet II. 1A mufled Cat is no good mouse hunter.

1758 Poor Richard's Almanack (Preface) Handle your Tools without Mittens; remember that the Cat in Gloves catches no Mice.

1857 Little Dorrit II. xiv. Mrs. General, if I may reverse the common proverb .. is a cat in gloves who will
catch mice. That woman .. will be our mother-in-law.

1922 Red Redmaynes ix. As we say in Italy, ‘if you put a cat into gloves, she will not catch mice.’ You have been in gloves ever since you knew Madonna was a widow.

1979 Country Life 21 June 2047 There is hardly one [cat] but flings back the lie in the face of the old saying that a cat in gloves catches no mice. Why dirty your paws when your servants will do it for you?

efficiency and inefficiency

A CAT may look at a king

- 1590 Never too Late VIII.181 A Cat may look at a King, and a swaynes eye hath as high a reach as a Lords looke.
- 1721 English Dictionary s.v. Cat, A Cat may look upon a King. This is a saucy Proverb, generally made use of by pragmatical Persons.
- 1935 House & its Head xi. There is no harm in that, dear. A cat may look at a king; and it is only in that spirit that my poor brother looks at Alison.
- 1979 Cracks in Ice 9 Reviewing is an adventure in responsible irreverence. A cat can look at a king.

equality & society

When the CAT's away, the mice will play

Cf. early 14th-cent. Fr. ou chat na rat regne, where there is no cat the rat is king; c 1470 Harley MS 3362 in Retrospective Review (1854) May 309 The mows lordchypythe [rules] ther a cat ys nawt; 1599 SHAKESPEARE Henry V I. ii. 172 To her unguarded nest the weasel Scot Comes sneaking, and so sucks her princely eggs, Playing the mouse in absence of the cat.

- 1607 Woman killed with Kindness II. 135 Mum; there's an old proverbe, when the cats away, the mouse may play.
- 1670 English Proverbs 68 When the cat is away, the mice play.
- 1876 Manchester Man III. xiv, Mrs. Ashton, saying ‘that when the cat's away the mice will play', had decided on remaining at home.
- 1925 Juno & Paycock I. 13 It's a good job she has to be so often away, for when the cat's away, the mice can play!
- 1979 Hand of Glory iii. ‘Cat's away, mouse doth play,’ he said. ‘The cat's been away too long.’

discipline & opportunity, taken

The CAT, the rat, and Lovell the dog, rule all England under the hog

The allusion is explained in quot. 1586.

- 1516 New Chronicles of England & France viii. 219V The Catte the Ratte And Louell our dogge Rulyth all Englande under hogge. The whiche was ment that Catisby Ratclyffe And the Lord Louell Ruled the lande under the kynge.
- 1586 Chronicles III.746 [Richard III executed] a poore gentleman called Collingborne [in 1484], for making a small rime of three of his .. councellors... lord Louell, sir Richard Ratcliffe .. and sir William Catesbie... The Cat, the Rat, and Louell our dog, Rule all England vnder an hog. Meaning by the hog, the .. wild boare, which was the Kings cognisance [coat of arms].
- 1816 Antiquary ii, ‘His name .. was Lovel.’ ‘What! the cat, the rat and Lovel our dog? Was he descended from King Richard's favourite?’
- 1931 Blanket of Dark viii. This Francis Lovell, With Catesby and Ratcliffe he ruled the land under King Richard. You have heard the country rhyme: The Cat, the Rat, and Lovell our dog Ruled all England
under the Hog.

1973 Postern of Fate I. ii. The cat, the rat and Lovell, the dog, Rule all England under the hog. .. The hog was Richard the Third.

rules and ruled

The CAT would eat fish, but would not wet her feet
Cf. medieval L. *catus amat piscem, sed non vult tingere plantas*, the cat loves a fish, but does not wish to wet its feet.

- 1225 in *Englische Studien* (1902) XXXI. 7 *Cat lufat visch, ac he nele his feth wete.*
- 1380 *House of Fame* III. 1783 *For ye be lyke the sweynte [tired] cat That wolde have fissh; but wostow [do you know] what? He wolde nothing wete his clowes.*
- 1549 *Dialogue of Proverbs* I. xi. B8V *But you lust not to do, that longeth therto. The cat would eate fyshe, and wold not wet her feete.*

1605–6 Macbeth I. vii. 44 *Letting ‘I dare not’ wait upon ‘I would’, Like the poor cat i’ th' adage.*
1732 Gnomologia no. 6130 *Fain would the Cat Fish eat, but she's loth her Feet to wet.*
1928 *Sphere* 7 Jan. 36 *‘The cat would fain eat fish, but would not wet his feet.’ .. In modern days one might paraphrase it into ‘bad sailors would fain enjoy the sun, but would not cross the channel’.*

decision and indecision; wanting and having

cat

see also CARE killed the cat; CURIOSITY killed the cat; KEEP no more cats than will catch mice; WANTON kittens make sober cats; there are more WAYS of killing a cat than choking it with cream; also CATS.

You cannot CATCH old birds with chaff
The wise and experienced are not easily fooled.

- 1481 *Reynard the Fox* (1880) xl. *Wenest [do you think] thou thus to deceyue … I am no byrde to be locked ne take by chaf. I know wel ynowh good corn.*
- 1590 *Timon* (1842) iv. ii. Tis well.—An olde birde is not caught with chaffe.
- 1670 *English Proverbs* 126 *You can't catch old birds with chaff.*
- 1853 *Newcomes* II. xv. *They ogled him as they sang .. with which chaff our noble bird was by no means to be caught.*
- 1936 *Danger at Cliff House* v. *Henry Prince was too old a bird to be caught with such chaff.*
- 1957 *She died because..* xiii. *The author begs to append translations of these several statements. The first is from Don Quixote: ‘I am an old dog, and tus, tus, will not do for me,’ which corresponds to the English proverb that an old bird may not be caught with chaff.*

decision; wisdom

catch

see also a CAT in gloves catches no mice; a DROWNING man will clutch at a straw; EAGLES don't catch flies; the EARLY bird catches the worm; FIRST catch your hare; HONEY catches more flies than vinegar; KEEP no more cats than will catch mice; if you RUN after two hares you will catch neither; a SHUT mouth catches no flies; if the SKY falls we shall catch larks; SUE a beggar and catch a louse; set a THIEF to catch a thief.

CATCHING's before hanging

- 1818 *Letters from Alabama* (1830) xxxvi. *Yes, says Marchant, but catching's before hanging—the villain's cleared out.*
- 1876 *New England Life* vii. *Catchin' before spankin' is the rule.*
1961 In Arms of Mountain 60 Ketchin' comes before hangin', I always say.

**action and consequence**

All CATS are grey in the dark

The proverb, which turns on the concept that the night obscures all distinguishing features, is used in a variety of contexts.

**1549 Dialogue of Proverbs I. V. A**

When all candels be out, all cats be grey. All thyngs are then of one colour.

**1596 Margarite of America**

All cattes are grey in the darke .. and therefore (good madam) you doe well to preferre the eie.

**1745 Letter 25 June in Papers (1961) III. 31**

And as in the dark all Cats are grey, the Pleasure of corporal Enjoyment with an old Woman is at least equal, and frequently superior.

**1771 Humphry Clinker III. 67**

He knew not which was which; and, as the saying is, all cats in the dark are gray.

**1886 Princess Casamassima I. xiv.**

‘If she isn't, what becomes of your explanation?’ .. ‘Oh, it doesn't matter; at night all cats are grey.’

**1841 Chuckling Fingers iii.**

‘Cecile wouldn't know,’ Jean said. ‘In the dark all cats are grey.’

**1881 Dark Blue & Dangerous xxvii.**

You forgot that all cats are grey in the dark and so are uniformed policemen.

**1900 Dying of Light xi. 130**

He braked as a cat scuttled in front of him … ‘Was that black?’ ‘All cats are grey in the dark,’ Tess quoted. ‘But it could have been. That's lucky.’

**similarity and dissimilarity**

cattle

see HURRY no man's cattle.

cause

see no one should be JUDGE in his own cause.

cease

see WONDERs will never cease.

certain

see CHILDREN are certain cares, but uncertain comforts; NOTHING is certain but death and taxes; NOTHING is certain but the unforeseen.

chaff

see you cannot CATCH old birds with chaff; a KING'S chaff is worth more than other men's corn.

A CHAIN is no stronger than its weakest link

**1856 Letter 1 Dec. (1877) II. 499**

The devil is very busy, and no one knows better than he, that ‘nothing is stronger than its weakest part’.

**1868 in Cornhill Mag. XVII. 295**

A chain is no stronger than its weakest link; but if you show how admirably the last few are united .. half the world will forget to test the security of the .. parts which are kept out of sight.

**1942 Body for Bill 298**

‘I've gathered that Stansfield was a pretty weak individual ... He was threatening to give the whole thing away.’.. ‘A chain is no stronger than its weakest link, remember?’

**1986 Peter Pyramid ii.**

A chain is only as strong as its weakest link; and the longer the chain, the more weak links.

**strength and weakness**

Don't CHANGE horses in mid-stream
The proverb is also used in the phrase *to change horse in mid-stream*.

1864 *Collected Works* (1953) VII. 384 I am reminded .. of a story of an old Dutch farmer, who remarked to a companion once that ‘it was best not to swap horses when crossing streams’.

1889 C.G. Gordon ii. Clothing and equipment were then undergoing a vigorous process of ‘swopping’ at the moment the animals were in the mid-stream of the siege of Sebastopol.

1929 Good-bye to All That xxiii. ‘If ours is the true religion why do you not become a Catholic?’ .. ‘Reverend father, we have a proverb in England never to swap horses while crossing a stream’.

1967 *English Proverbs Explained* 41 Don’t change horses in mid-stream … If we think it necessary to make changes, we must choose the right moment to make them.


**decision and indecision**

A CHANGE is as good as a rest

1890 in *Lippincott’s Monthly Mag.* Feb. x. 198 Well, I gave my mind a thorough rest by plunging into a chemical analysis. One of our greatest statesmen has said that a change of work is the best rest. So it is.

1895 *Randigal Rhymes* 59 Change of work is as good as touchpipe [a short interval of rest].

1903 *Collectanea* III. 439 Change of work is rest. (Manx.)

1951 Now or Never ii. On the principle that a change of work is a rest, we redecorated the bathroom … We came to the conclusion that the saying is a fallacy.

1967 *Death enters Lists* viii. There would be no fish-bits for Whiskers .. but she could buy him some fish-pieces; and a change was as good as a rest, she remembered.

1984 *Thin Woman* xiii. Me old grandpa used to say ‘a change is as good as a rest’, and at my time of life variety don’t often come aknocking.

1991 *Only Game* xv. 88 I had to go to the dentist’s, so Jane got landed with him instead, and the silly old sod probably thought a change is as good as a rest, and expected Jane to get on with it.

**change ; recreation**

change

see also (verb) the LEOPARD does not change his spots; TIMES change and we with time.

chapel

see where GOD builds a church, the Devil will build a chapel.

CHARITY begins at home

1383 in Wyclif *English Works* (EETS) 78 Charite schuld bigyne at hem-self.

a 1625 *Wit without Money* v. ii. Charity and beating begins at home.

1659 *Appeal of Injured Innocence* I. 25 Charity begins, but doth not end, at home … My Church-History .. began with our own Domestick affairs … I intended .. to have proceeded to forrain Churches.

1748 *Roderick Random* I. vi. The world would do nothing for her if she should come to want—charity begins at home.

1910 “ Reginald in Russia 2 With her, as with a great many of her sex, charity began at homeliness and did not generally progress much farther.

1935 *Mapp & Lucia* vii. Besides, the loss of Foljambe had occurred to him first. Comfort, like charity, began at home.

1985 *Plain Old Man* xiv. ‘You know Aunt Emma never gives anybody a complimentary ticket. If she did … there’d be no money raised for charity.’ ‘I thought charity began at home.’

1996 *Washington Post* 30 July C16 True, charity begins at home, but it shouldn’t end there.

**charity ; home**
CHARITY covers a multitude of sins

1633 Priest to Temple (1652) xii. Many and wonderfull things are spoken of thee … To Charity is given the covering of sins.

1794 Letter 26 May in Writings (1913) I. 191 Faction covers at least as great a multitude of sins as charity.

1836 Rattlin the Reefer I. xxx. The blue coat, like charity, covereth a multitude of sins.

1908 ‘’ Gentle Grafter 47 According to the old proverb, ‘Charity covers a multitude of skins’.

1982 Game xvi. Charity, after all, can cover up a multitude of sins.

It is as CHEAP sitting as standing
Commonly applied literally.

1666 Italian Proverbs 277 The English say, It is as cheap sitting as standing, my Masters.

1858 Ask Mamma xlix. Let's get chairs, and be snug; it's as cheap sitting as standing.

1903 Collectanea II. 38 ‘Cheating never prospers.’ A proverb frequently thrown at each other by young people when playing cards.

1946 ‘’ Bodies in Bookshop xix. The old man .. grunted angrily and lowered himself into a chair. I had already taken a seat. It was as cheap to sit as to stand.

CHEATS never prosper
Also cheaters, esp. in US. Cf. a 1612 J. HARINGTON Epigrams (1618) iv. 5 Treason doth neuer prosper, what's the reason? For if it prosper, none dare call it Treason.

1805 Tour in America II. xxix. It is a common saying in England, that ‘Cheating never thrives’: but, in America, with honest trading you cannot succeed.

1935 William—the Detective vi. They avenged themselves upon the newcomer .. by shouting the time-honoured taunt ‘Cheats never prosper’.

1971 Green Hell Treasure ii. ‘So you figured .. that someone in the classroom had been helping him with his homework, and that was cheating. Which you frown on.’ ‘With reason,’ Da Silva said virtuously. ‘Cheaters never prosper’.

1997 Washington Post 19 Oct. D10 Cheaters never prosper. Who thought Orel Hershiser, one of baseball's leading citizens for 15 years, would ever have to endure such words?

cheaping
see MAY chickens come cheeping.

cheese
**see an APPLE-PIE without some cheese is like a kiss without a squeeze.**

A CHERRY year, a merry year; a plum year, a dumb year

1678 _English Proverbs_ (ed. 2) 52 A cherry year a merry year: A plum year a dumb year. This is a puerile and senseless rythme … as far as I can see.

1869 _Weather Lore_ 14 The progress of the seasons may be watched by observing the punctuality of the vegetable world … A cherry year, a merry year. A plum year, a dumb year.

1979 _Satan Sampler_ ix. Warboys was studying an arrangement of cherry blossom … The blossom was good this year. A cherry year, a merry year.

- **garden lore**
- **chicken**

see don't COUNT your chickens before they are hatched; CURSES, like chickens, come home to roost; MAY chickens come cheeping.

**Monday's CHILD is fair of face**

Each line of the verse (quot. 1838) may be used separately. Examples relating to different days of the week are illustrated here for convenience. In quot. 1838 ‘Christmas’ is an unusual variant, ‘Sabbath’ being far more common.

1838 _Traditions of Devon_ II. 287 Monday's child is fair of face, Tuesday's child is full of grace, Wednesday's child is full of woe, Thursday's child has far to go, Friday's child is loving and giving, Saturday's child works hard for its living, And a child that's born on the Christmas day Is fair and wise and good and gay.

1915 _Salute to Adventurers_ i. I was a Thursday's bairn, and so, according to the old rhyme, 'had far to go'.

1935 _Journal_ 12 Nov. in _Dai Greatcoat_ (1980) II. 81 Which day's child is 'loving and giving' in the rhyme?.. Is it Wednesday's?

1957 _Testament of Experience_ I. ii. From the outset Shirley sustained the nursery adage which commends 'Sunday's child', for she put on weight steadily and was the easiest of infants to rear.

1980 _Setting World on Fire_ II. iii. She showed her contrition by stroking his hair. ‘Saturday's child works hard for his living,’ she murmured.

1997 _Washington Post_ 18 Dec. C27 Monday's child is fair of face. | Tuesday's child is full of grace. | Wednesday's child is full of woe. | Thursday's child has far to go. | Friday's child is loving and giving. | Saturday's child works hard for a living. | And the child born on the Sabbath day | Is bonny and blithe, and good and gay.

- **children**
- **The CHILD is the father of the man**

An assertion of the unity of character from youth to manhood. Cf. 1671 MILTON _Paradise Regained_ IV. 220 The childhood shews the man, As morning shews the day.

1807 _Poems_ (1952) I. 226 My heart leaps up when I behold A rainbow in the sky: So was it when my life began … The Child is father of the Man.

1871 _Character_ ii. The influences which contribute to form the character of the child .. endure through life … ‘The child is father of the man.’

1907 _Father & Son_ xii. We are the victims of hallowed proverbs, and one of the most classic of these tells us that ‘the child is the father of the man’.

1979 _Victorian Historical Novel_ v. The lonely, politically involved child, is father to the man who only slowly grasps the meaning of his experience.

- **children**; **human nature**

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child
see also a BURNT child dreads the fire; PRAISE the child, and you make love to the mother; SPARE the rod and spoil the child; it is a WISE child that knows its own father.

CHILDREN and fools tell the truth
Cf. late 14th-cent. Fr. pour savoir vrai de chose toute, yvre, enfant, sot et femme escoute, to know the truth about everything, listen to drunkards, children, idiots, and women; c 1425 in Anglia (1885) VIII.

Atte laste treuth was tryed oute of a childe and dronken man.

1545 in Letters & Papers of Reign of Henry VIII (1929) Addenda I.i. 437 It is ‘an old saying that a child, a fool and a drunken man will ever show .. the truth’.

Endymion IV.ii. Children must not see Endimion, because children and fooles speake true.

Scots Figgaries III. 23 I am a fool 'tis confest, but children and foolies tell truth sometimes; you know.

1805 Letter Jan. (1932) I. 233 It is a proverb, that children and fools talk truth and I am mistaken if even the same valuable quality may not sometimes be extracted out of the tales made to entertain both.

1921 Evening Standard 21 Oct. 9 Solicitor .. ‘Are you telling the truth in this case?’ Witness.—Only children and fools tell the truth.

1972 ‘’ Murder with Love ii. All he said was that children and fools speak the truth.

CHILDREN are certain cares, but uncertain comforts
The sense is reversed in the last quotation.

Parœmiologia Anglo-Latina 240 Children are uncertaine comforts, but certaine cares.

English Gentleman (ed. 3) 27 Children reflect constant cares, but uncertaine comforts.

Gnomologia no. 1095 Children are certain Cares, but uncertain comforts.

How to be Happy though Married xvi. Children are not ‘certain sorrows and uncertain pleasures’ when properly managed.

Dear Enemy 203 My new little family has driven everything out of my mind. Bairns are certain joy, but nae sma' care.

CHILDREN should be seen and not heard
Originally applied specifically to (young) women.

c 1400 Festial (EETS) I. 230 Hyt ys an old Englysch sawe [saying]: ‘A mayde schuld be seen, but not herd.’

1560 Works I. Bbb2 This also must honest maids provide, that they be not full of tongue ... A maid should be seen, and not heard.

1773 Spiritual Quixote I. III. xviii. It is a vulgar maxim, ‘that a pretty woman should rather be seen than heard’.

1820 Memoirs (1875) V. xii. My dear mother's constant lesson in childhood, that children in company should be seen and not heard.

1959 Eating People is Wrong ii. ‘You think that children should be seen and not heard then?’ asked the novelist.

1982 High Spirits 180 You know the sort of thing:.. children are to be seen and not heard except for exceptional children like me.

Murder on Flying Scotsman i. 12 Harold is being disagreeable ... He says children should be seen and not heard, and preferably not seen either, but I want my little darlings with me.
see also the DEVIL'S children have the Devil's luck; FOOLS and bairns should never see half-done work; HEAVEN protects children, sailors, and drunken men.

chip
see a CARPENTER is known by his chips.

choice
see you PAYS your money and you takes your choice; SMALL choice in rotten apples.

choke
see it is idle to SWALLOW the cow and choke on the tail.

choking
see there are more WAYS of killing a cat than choking it with cream; there are more WAYS of killing a dog than choking it with butter.

Never CHOOSE your women or your linen by candlelight

1573 Garden of Pleasure 51 Choose not a woman, nor linnen clothe by the candle.
1678 English Proverbs (ed. 2) 64 Neither Women nor linnen by candle-light.
1737 Poor Richard's Almanack (May) Fine linnen, girls and gold so bright. Chuse not to take by candlelight.
1928 Bystander 17 Oct. 136 The title ['By Candle Light'] is explained by the grandmotherly aphorism: 'Choose neither women nor linen by candlelight.'
1980 Woman's Journal Dec. 105 'Never choose your women or your linen by candlelight,' they used to say: a testimony to the soft, flattering glow that candles always give.

appearance, deceptive ; women
choose
see also of two EVILS choose the less.

chooser
see BEGGARS can't be choosers.

chosen
see MANY are called but few are chosen.

Christmas
see the DEVIL makes his Christmas pies of lawyers' tongues and clerks' fingers; a GREEN Yule makes a fat churchyard.

The CHURCH is an anvil which has worn out many hammers
The saying originated in the reply of the Calvinist theologian Theodore Beza (1519–1605) to the King of Navarre after the massacre of the Huguenots at Vassy in March 1562. The king had attempted to excuse the massacre on the grounds of the Protestants' having provoked the Duke of Guise and his followers by throwing stones at them.

1853 Hist. Protestants of France I. II. v. 156 (tr. Beza to King of Navarre, 1562) It is the peculiarity of the Church of God .. to endure blows, not to give them; but yet you will be pleased to remember, that it is an anvil on which many a hammer has been broken.
1908 Acts of Apostles I. 136 The Church is an anvil which has worn out many hammers and the story of the first collision is, in essentials, the story of all.
1920 Path of King vii. ‘From this day I am an exile from France so long as it pleases God to make His Church an anvil for the blows of His enemies.’..‘God's church is now an anvil, but remember .. it is an anvil which has worn out many hammers.'

Christianity
church
see also the BLOOD of the martyrs is the seed of the Church; where GOD builds a church, the Devil will build a chapel; he is a GOOD dog who goes to church; the NEARER the church, the farther from God.

curchyard
see a GREEN Yule makes a fat churchyard.

CIRCUMSTANCES alter cases

1678 Tragedies of Lost Age 177 There may be circumstances that alter the case, as when there is a sufficient ground of partiality.
1776 Memoirs (1798) 92 Our General reflected for a moment, that as circumstances alter cases, Gen. Washington .. might possibly wish for some aid.
1895 In Market Overt xxxix. Circumstances alter cases even with the best of us, as was shown in a day or two in the conduct of the Lord Bishop.
1938 Appointment with Death xiii. It is undoubtedly true that circumstances alter cases. I do feel .. that in the present circumstances decisions may have to be reconsidered.
1960 Nuncle 116 Well, circumstances alter cases … With me sitting here .. you haven’t got a free hand.
1997 Washington Post 24 Dec. D11 I heartily disagree that making a gift to charity in honor of a third party is no gift at all. As the old saying goes, ‘circumstances alter cases’.

circumstances

circus
see if you can't RIDE two horses at once, you shouldn't be in the circus.

cite
see the DEVIL can quote Scripture for his own ends.

city
see if every man would SWEEP his own doorstep the city would soon be clean.

A CIVIL question deserves a civil answer

1853 Sam Slick's Wise Saws II.ii. Give a civil answer to a civil question.
1858 Piney Woods Tavern xxvii. The Squire there asked me a civil question, and that deserve a civil answer,—at least that's manners where I come from.
1935 Pins & Needles xi. ‘Thank you for those few words,’ Aunt said effusively. ‘I've got what I wanted—a civil answer to a civil question.’

CIVILITY costs nothing
Politeness now often replaces civility. Cf. late 15th-cent. Fr. de bouche honnesteté.. petit couste et vault plenté, courteous words .. cost little and are worth much.
1706 Spanish & English Dict. s.v. Cortesía, Mouth civility is worth much and costs little.
1765 Letter 30 May (1967) III. 107 Remember Civility costs nothing, and buys every thing.
1765 Memoirs 73 Politeness .. costs but little.
1841 Ten Thousand a Year I. iii. It may be as well .. to acknowledge the fellow’s note ... Civility costs nothing.
1873 Rambles xiv. Civility costs nothing, it is said—Nothing, that is, to him that shows it; but it often costs the world very dear.
1980 Medium for Murder x. ‘It made me hopping mad to hear you kow-towing to him.’ .. ‘Politeness costs nothing,’ said Brooker.
1992 Death in Disguise v. 95 There was no call, Jill's boss had agreed whilst comforting his employee with an iced Malibu, to take that tone. Politeness cost nothing.
manner; Politeness
clay
see CANDLEMAS day, put beans in the clay, put candles and candlesticks away.
clean
see NEW brooms sweep clean; if every man would SWEEP his own doorstep the city would soon be clean.

CLEANLINESS is next to godliness
Next in this proverb means ‘immediately following’, as in serial order. Cf. 1605 BACON Advancement of Learning II. 44 Cleanness of bodie was euer esteemed to proceed from a due reverence to God.

a 1791 Works (1872) VII. 16 Slovenliness is no part of religion … ‘Cleanliness is indeed next to godliness.’

1876 Ride to Khiva x. ‘Cleanliness is next to Godliness.’ The latter quality, as displayed in a Russian devotee, is more allied with dirt than anything else.

1893 Judgement Day xvii. His sister Loretta .. called: Cleanliness is next to Godliness.

1979 Backfire i. The hospital staff had a thing about personal cleanliness, next to godliness, you might say.

1994 Too Many Cooks Spoil Broth xii. 118 If cleanliness is next to godliness, as they say, Susannah's best quality is automatically third-rate.

CLEERGYMEN's sons always turn out badly

1885 How to be Happy though Married xix. The Proverb says that ‘Clergymen's sons always turn out badly’.. because the children are surfeited with severe religion, not with the true religion of Christ.

1922 Outspoken Essays 2nd Ser. vii. An Eton boy .. When asked why the sons of Eli turned out badly, replied ‘The sons of clergymen always turn out badly’.

1982 Unsuitable Attachment iii. Yes, sons of the clergy often go to the bad, and daughters, too.

children and parents
clerk
see the DEVIL makes his Christmas Pies of lawyers' tongues and clerks' fingers.
client
see a man who is his own LAWYER has a fool for his client.
climb
see he that would EAT the fruit must climb the tree; the HIGHER the monkey climbs the more he shows his tail.

Hasty CLIMBERS have sudden falls

a 1439 Fall of Princes (EETS) III. 953 The wheel of Fortune tourneth as a ball; Sodeyn clymbyng axeth a sodeyn fall.

b 1511 Comfort of Lovers (1975) A4 Clymbe not to fast, lest sodenlye ye slyde.

1592 Repentance in Works XII. 158 For a yong man led on by selfe will ... Hee forseath not that such as clime hastely fall sodainely.

1605 Capt. Thomas Stukeley D1 But there are many daungers by the way, and hastie climers quicklie catch a fall.

1616 Crossing of Proverbs II. A4 Hasty climbers haue sodaine falls ... Not if they sit fast.

1869 John Ploughman's Talk xix. Hints as to thriving ... Hasty climbers have sudden falls.
The ambition to send spaceships to the red planet reminds me of the old saying: ‘Hasty climbers quickly catch a fall.’

**ambition**

From CLOGS to clogs is only three generations
Said to be a Lancashire proverb. Similar to from SHIRTSLEEVES to shirtsleeves in three generations. The clog, a shoe with a thick wooden sole, was commonly used by factory and other manual workers in the north of England. Cf. 1700 DRYDEN Wife of Bath in Fables Ancient & Modern 493 Seldom three descents continue good. 1721 J. KELLY Scottish Proverbs 312 The Father buys, the Son biggs [builds], The Grandchild sells, and his Son thiggs [begs].

□1871 Notes & Queries 4th Ser. VII. 472 ‘From clogs to clogs is only three generations.’ A Lancashire proverb, implying that, however rich a poor man may eventually become, his great-grandson will certainly fall back to poverty and ‘clogs’.

1938 Principles of Art v. But the poor, who are always the last guardians of a tradition, knew that the curse of God rested on idleness, and spoke of three generations from clogs to clogs.

1984 English Companion 59 This indeed was the normal working-class footwear in the industrial north till the age of affluence dawned after the last war; the old northern proverb, clogs to clogs in three generations, is self-explanatory.

**family ; poverty**

close

see when ONE door shuts, another opens.

cloth

see CUT your coat according to your cloth.

CLOTHES make the man

Cf. GK. µετά τον παλτό, the man is his clothing; ERASMUS Adages ‘Divitiae’ vestis virum facit.


c 1445 Peter Idley’s Instructions to his Son (1935) I. 82 Ffor clothyng oft maketh man.

1591 Second Fruits 115 Though manners makes, yet apparell shapes.

1617 Alcida B3 The Hood makes not the Monke, nor the apparrell the man.

1836 Sartor I. V. Clothes gave us individuality, distinctions, social polity. Clothes have made men of us.

1933 Lost Horizon 3 Still, it did happen—and it goes some way to show that clothes make the man, doesn’t it?

1985 How was it for You? 120 I hear the clip-clop of my stilettos on the wooden floor, well, dears, I’m anything they want me to be. I expect that’s what they mean by Clothes Maketh the Man.

1996 Washington Times 12 Aug. A19 If clothes make the man, the new Bob Dole (if it lasts) will be a more formidable presidential candidate.

**appearance, significant ; dress**

clothes

see there is no such thing as BAD weather, only the wrong clothes.

Every CLOUD has a silver lining
A poetic sentiment that even the gloomiest outlook contains some hopeful or consoling aspect. Cf. 1634 MILTON Comus I. 93 Was I deceiv’d, or did a sable cloud Turn forth her silver lining on the night?

□1863 Struggles of P.V. Nasby (1872) xxiii. Ther is a silver linin to evry cloud.

1869 Struggles & Triumphs 406 ‘Every cloud’, says the proverb, ‘has a silver lining.’

1939 Trouble for Lucia xi. She always discovered silver linings to the blackest of clouds, but now, scrutinize them as she might, she could detect in them none but the most sombre hues.
1991 Redundancy of Courage xxii. 283 This misfortune of hers had done wonders for our up and down relationship—all clouds have a silver lining, don't they say.

optimism

clout
see ne'er CAST a clout till May be out.

clutch
see a DROWNING man will clutch at a straw.

coat
see CUT your coat according to your cloth.

Let the COBBLER stick to his last
Attributed to the Greek painter Apelles (4th cent. BC.): see quot. 1721. The ‘shoemaker’ variant is a long-standing one in British proverb lore, but is now mainly North American. A last is a wooden or metal model on which a shoemaker fashions shoes or boots. Cf. PLINY Natural History xxxv. 85 ne supra crepidam sutor iudicaret, the cobbler should not judge beyond his shoe; ERASMUS Adages I. vi. 16 ne sutor ultra crepidam.

\[1539\] tr. Erasmus' Adages 17 Let not the shoemaker go beyond hys shoe.

1616 Dict. (rev.ed.) 567 Cobler keepe your last.

1639 Paræmiologia Anglo-Latina 21 Cobler keepe to your last.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 242 Let not the Cobler go beyond his last … Taken from the famous Story of Apelles, who could not bear that the Cobler should correct any part of his Picture beyond the Slipper.

1868 Tim Bunker Papers lix. I understood the use of a plow .. better than the use of a pen .. remembering the old saw ‘Let the cobbler stick to his last’.

1930 Murder on Bus xxx. Yet even then, Mapell had been mixed up with a gang of blackmailers. The shoemaker sticks to his last!

1984 San Andreas viii. Point taken, Mr. McKinnon. You see before you a rueful cobbler who will stick to his last from now on.

work

The COBBLER to his last and the gunner to his linstock
A fanciful variant of the preceding proverb. A linstock is a staff with a forked head to hold a lighted match.

\[1748\] Roderick Random II. xlii. I meddle with no body's affairs but my own; The gunner to his linstock, and the steersman to the helm, as the saying is.

1893 Life of W. H. Smith II. v. He .. never showed any disposition to trespass on the province of science or literature … There is sound sense in the adage, ‘The cobbler to his last and the gunner to his linstock’.

work

Every COCK will crow upon his own dunghill
Everyone is confident or at ease when on home ground. Cf. SENeca Apocolocyntosis vii. gallum in suo sterquilinio plurimum posse, the cock is most powerful on his own dunghill; the work is a satire on Claudius' deification at death, and Seneca is punning on Claudius' provincial origin and interests, as gallus means both a cock and a Gaul.

\[1250\] Ancrene Wisse (1952) 62 Coc is kene [bold] on his owune mixerne [midden].

1387 tr. Higden's Polychronicon (1879) VIII. 5 As Seneca seith, a cok is most myghty on his dongehille.

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs I. xi. D2 He was at home there, he myght speake his will. Every cocke is proude on his owne dunghill.

1771 Humphry Clinker II. 178 Insolence .. akin to the arrogance of the village cock, who never crows but upon his own dunghill.
'I believe you're showing off.'.. 'Every cock will crow upon his own dunghill'.

Mariner seemed to be easy enough. A cock on his own dunghill.

cold

see also there's many a GOOD cock come out of a tattered bag; the ROBIN and the wren are God's cock and hen.

COLD hands, warm heart

A cold hand and a warm heart.

I did take her hand ... Cold hand, warm heart!

I knew you would be on my side ... Cold hand—warm heart. That is the saying, isn't it?

A hot, humid night, but her hands cold. Cold hands, warm heart.

'Belle, your hands are cold,' he said. ‘Cold hands, that's funny?’ ‘You know the old saying, “cold hands, warm heart”.’

love
cold

see also (noun) as the DAY lengthens, so the cold strengthens; FEED a cold and starve a fever;
(adj.) REVENGE is a dish that can be eaten cold.

colour
see a GOOD horse cannot be of a bad colour.

come
see ALL things come to those who wait; the BIGGER they are, the harder they fall; don't CROSS the bridge till you come to it; EASY come, easy go; never do EVIL that good may come of it; FIRST come, first served; what GOES around comes around; all is GRIST that comes to the mill; LIGHT come, light go; come LIVE with me and you'll know me; MARCH comes in like a lion, and goes out like a lamb; if the MOUNTAIN will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet must go to the mountain; when POVERTY comes in at the door, love flies out of the window; QUICKLY come, quickly go; when THIEVES fall out, honest men come by their own; TOMORROW never comes.

comfort
see CHILDREN are certain cares, but uncertain comforts.

COMING events cast their shadows before

'Tis the sunset of life gives me mystical love, And coming events cast their shadows before.
The coming event of Mr. Quiverful's transference to Barchester produced a delicious shadow in the shape of a new outfit for Mrs. Quiverful. ‘Coming events cast their shadows before.’ This Shikastan [Earthly] observation was of particular appropriateness during an epoch when the tempo of events was so speeded up.

command
see he that cannot OBEY cannot command.

COMMON fame is seldom to blame

Cf. Though prouerbe truely say, by fames affect, Gods judgement lightly doth a truth detect.
Common fame's seldome to blame.  

A man will seldome be under an universal ill Report, unless he has given some occasion for it.

Common fame is seldom to blame.

But though, as the proverb says, common fame is seldom to blame, don't believe everything you hear about me.

public opinion

communication

see EVIL communications corrupt good manners.

A man is known by the COMPANY he keeps

Originally used as a moral maxim or exhortation in the context of (preparation for) marriage.

If a man can be known by nothing els, then he maye bee known by his companions.

There is a Proverb, Mrs. Joyner, You may know him by his Company.

‘Surely he does not mean me.’ ‘One is known by the company he keeps.’

A man is known by the company he keeps.

People knew a man by the company he kept, but they generally knew a woman by the man who kept her.

The COMPANY makes the feast

Take this for a rule, you may pick out such times and such companies, that you may make yourselves merrier,.. for 'tis the company and not the charge [expense] that makes the feast.

Epicurus maintained that you should rather have regard to the company with whom you eat .. than to what you eat … This has been crystallised into the terse English proverb, ‘The company makes the feast.’

It is the company which makes the occasion, not the surroundings.

friends ; hospitality

company

see also MISERY loves company; TWO is company, but three is none.

COMPARISONS are odious

Cf. early 14th-cent. Fr. comparaisons sont haïneuses, comparisons are hateful.
Letter 15 Sept. (1920) I. 32 Nuremburg is excellent—and comparisons are odious; but I would give a thousand N[uremburg]'s for one ray of Verona.

Printer's Error ii. ‘I will study the psychology of pigs instead of that of .. refugees.’ ‘Comparisons are odious,’ observed Carey.

If there is one message .. it is that comparisons are odious. Incomes and prices have to be related to local conditions.

similarity and dissimilarity

He that COMPLIES against his will is of his own opinion still

He that complies against his Will, Is of his own Opinion still; Which he may adhere to, yet disown, For Reasons to himself best known.

No one should submit their mind to another mind: He that complies against his will Is of his own opinion still—that's my motto. I won't be brainwashed.

But Ed Maguire did what he did against his own convictions. And what they say is true .. ‘A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still.’

free will and compulsion

CONFESS and be hanged

Confesse and be hangede man In English some saie.

Handkerchief—confessions—handkerchief! To confess, and be hanged for his labour.

After so ample a Confession as he hath made, must he now be hang'd too to make good the Proverb?

At the gallows!.. Confess and be hanged is a most reverend proverb.

People who commit high treason get hanged.'.. 'Very well, confess and be hanged!'

Confession may be good for the soul; but it is doubtful whether the avowal of incapacity to the parties desirous of securing our services is quite judicious.

Confession may be good for the soul but it's pretty lousy for marriages.

Confession is good for the soul, particularly when it comes from journalists, who have a notoriously difficult time admitting error.

CONSCIENCE makes cowards of us all

Quot. 1912 is a humorous perversion of the proverb. Cf. SHAKESPEARE Richard III I. iv. 133 Where’s thy conscience now?—I'll not meddle with it—it makes a man a coward.

Conscience does make cowards of us all.

Provoked Wife v. 75 It mayn’t be amiss to deferr the Marriage till you are sure they [mortgages]
are paid off ... Guilty Consciences make Men Cowards.
1912 ‘Chronicles of Clovis’ 134 The English have a proverb, ‘Conscience makes cowboys of us all.’
1941 You can’t be too Careful viii. ‘Why doesn’t he face it out?’.. ‘Conscience makes cowards of us all, Whittaker.’
1976 Poor Old Lady’s Dead iv. There was something funny here. Bloody funny. So the inspector, who lived, like any other policeman, with the sure knowledge that conscience doth make cowards of us all, began to lean.

conscience : cowardice

conscience
see a GUILTY conscience needs no accuser.

consent
see SILENCE means consent.

CONSTANT dropping wears away a stone
Primarily used to mean that persistence will achieve a difficult or unlikely objective (but see also quotes. 1874 and 1912). Continual frequently occurs instead of constant in the US. Cf. CHOERILUS OF SAMOS Fragments x. (Kinkel)

constant dropping wears away a stone

persistence
contempt
see FAMILIARITY breeds contempt.

continual
see CONSTANT dropping wears away a stone.

contrary
see DREAMS go by contraries.

cook
see GOD sends meat, but the Devil sends cooks; TOO many cooks spoil the broth.

corn
see a KING'S Chaff is worth more than other men's corn.

CORPORATIONS have neither bodies to be punished nor souls to be damned
A large organization, unlike a private individual, can act unjustly or highhandedly without fear of being...
brought to account.

1658 Reports II. 233 The opinion of Manwood, chief Baron [c 1580], was this, as touching Corporations, that they were invisible, immortall, and that they had no soule; and therefore no Subpœna lieth against them, because they have no Conscience nor soule.

c 1820 Literary Extracts (1844) I. 268 Lord Chancellor Thurlow said [c 1775] that the corporations have neither bodies to be punished nor souls to be damned.

a 1845 in S. Holland Memoir (1855) I. xi. Why, you never expected justice from a company, did you? They have neither a soul to lose, nor a body to kick.

1932 Hold your Tongue xii. A corporation is just like any natural person, except that it has no pants to kick or soul to damn, and, by God, it ought to have both.

- business ; conscience corrupt

see EVIL communications corrupt good manners; POWER corrupts.

cost

see CIVILITY costs nothing.

cough

see LOVE and a cough cannot be hid.

COUNCILS of war never fight

People discussing matters in a group never reach the decision to fight, which an individual would make.

1863 Telegram 13 July (1877) III. 148 Act upon your own judgment and make your Generals execute your orders. Call no counsel [sic] of war. It is proverbial that counsels of war never fight.

1891 Barracks, Bivouacs & Battles 191 Solomon's adage that in the multitude of counsellors there is wisdom does not apply to war. ‘Councils of war never fight’ has passed into a proverb.

- action and inaction ; decision and indecision ; warfare

counsel

see a FOOL may give a wise man counsel; NIGHT brings counsel.

Don't COUNT your chickens before they are hatched

An instruction not to make, or act upon, an assumption (usually favourable) which might turn out to be wrong. The metaphorical phrase to count one's chickens is also used.

1570 New Sonnets C2 Counte not thy Chickens that vnhatched be.

1579 Ephemerides of Phialo 19 I woulde not haue him to counte his Chickens so soone before they be hatcht, nor tryumphe so long before the victorie.

1664 Hudibras II. iii. To swallow Gudgeons ere th'are catch'd, And count their Chickens ere th'are hatch'd.

1829 Journal 20 May (1946) 69 I see a fund .. capable of extinguishing the debt .. in ten years or earlier … But we must not reckon our chickens before they are hatchd.

1906 in Reminiscences xxii. A victory may be snatched, But never count your little chicks, Before they're safely hatchd.

1935 '' Keep it Quiet xxiv. To Cardonnel, he wrote his congratulations, adding that as to convicting the thief, he feared that they were far from proof, and ought not to count their chickens.

1964 & English Proverbs Explained 42 Mr. Smith hoped to be made manager before the end of the year … ‘Don't count your chickens before they are hatched,’ warned his wife.

- optimism

In the COUNTRY of the blind, the one-eyed man is king

‘A little wit, among foolish people, will pass a man for a great genius’ (T. Fielding Proverbs of all Nations (1824) 23); also used of ability as well as wit. Cf. ERASMUS Adages III. iv. in regione
caechorum rex est luscus, in the kingdom of the blind the one-eyed man is king.

1522 Works (1843) II. 43 An one eyed man is Well syghted when He is amonge blynde men.

1640 Outlandish Proverbs no. 469 In the kingdome of blind men the one ey'd is king.

1830 Arabic Proverbs 34 The one-eyed person is a beauty in the country of the blind.

1904 in Strand Apr. 405 Through his thoughts ran this old proverb .. ‘In the Country of the Blind, the One-Eyed Man is king.’

1937 Letter 7 Mar. in Young Man's Country (1977) ii. You exaggerate the alleged compliment paid to me by the Bengal Govt. in wanting to retain my services. ‘In the country of the blind the one-eyed man is king.’

1979 Guardian 3 Oct. 11 At last among the blind the one-eyed man was king ... There are men much more limited than David.

ignorance ; rulers and ruled

Happy is the COUNTRY which has no history

Carlyle (see quot. 1864) attributed this observation to the French political philosopher Montesquieu (1689–1755). Cf. 1740 B. FRANKLIN Poor Richard's Almanack (Feb.) Happy that Nation,—fortunate that age, whose history is not diverting.

1807 Letter 29 Mar. in Writings (1904) XI. 182 Blest is that nation whose silent course of happiness furnishes nothing for history to say.

1860 Mill on Floss vi. iii. The happiest women, like the happiest nations, have no history.

1864 Frederick the Great IV. xvi. i. Happy the people whose annals are blank in history.

1880 Mary Anerley vi. This land, like a happy country, has escaped, for years and years, the affliction of much history.

1957 Testament of Experience I. iv. Quoting the familiar dictum: ‘Happy is the country which has no history,’ I remarked that I belonged, like Edward VIII, to a generation which was still on the early side of middle age but had already seen almost more history than any generation could bear.

1981 Nature 23 Apr. 698 An old proverb .. tells us that ‘happy is the nation that has no history.’.. DNA .. is the unhappiest of molecules, for it is the subject of innumerable biographies.

blessings ; past

country

see also you can take the BOY out of the country but you can't take the country out of the boy; GOD made the country, and man made the town; OTHER times, other manners; a PROPHET is not without honour save in his own country.

couple

see a DEAF husband and a blind wife are always a happy couple.

The COURSE of true love never did run smooth

1595 Midsummer Night's Dream I.i. 134 For aught that I could ever read .. The course of true love never did run smooth.

1836 Cruise of Midge I. xi. ‘The course of true love never did run smooth.’ And the loves of Saunders Skelp and Jessy Miller were no exception to the rule.

1980 Tablet 26 Jan. 89 The course of true love could never run smooth with Sybylla's temperament.

love, blighted

course

see also HORSES for courses.

court
see HOME is home, as the Devil said when he found himself in the Court of Session.

cover
see (noun) you can't tell a BOOK by its cover; (verb) CHARITY covers a multitude of sins.

coverlet
see everyone STRETCHES his legs according to the length of his coverlet.

Why buy a COW when milk is so cheap?
An argument for choosing the least troublesome alternative; frequently used as an argument against marriage. One of the few proverbs in the form of a rhetorical question; cf. why KEEP a dog, and bark yourself?

1659 Proverbs. p. ii. *It is better to buy a quart of Milk by the penny then keep a Cow.*

1680 Mr. Badman 293 *Who would keep a Cow of their own, that can have a quart of milk for a penny? Meaning, Who would be at the charge to have a Wife, that can have a Whore when he listeth (wishes)?*

1895 Note-Books (1926) xvii. *It was cheaper to buy the milk than to keep a cow.*

1942 yellow overcoat v. ‘He ain't marryin’ve. any more!.. ‘Why buy a cow when milk is so cheap, eh?’

1984 Color of Money vi. ‘I don't have a wife.’ ‘That's the best way. Why buy a cow when you can get milk free?’

1996 Washington Post 14 Jan. C5 *When it comes to sex, your mother and Elvis may have been right: Men don't buy the cow when they can get the milk for free.*

marriage
cow
see also a BELLOWING cow soon forgets her calf; BETTER a good cow than a cow of a good kind; it is idle to SWALLOW the cow and choke on the tail; THREE things are not to be trusted.
coward
see a BULLY is always a coward; CONSCIENCE makes cowards of us all.

COWARDS die many times before their death
The popular form is a misquotation of Shakespeare (see quot. 1599) Cf. 1596 DRAYTON Mortimeriados S1 Every houre he dyes, which ever feares.

1599 Julius Caesar II.ii. 32 *Cowards die many times before their deaths: The valiant never taste of death but once.*

1800 Castle Rackrent p. xliv. *In Ireland, not only cowards, but the brave ‘die many times before their death.’*

1927 Sphere 3 Dec. 414 *It is true that cowards die many times before their death, and Noel Coward will come back again and again, and .. win his niche among the great dramatists.*

cowardice
The COWL does not make the monk
Do not judge men by what they appear to be. Cf. medieval L. *cucullus non facit monachum*, the cowl does not make the monk; a 1250 Ancrene Wisse (1962) 10 *Her in is religiun, nawt i the wide hod ne i the blake cape.*

1387 Testament of Love in Chaucer Complete Works (1897) II. xi. *For habit maketh no monk; ne weringe of gilte spurres maketh no knight.*

1588 Pandosto IV. 289 *Trueth quoth Fawnia, but all that weare Cooles (cowls) are not Monkes.*

1613 Henry VIII III.i. 23 *They should be good men, their affairs as righteous; But all hoods make not monks.*

1820 Abbot II. xi. *‘Call me not doctor .. since I have laid aside my furred gown and bonnet.’.. ‘O, sir .. the cowl makes not the monk.’
1891 Music in London (1932) I. 217 Such impostures are sure of support from the sort of people .. who think that it is the cowl that makes the monk.

appearance, deceptive

cradle

see the HAND that rocks the cradle rules the world.

A CREAKING door hangs longest

Usually said as a comfort to the infirm, though sometimes implying that the weak or faulty is a nuisance the longest. Gate sometimes replaces door.

□1776 John Buncle, Junior I. vi. They say a creaking gate goes the longest upon its hinges; that's my comfort.

1888 Madame Midas II. ii. It is said that ‘creaking doors hang the longest’. Mrs. Pulchop .. was an excellent illustration of the truth of this saying.

1944 Towards Zero 62 But it seems I am one of these creaking gates—these perpetual invalids who never die.


1985 Paradise Postponed viii. I'll probably last like this another thirty years. I'll be a creaking gate .. and they goes on swinging forever.

mortality; old age

cream

see there are more WAYS of killing a cat than choking it with cream.

Give CREDIT where credit is due

The older form with honour (principally in the sense ‘obeisance, homage’) is now rare. Cf. ROMANS xiii. 7 (Reims) Render therefore to all men their due:. to whom honour, honour.

□1777 Letter 29 Oct. in Collections of Massachusetts Hist. Society (1917) LXXII. 375 May Honor be given to whom Honor may be due.

1834 Diary 17 Jan. (1941) 50 Loudon must be a man of taste .. and disposed to give all credit where any credit is due.

1894 Girl's Own Paper 6 Jan. 228 The justice and magnanimity which would show ‘honour to whom honour is due’.. is not always found equal to the occasion when it involves the granting of a degree.

1968 Rock Baby xxii. You aren't half as daft as I thought ... Credit where credit's due.

1976 Wilt viii. ‘Some maniac …’ ‘Come now, give credit where credit is due,’ interrupted Dr. Board.

1997 Washington Post 14 Apr. C12 ‘Give credit where it's due,’ South sighed. ‘The man found the killing opening lead against me.’

fair dealing; just deserts

crime

see POVERTY is not a crime.

crop

see good SEED makes a good crop.

Don't CROSS the bridge till you come to it

Do not concern yourself with difficulties until they arise. Now also common as the metaphorical phrase to cross one's bridges when one comes to them.

□1850 Journal 29 Apr. in Life (1886) II. 165 Remember the proverb, ‘Do not cross the bridge till you come to it.’

1895 Household Tales xiv. One who anticipates difficulty is told not to cross the bridge till he gets to it.

1927 Quayle's Invention xv. Why cross our bridges before we come to them?
1967 Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead II. 43 We cross our bridges when we come to them and burn our bridges behind us, with nothing to show for our progress except a memory of the smell of smoke, and a presumption that once our eyes watered.

**trouble**

**CROSSES are ladders that lead to heaven**

There are two strands to the proverb: in one, *cross* signifies the crucifix; in the other, it means ‘trouble, misfortune’.

**1616** *Adages* 36 *The Crosse is the ladder of heauen.*

**1670** *English Proverbs* 6 *Crosses are ladders that do lead to heaven.*

**1859** *Self-Help* xi. *If there be real worth in the character .. it will give forth its finest fragrance when pressed. ‘Crosses’ says the old proverb, ‘are ladders that lead to heaven.’*

**1975** *Women in Wall* iv. *The cross, they say, is the ladder to heaven and so I have sent your lordship .. two.*

**misfortune**

**crow**

see *(noun)* on the FIRST of March, the crows begin to search; *HAWKS* will not pick out hawks' eyes; *ONE* for the mouse, one for the crow; *(verb)* every cock will crow upon his own dunghill; also *CROWING.*

**crowd**

see *TWO is company, but three is none.*

**crowing**

see *a WHISTLING woman and a crowing hen are neither fit for God nor men.*

**crown**

see *the END crowns the work.*

**Don't CRY before you're hurt**

Cf. early 14th-cent. Fr. *follie fait plorer deuant que on soit batu.*

**1548** *Reliquiœ Antiquœ* (1843) II. 16 *Ye may the better understand that I cry not before I am pricked.*

**1678** *English Proverbs* (ed. 2) 237 *You cry before you're hurt.*

**1721** *Scottish Proverbs* 204 *It is time enough to cry, Oh, when you are hurt. Spoken to dissuade People from groundless Fears.*

**1850** *Pendennis* II. xxx. *I .. took up a pistol. You see it is not loaded, and this coward cried out before he was hurt.*

**1930** *Other Bullet* xxviii. *Don't cry out before you're hurt.*

**1981** *Devil's Parole* xvi. *You mean .. that one shouldn't cry before one is hurt.*

**cowardice ; expectation**

**cry**

see also *MUCH cry and little wool; SING before breakfast, cry before night.*

**It is no use CRYING over spilt milk**

It is pointless to repine when it is too late to remedy the misfortune.

**1659** *Proverbs* (British) 40 *No weeping for shed milk.*

**1738** *Polite Conversation* I. 27 *‘I would cry my Eyes out.’ .. ‘Tis a Folly to cry for spilt Milk.’

**1884** *Canon's Ward* I. xv. *There would be a row .. but he would say, like a wise man, ‘There's no use in crying over spilt milk.’

**1936** *Whiteoak Harvest* xxv. *It's no use crying over spilt milk. The money's gone .. and that's that.*

**1984** *‘ Gondola Scam* xiii. *I wish now I'd thought about the implications, but it's no good crying over
spilt milk.

1995 And Hope to Die ix. 115 I said this dismissively. No good crying over spilt milk.

misfortune; past

cup

see FULL cup, steady hand; the LAST drop makes the cup run over; there's MANY a slip between cup and lip.

He that will to CUPAR maun to Cupar

Cupar is a town in Fife, Scotland.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 141 He that will to Cowper [Cupar], will to Cowper. A Reflection upon obstinate Persons, that will not be reclaim'd.

1817 Rob Roy III. i. The Hecate .. ejaculated, ‘A wilfu' man will hae his way—them that will to Cupar maun [must] to Cupar!’

1893 Catriona xiii. He stood part of a second .., hesitating. ‘He that will to Cupar, maun to Cupar.’ said he, and .. was hauled into the skiff.

1958 And be Villain v. ‘I shall take the first plane to Paris.’.. ‘Well, he who will to Cupar maun to Cupar, but I think it's very silly of you.’

obstination

cure

see NO cure, no pay; PREVENTION is better than cure.

What can't be CURED must be endured

Cf. 1377 LANGLAND Piers Plowman B. x. 439 When must comes forward, there is nothing for it but to suffer; c 1408 LYDGATE Reason & Sensuality (EETS) l. 4757 For thyng that may nat be eschiwed But of force mot be sywed [followed].

1579 Shepherd's Calendar (Sept.) 88 And cleanly couer, that cannot be cured. Such il, as is forced, mought nedes be endured.

1763 Prophecy of Famine 18 Patience is sorrow's salve; what can't be cur'd, so Donald right areeds [counsels], must be endur'd.

1870 Madam How i. That stupid resignation which some folks preach .. is merely saying—what can't be cured, must be endured.

1936 South Riding VI. i. We all have our bad turns. What can't be cured must be endured, you know.

1979 Now God be Thanked iii. What can't be cured must be endured .. and then I don't think he'll beat you any more.

1997 Washington Post 18 Dec. C1 ‘What cannot be cured must be endured,’ the chained man says, trying to smile. But it comes out as a grimace.

patience and impatience

CURIOSITY killed the cat

1921 Diff'rent II. 252 ‘What'd you ask 'em, for instance?’.. ‘Curiosity killed a cat! Ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies.’

1939 By Shores of Silver Lake xvi. ‘Whatever are you making, Pa?..[There was no reply.] Curiosity killed a cat, Pa.’ Tantalizing, he sat there whittling.

1973 Postern of Fate I. iv. ‘A curiosity death,’ said Tommy. ‘Curiosity killed the cat.’

1984 Last Laugh iii. ‘I'm curious, that's all.’ ‘Curiosity killed old tom.’

1991 Redundancy of Courage xxvii. 371 The townspeople had learned the hard way that curiosity killed the cat—you stayed indoors if there was trouble.

curiosity
curried (combed): see a SHORT horse is soon curried.

CURSES, like chickens, come home to roost
Also without specific reference to curses, as in quot. 1996.

\[c1390\] Parson's Tale 1.620 And ofte tyme swich cursyng wrongfully retorneth agayn to hym that curseth, as a bryd that retorneth agayn to his owene nest.

1592 Arden of Feversham G4 For curses are like arrowes shot upright, Which falling down light on the suters [shooter's] head.

1810 Kehama (title-page), Curses are like young chicken; they always come home to roost.
1880 Duty iv. Their injustice will return upon them. Curses, like chickens, come home to roost.
1932 Cold Comfort Farm vii. Curses, like rookses, flies home to nest in bosomses and barnses.
1986 Washington Post 10 July A23 The proverb teaches us that ‘curses, like chickens, come home to roost.’ The Supreme Court taught that lesson one more time last week in an opinion that combined bad law with rough justice.
1996 Washington Post 26 Feb. B2 In attempting to understand last week’s nonsense in New Hampshire, we do well to bear in mind three axioms so hoary that their essential truth may no longer be adequately grasped … The third, ‘Chickens always come home to roost.’

\[malice \; retribution\]
The CUSTOMER is always right

\[c1917\] Confessions of Alphonse iii. The great success of a restaurant is built up on this principle—le patron n’a jamais tort—the customer is always in the right!
1928 Good Morning, America 17 Behold the proverbs of a nation … Let one hand wash the other. The customer is always right.
1941 Death & Taxes ii. ‘I’m drunk.’ ‘You shouldn’t do it, George.’ ‘Business,’ he said solemnly. ‘The customer is always right.’
1973 “’ Let Sleeping Vets Lie xxv. You’ve heard the old saying, ‘The customer is always right.’ Well I think it’s a good working axiom.
1980 Times 30 Sept. 9 That the customer is always right is a theory attributed to John Wanamaker, the American retail prince who founded the stores which bear his name.
1996 American Spectator June 45 Guided by the shining principle that the customer is always right, Home Secretary Michael Howard was more than willing to oblige the Saudis …

\[buying \; and \; selling\]
Don't CUT off your nose to spite your face
A warning against spiteful revenge which results in one's own hurt or loss. The metaphorical phrase to cut off one's nose to spite one's face is very frequently found. Cf. medieval L. male ulciscitur dedecus sibi illatum, qui amputat nasum suum, he who cuts off his nose takes poor revenge for a shame inflicted on him; mid 14th-cent. Fr. qui cope son nès, sa face est despechie, the man who cuts off his nose spites his face.
\[c1560\] Deceit of Women 11 He that byteth hys nose of, shameth hys face.
1788 Dict. Vulgar Tongue (ed.2) U3³⁷ He cut off his nose to be revenged of his face, said of one who, to be revenged of his neighbour, has materially injured himself.
1889 Master of Ballantrae x. He was in that humour when a man—in the words of the old adage—will cut off his nose to spite his face.
1964 English Proverbs Explained 43 Don't cut off your nose to spite your face.
1980 Pint of Murder vi. So the next thing anybody knew she'd run off an' married that no-good Bob
Bascom an' if that ain't cuttin' off your nose to spite your face, I'd like to know what is.

**malice ; revenge**

**CUT your coat according to your cloth**

Actions should suit circumstances or resources. Also common as the metaphorical phrase to cut one's coat according to one's cloth.

- **1546** Dialogue of Proverbs I. viii. C1 I shall Cut my cote after my cloth.
- **1580** Euphues & his England II. 188 Be neither prodigall to spende all, nor couetous to keepe all, cut thy coat according to thy cloth.
- **1778** Writings (1936) XIII. 79 General McIntoch .. must .. yield to necessity; that is, to use a vulgar phrase, ‘shape his Coat according to his Cloth’.
- **1873** Phineas Redux II. xxxv. An unselfish, friendly, wise man, who by no means wanted other men to cut their coats according to his pattern.
- **1951** ‘ Miss Silver comes to Stay xxxvi. ‘You must cut your coat according to your cloth.’..‘My trouble is that I do like the most expensive cloth.’
- **1974** Porterhouse Blue iii. I'm afraid the .. exigencies of our financial position do impose certain restraints .. A case of cutting our coats to suit our cloth.

- **circumstances ; poverty ; thrift**

**cut**

see also (participial adjective)a SLICE off a cut loaf isn't missed; (verb) DIAMOND cuts diamond.

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D

daisy

see it is not SPRING until you can plant your foot upon twelve daisies.

damned

see CORPORATIONS have neither bodies to be punished nor souls to be damned.

**They that DANCE must pay the fiddler**

Cf. he who PAYS the piper calls the tune, where the emphasis is reversed. To pay the piper (fiddler, etc.) means ‘to bear the cost (of an enterprise)’. The proverb is now predominantly found in US use.

- **1638** Taylor's Feast in Works (1876) 94 One of the Fidlers said, Gentlemen, I pray you to remember the Musicke [musicians], you have given us nothing yet ... Always those that dance must pay the Musick.
- **1837** Speech 11 Jan. in Works (1953) I. 64 I am decidedly opposed to the people's money being used to pay the fiddler. It is an old maxim and a very sound one, that he that dances should always pay the fiddler.
- **1957** First Four Years (1971) i. Laura was going to have a baby ... She remembered a saying of her mother's: ‘They that dance must pay the fiddler.’

- **action and consequence**

dance

see also he that LIVES in hope dances to an ill tune.

danger

see the post of HONOUR is the post of danger; OUT of debt, out of danger.

dangerous
DELAYS are dangerous; a LITTLE knowledge is a dangerous thing.

dark
see all CATS are grey in the dark.

The DARKEST hour is just before the dawn

1650 Pisgah Sight II. xi. It is always darkest just before the Day dawneth.
1760 in Journal (1913) IV. 498 It is usually darkest before day break. You shall shortly find pardon.
1897 1897 Hist. our Own Times V. iii. Ayoob Khan now laid siege to Candahar … As so often happens in the story of England's struggles in India, the darkest hour proved to be that just before the dawn.
1979 Arrow of God IV. x. I know how you feel … It's probably just the darkest-hour-before-the-dawn syndrome.

hope and despair
darling
see BETTER be an old man's darling, than a young man's slave.
daughter
see like FATHER, like son; like MOTHER, like daughter; my SON is my son till he gets him a wife, but my daughter's my daughter all the days of her life.
dawn
see the DARKEST hour is just before the dawn.

As the DAY lengthens, so the cold strengthens

1631 God's Power 27 The New Year now begun, as the Days began to lengthen, so the Cold began to strengthen.
1639 Parereiologia Anglo-Latina 18 As the day lengthens so the cold strengthens.
1721 Scottish Proverbs 52 As the Day lengthens the Cold strengthens. It is often found that February and March are much more cold and piercing than December or January.
1899 Recollections II. xxii. The weather at this time was bearing out the old adage and the cold strengthened as the days lengthened.
1933 Farmer Boy x. The days were growing longer, but the cold was more intense. Father said: When the days begin to lengthen The cold begins to strengthen.
1978 Calendar of Country Customs iii. As the day lengthens, So the cold strengthens, is still a well-known country proverb, applicable to January and early February.

weather lore

Be the DAY weary or be the day long, at last it ringeth to evensong

1509 Pastime of Pleasure xlii. R8V For though the day, be neuer so longe, At last the belles ryngeth to euensonge.
1612 Gallant's Burden 20 If you could indent with the Sunne to stand still .. yet it shall sette: Be the day never so long, at length comes evensong.
1732 Gnomologia no. 6132 Be the day never so long, At length cometh Even-song.
1935 In whose Dim Shadow xv. “Be the day weary or be the day long, At last it ringeth to evensong”,’ quoted the Chief Constable.
1969 Life in Studio 120 Be the day short or be the day long, At length it cometh to evensong.

perseverance
day
see also an APPLE a day keeps the doctor away; BARNABY bright, Barnaby bright, the longest day and the shortest night; the BETTER the day, the better the deed; every DOG has his day; FAIR and softly goes far in a day; FISH and guests stink after three days; OTHER times, other manners; ROME was not built in a day; my SON is my son till he gets him a wife, but my daughter's my daughter all the days of her life; SUFFICIENT unto the day is the evil thereof; TOMORROW is another day.

Let the DEAD bury the dead
With allusion to MATTHEW viii. 22 (AV) Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.

1815 Hist. Cosmopolite (1859) 340 A religious bigot made a motion to mob me; but none would second it. A worldling replied to him, ‘Let the dead bury their dead.’

1931 What dare I Think? vi. Let, then, the dead bury the dead. The task for us is to rejuvenate ourselves and our subject.

1984 San Andreas xii. The best thing would be if you forgot them. Sounds cruel, I know, but let the dead bury their dead.

1997 Spectator 8 Nov. 28 There is something repellent, as well as profoundly unhistorical, about judging the past by the standards or prejudices of another age. Let the dead bury the dead.

DEAD men don't bite
The words put into the mouth of Theodotus, a teacher of rhetoric, advising the Egyptians to murder Pompey when he came seeking refuge in Egypt after his defeat at Pharsalia in 48 BC: PLUTARCH Pompeius lxvii. a, a dead man does not bite. Cf. ERASMUS Adages III. vi. mortui non mordent, the dead do not bite.

1547 Chronicle (1548) Hen. VI 92 A prouerbe .. saith, a dead man doth no harme: Sir John Mortimer .. was attainted [convicted] of treason and put to execucion.


1593 Jack Straw F2 I trow [believe] they cannot bite when they be dead.

1655 Church Hist. Britain IX. iv. The dead did not bite; and, being dispatch'd out of the way, are forgotten.

1883 Treasure Island xi. ‘What are we to do with 'em anyway? .. Cut 'em down like that much pork?'.. 'Dead men don't bite,' says he.

1902 Hist. Scotland. xii. The story that Gray ‘whispered in Elizabeth's ear, The dead don't bite’, is found in Camden.

1957 See Rome & Die xvi. A dead man cannot bite, as it says somewhere in Plutarch. Pompey's murderers, I think. Anyhow, that was the way their minds worked then.

DEAD men tell no tales
Cf. 1560 T. BECON Works II. 97 He that hath his body loden with meat and drinke is no more mete to prai vnto god then a dead man is to tel a tale.

1664 Andronicus Comnenius I. iv. 'Twere best To knock 'um i' th' head … The dead can tell no tales.

1702 Inconstant V. 76 Ay, ay, Dead Men tell no Tales.

1850 Alton Locke I. iv. Where are the stories of those who have .. ended in desperation?.. Dead men tell no tales.

1979 Love & Land Beyond viii. Dead men told no tales, and the living were not always over-communicative.

1996 Washington Times 2 July A4 Dead men not only tell no tales, they don't dispute tales, either.
Blessed are the DEAD that the rain rains on

A similar belief is happy is the BRIDE that the sun shines on.

1607 Puritan I. i. If, Blessed bee the coarse [corpse] the raine raynes vpon, he had it, powring downe.

1787 Provincial Glossary (Superstitions) 61 It is .. esteemed a good sign if it rains whilst a corpse is burying: .. Happy is the corpse that the rain rains on.

1925 Great Gatsby 210 I could only remember, without resentment, that Daisy hadn't sent a message or a flower. Dimly I heard someone murmur, ‘Blessed are the dead that the rain falls on.’

blessings ; death
death
see also the only GOOD Indian is a dead Indian; it's ILL waiting for dead men's shoes; a LIVE dog is better than a dead lion; never SPEAK ill of the dead; STONE-dead hath no fellow; THREE may keep a secret, if two of them are dead.
deadly
see the FEMALE of the species is more deadly than the male.

There's none so DEAF as those who will not hear

Similar to there's none so BLIND as those who will not see. Cf. mid 14th-cent. Fr. il n'est si mavais ours que chuis ch'oër ne voeilt, there is no person so deaf as the one who does not wish to hear.

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs II. ix. K4 Who is so deafe, or so blynde, as is hee, That wilfully will nother here nor see?

1570 Disobedient Child C2 I perceyve by thys geare, That none is so deafe, as who wyll not heare.

1766 in Papers (1969) XIII. 18 I have not interfered in this Trial one word, only in my Applications to you and Mr. Foxcraft, both of which turn a deaf Ear: for none so deafe as those who will not hear.

1824 Book of Fallacies I. v. None are so completely deafe as those who will not hear.

1952 Hemlock & After I. ii. She would feebly and grumblingly attempt to reproduce something of the pursed-lipped, self-righteous matriarchy of her own girlhood home. ‘Penny wise, pound foolish,’ she would say, or ‘There's none so deafe as do not choose to hear.’

obstination

A DEAF husband and a blind wife are always a happy couple

1578 First Fruits 26 There neuer shal be chiding in that house, where the man is blynd, and the wife deafe.

1637 Pleasant Dialogues VI. 334 Then marriage may be said to be past in all quietnesse, When the wife is blind, and the husband deafe.

1710 Proverbs 338 The Husband must not See, and the Wife must be blind.

1940 Body, Boots & Britches xix. When the wooing is o'er and the maid wed .. the neighbours will observe .. ‘A deaf husband and a blind wife are always a happy couple.’

1988 Washington Times 8 July E2 Nothing brings out advice mongers like a summer wedding … ‘A deaf husband and a blind wife are always a happy couple.’

harmony ; marriage
dear:
see EXPERIENCE keeps a dear school; GOLD may be bought too dear.
dear-bought:
see FAR-FETCHED and dear-bought is good for ladies.
dearlest:
see **BUY in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest.**

**DEATH is the great leveller**

Cf. CLAUDIAN *De Raptu Proserpinae* II. 302 omnia mors aequat, death levels all things.

1732 Gnomologia no. 1250 *Death is the grand leveller.*

1755 *Centaur* ii. *Is diversion grown a leveller, like death?*

1961 *Heart of London* I. 101 ‘All this is going to be a great leveller.’ .. ‘It is death which is the great leveller.’

1973 ‘’ *His Burial Too* vi. *Dr. Dabbe took a last look … ‘A classic case, you might say, Sloan, of Death, the Great Leveller.’*

**death**

**DEATH pays all debts**

Cf. 1597–8 SHAKESPEARE *Henry IV*, Pt. 1 III. ii. 157 The end of life cancels all bands [bonds].

1611 *Tempest* III. ii. 126 *He that dies pays all debts.*

1827 Two Drovers in Chronicles of Canongate I. xiv. ‘It must be sorely answered.’ .. ‘Never you mind that—Death pays all debts; it will pay that too.’

1979 *After You* xvi. *I have no particular objection to death as such; it pays all bills.*


**death**

**see also** COWARDS die many times before their death; NOTHING is certain but death and taxes; there is a REMEDY for everything except death.

**debt**

**see** DEATH pays all debts; OUT of debt, out of danger; SPEAK not of my debts unless you mean to pay them.

**deceptive**

**see** APPEARANCES are deceptive.

**deed**

**see** the BETTER the day, the better the deed; no GOOD deed goes unpunished.

**deep**

**see** STILL waters run deep.

**defence**

**see** ATTACK is the best form of defence.

**deferred**

**see** HOPE deferred makes the heart sick.

**defiled**

**see** he that TOUCHES pitch shall be defiled.

**DELAYS are dangerous**

Cf. c 1300 *Havelok* (1915) l. 1352 Dwelling haueth ofte scathe [harm] wrouht.

1578 Euphues I. 212 *Delays breed daungers, nothing so perillous as procrastination.*

1655 Gentlemen of Venice v. 62 *Shall we go presently [immediately], delaies are dangerous.*

1824 *Letters* (1922) p. xxxi. *I have always found on all subjects that ‘delays are dangerous’… It is expedient that we marry young.*

1930 *Murder en Route* xxxiii. *What a pity Master Hector left it too late … Delays are proverbially dangerous.*
Siege of Vienna iii. In the autumn of 1682, when a Turkish war in the following year was absolutely certain, these delays became dangerous.

**Action and inaction**: procrastination

delved

see when ADAM delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?

Derbyshire

see YORKSHIRE born and Yorkshire bred, strong in the arm and weak in the head.

deserve

see none but the BRAVE deserve the fair; a CIVIL question deserves a civil answer; one GOOD turn deserves another.

**DESPERATE diseases must have desperate remedies**
The proverb is found in many variant forms. Cf. L. *extremis malis extrema remedia*, extreme remedies for extreme ills.

- **1539** tr. Erasmus' Adages 4 A stronge disease requyreth a stronge medicine.
- **1600–1** Hamlet IV. iii. 9 Diseases desperate grown By desperate appliance are reliev'd, Or not at all.
- **1639** Paræmiologia Anglo-Latina 200 Desperate cuts must have desperate cures.
- **1659** Hist. Collections I. 120 According to the usual Proverb, A desperate disease must have a desperate remedy.
- **1748** Clarissa VI. 292 I must .. have an interview with the charmer of my Soul: For desperate diseases must have desperate remedies.
- **1935** Toll House Murder ix. These circumstances are wholly exceptional. Desperate diseases, they say, call for desperate remedies.
- **1961** She shall Die xi. She'd have sold the roof over her head sooner than have you know. Desperate situations require desperate remedies.

**necessity**
destiny

see HANGING and wiving go by destiny.

destroy

see whom the GODS would destroy, they first make mad.

details

see the DEVIL is in the details.

The DEVIL can quote Scripture for his own ends
The proverb alludes to the temptation of Christ by the Devil (MATTHEW iv) when the latter quotes a passage from Psalm xci.

- **1596** Merchant of Venice I. iii. 93 The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose. An evil soul producing holy witness Is like a villain with a smiling cheek.
- **1761** Apology 15 Thus Candour's maxims flow from Rancour's throat, As devils, to serve their purpose, Scripture quote.
- **1843** Martin Chuzzlewit xi. Is any one surprised at Mr. Jonas making such a reference to such a book for such a purpose? Does any one doubt the old saw that the Devil (being a layman) quotes Scripture for his own ends.
- **1937** Ten Teacups xiii. The versatile personage in our popular proverbs, who .. quotes Scripture for his own ends.

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His use of a biblical phrase gave her a touch of shivers, of diablerie—the devil at his old game of quoting scripture.

The devil can quote Scripture, as we all know, so why not a politician?

Idleness and mischief are linked in ST. JEROME Letters CXXV. xi. fac et aliquid operis, ut semper te diabolus inveniat occupatum, do something, so that the devil may always find you busy; cf. c 1386 CHAUCER Tale of Melibee l. 1594 Thercjre seith Seint Jerome: ‘Dooth somme goode dedes that the devel, which is oure enemy, ne fynde yow nat unocupied.’

1715 Divine Songs 29 In Works of Labour or of Skill I would be busy too: For Satan finds some mischief still for idle Hands to do.

If the Devil find a Man idle, he’ll set him on Work.

There is a homely proverb, which speaks a shrewd truth, that whoever the devil finds idle he will employ … What but habitual idleness can hereditary wealth and titles produce?

Better keep busy, and the devil won’t find so much for your idle hands to do.

There is a risk that youngsters will leave school and college to find themselves unwanted, with the devil finding work for idle hands to do.

There is potential for such a large new intake to become bored. We all know who makes work for idle hands.

Many hymns are sung to popular secular melodies; this practice was especially favoured by the Methodists. The expression is commonly attributed to the English evangelist Rowland Hill (1744–1833)

Why should the devil have all the pretty tunes?’ collect the airs which are sung at pot and public houses, and write their hymns to them.

If Wesley could not see why the devil should have all the good tunes, still less should we be able to see why he should have all the good amusements.

Many issues remain unresolved. As one .. official put it, ‘the devil is in the details, and we don’t know what those details are yet.’

Positron Emission Tomography scans measure blood flow to areas, missing fine detail, and the mathematical devil lies in the details.

The devil is in the details

There is an old German saying .. that the devil is in the details.

Many issues remain unresolved. As one .. official put it, ‘the devil is in the details, and we don’t know what those details are yet.’

Positron Emission Tomography scans measure blood flow to areas, missing fine detail, and the mathematical devil lies in the details.

The devil is not so black as he is painted

Hills look Down iv. Better keep busy, and the devil won’t find so much for your idle hands to do.

Times 30 June 15 There is a risk that youngsters will leave school and college to find themselves unwanted, with the devil finding work for idle hands to do.

Spectator 1 Nov. 25 There is potential for such a large new intake to become bored. We all know who makes work for idle hands.

Kids (Yorkshire Television) makes sure the devil doesn’t have the best tunes; he has hardly a note.

Not even the rule that the Devil should not have all the best tunes could save ‘Happy Days Are Here Again.’

The devil is in the details

There is an old German saying .. that the devil is in the details.

Many issues remain unresolved. As one .. official put it, ‘the devil is in the details, and we don’t know what those details are yet.’

Positron Emission Tomography scans measure blood flow to areas, missing fine detail, and the mathematical devil lies in the details.
Cf. late 15th-cent. Fr. *toutesfois n'est il pas sy deable qu'il est noir*, a man is not always as devilish as he is black.

1534 Dialogue of Comfort (1553) III. xxii. Some saye in sporte, and thinke in earnest: The devill is not so blakke as he is painted.

1642 Instructions for Foreign Travel xiv. The Devill is not so black as he is painted, no more are these Noble Nations and Townes as they are tainted.

1834 Peter Simple II. x. Fear kills more people than the yellow fever ... The devil's not half so black as he's painted.

1928 Bohemian Life in Paris xi. Even if we admit that the devil is as black as he is painted, we cannot admit that everybody is a devil.

1953 Pocket full of Rye xxiii. Lance patted her on the arm. ‘You didn't believe the devil was as black as he was painted? Well, perhaps he wasn’t.’

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**good and evil ; reputation**

The DEVIL looks after his own

Cf. 1606 J. DAY Isle of Gulls D4V You were worse then the devil els, for they say hee helps his Servants.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 310 The Dee'ls ay good to his own ... Spoken when they whom we affect not, thrive and prosper in the World; as if they had their Prosperity from the Devil.

1837 Arethusa II. i. Weazel was the only midshipman saved besides myself: the devil always takes care of his own.

1940 Why did Trethewy Die? vii. ‘The devil looks after his own,’ said Pierce. ‘Yes, doesn't he? But even he's not so clever, either.’

1979 Hooky & Villainous Chauffeur xii. I managed; as the saving goes, the devil looks after his own.

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**associates ; good fortune**

The DEVIL makes his Christmas pies of lawyers' tongues and clerks' fingers

1591 Second Fruits 179 Of three things the Deuill makes his messe, Of Lawyers tongues, of Scriveners fingers, you the third may gesse [i.e. women].

1629 Workes 1059 Corrupt and consciencelesse lawyers you will confesse to be sharp and wounding brambles ... The Italians haue a shrewd prouerbe against them. The Deuill makes his Christmas-pyes of lawyers tongues, and clerkes fingers.

a 1697 Brief Lives (1898) I. 422 Sir Robert Pye, attorney of the court of wardes, .. happened to dye on Christmas day: the newes being brought to the serjeant, said he ‘The devill haz a Christmas pye.’

1952 Calendar of Crime 248 Well, well, it couldn't have happened at a more appropriate season; there's an old English proverb that says the Devil makes his Christmas pies of lawyers' tongues.

1980 Times 24 Dec. 8 The Devil makes his Christmas-pies of television personalities' tongues and journalists' typing fingers: old English proverb, adapted.

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**honesty and dishonesty ; law and lawyers**

The DEVIL’s children have the Devil’s luck

Cf. the DEVIL looks after his own.

1678 English Proverbs (ed. 2) 126 The Devils child the Devils luck.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 333 The Dee'ls Bairns have Dee'ls luck. Spoken enviously when ill People prosper.

1798 Letter 20 July (1845) III. 42 It is an old saying, ‘the Devil’s children have the Devil’s luck.’ I cannot find .. where the French Fleet are gone to.

1841 Tom Bowling II. x. The luck of the fellow! .. Not a leg or an arm missing ... The devil's children have the devil's luck.
Corpse with Grimy Glove vii. They must have had her hidden up somewhere .. and waited till after sundown to get away. The devil's own luck—but the devil looks after his children.

Red Kill viii. The Devil's son has the Devil's luck. We're going to need that kind of luck.

Devil take the hindmost

A shortened version of EVERY man for himself, and the Devil take the hindmost. A Latin version of this sentiment is HORACE Ars Poetica 417 occupet extremum scabies, may the itch take the one who is last.

Everybody's Business 29 In a few years the navigation .. will be entirely obstructed ... Every one of these gentleman-watermen hopes it will last his time, and so they all cry, the Devil take the hindmost.

Tales of American Landlord I. ix. The troops .. hurried away .. with a precipitation which seemed to say 'De'il tak the hindmost.'

Foolish Immortals vii. Hannah grew up in .. a land of unlimited resources and opportunity for acquiring them and let the devil take the hindmost.

Firestarter 67 His motto .. had been full speed ahead and devil take the hindmost.

The Devil was sick, the Devil a saint would be; the Devil was well, the devil a saint was he!

Promises made in adversity may not be kept in prosperity. Cf. medieval L. aegrotavit daemon, monachus tunc esse volebat; daemon convaluit, daemon ut ante fuit, when the Devil was ill, he wished to be a monk; when the Devil recovered, he was the Devil just as before; 1586 J. WITHALS Dict. (rev. ed.) K8 The diuell was sicke and crasie; Good woulde the monke bee that was lasie.

Works 634 God had need to take what devotion he can get at our hands in our misery; for when prosperity returnes, wee forget our vowes ... The Deuill was sicke, the deuill a Monke would be, The Deuill was well, the deuill of [sic] Monke was he [i.e. no sort of monk at all].

Joseph's Coat II. xvii. A prisoner's penitence is a thing the quality of which it is very difficult to judge until you see it .. tried outside. 'The devil was sick.'

Small Boy xxviii. The old, the irrepressible adage .. was to live again between them: 'When the devil was sick the devil a saint would be; when the devil was well the devil a saint was he!

Alice, where art Thou? xii. 185 Laurie .. offers to do penance for his past, to make amends in the future .. My father's comment is that the devil a monk was he.

Devil see also set a BEGGAR on horseback, and he'll ride to the Devil; BETTER the devil you know than the devil you don't know; EVERY man for himself, and the Devil take the hindmost; GIVE a thing, and take a thing, to wear the Devil's gold ring; GIVE the Devil his due; where GOD builds a church, the Devil will build a chapel; GOD sends meat, but the Devil sends cooks; what is GOT over the Devil's back is spent under his belly; HASTE is from the Devil; HOME is home, as the Devil said when he found himself in the Court of Session; an IDLE brain is the Devil's workshop; NEEDS must when the Devil drives; PARSLEY seed goes nine times to the Devil; it is easier to RAISE the Devil than to lay him; he who SUPS with the Devil should have a long spoon; TALK of the Devil, and he is bound to appear; TELL the truth and shame the Devil; YOUNG saint, old devil.

DIAMOND cuts diamond

Used of persons evenly matched in wit or cunning. Also frequently found as a descriptive phrase DIAMOND cut diamond. Cf. 1593 NASHE Christ's Tears II. 9 An easie matter is it for anie man to cutte me (like a Diamond) with mine own dust.
You can only DIE once

c 1435 Torrent of Portugal (EETS) l. 993 A man schall But onnys Dyee.
1597–8 Henry IV, Pt. 2 III. ii. 228 A man can die but once.
a 1721 in Literary Works (1971) I. 533 With great Submission I pronounce That People dye no more than once.
1818 Travels in Canada & United States xxxvii. He replied .. that he was too ill to come out, and should die if she forced him; ‘You can die but once,’ said the beldame.
1840 Olla Podrida l. xii. ‘A man cannot die more than once,’ .. but .. a man can die .. once professionally or legally, and once naturally.
1880 Death of Favourite Girl ii. ‘Why not,’ said Sally. ‘You can only die once.’

death; fate and fatalism
die see also good AMERICANS when they die go to Paris; COWARDS die many times before their death; we must EAT a peck of dirt before we die; whom the GODS love die young; the GOOD die young; call no man HAPPY till he dies; he who LIVES by the sword dies by the sword; OLD habits die hard; OLD soldiers never die; YOUNG men may die, but old men must die; also DYING.
diet
see the best DOCTORS are Dr Diet, Dr Quiet, and Dr Merryman.
differ
see TASTES differ.
DIFFERENT strokes for different folks
Of US origin: strokes = comforting gestures of approval or congratulation. Quickly picked up and used in a variety of parodic forms, as in a 1974 Volkswagen advertisement: Different Volks for different folks.
1997 Washington Times 24 Dec. C11 He thinks he is sterilizing his fork that way … Different strokes for different folks.

tact; ways and means
The DIFFICULT is done at once; the impossible takes a little longer
A version of this is well known as the slogan of the US Armed Forces: the difficult we do immediately; the impossible takes a little longer. The ‘French Minister’ to whom this saying is attributed in quot. 1873 is Charles Alexandre de Calonne (1734-1802), appointed finance minister by Louis XVI in 1783: si c'est possible, c'est fait; impossible? cela se fera, if a thing is possible, consider it done; the impossible? that will be done (quoted in J. Michelet Histoire de la Révolution Française (1847) I. ii. 8).
1873 Phineas Redux II. xxix. What was it the French Minister said. If it is simply difficult it is done. If
it is impossible, it shall be done.

1967 Technicolor Time Machine iv. The impossible may take a while, but we do it, you know the routine. 1981 Shard calls Tune iv. A well-worn precept of the British Navy was that the difficult was done at once; the impossible took a little longer.

1997 National Review 29 Sept. 66 That's good, utilitarian, achievement-oriented American lingo. We do the difficult immediately, the impossible takes a little longer.

possibility and impossibility
difficult
see also it is the FIRST step that is difficult.
difficulty
see ENGLAND's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity.
digging
see when you are in a HOLE, stop digging.
DILIGENCE is the mother of good luck

□1591 Spanish Schoolmaster L2\V Diligence is the mother of good fortune. La diligencia es madre de la buena ventura.
1736 Poor Richard's Almanack (Feb.) Diligence is the mother of good Luck.
1875 Thrift ix. Diligence is the mother of good luck ... A man's success in life will be proportionate to his efforts.
1972 In Ditch vi. Where do people get a system that allows a man to be better off when out of work?.. People .. used to say that diligence was the mother of fortune.

diligence; luck
dinner
see AFTER dinner rest a while, after supper walk a mile; BETTER a dinner of herbs than a stalled ox where hate is.

Throw DIRT enough, and some will stick
Persistent slander will eventually pass for truth. Cf. L. calumniare fortiter, et aliquid adhaerebit, slander strongly and some will stick.
□1656 Trepan 34 She will say before company, Have you never had the French Pox? speak as in the sight of God: let them Reply what they will, some dirt will stick.
1678 Letter to Popish Friends 7 'Tis a blessed Line in Matchiavel—If durt enough be thrown, some will stick.
1705 Hudibras Redivivus II. 11 Scurrility's a useful Trick, Approv'd by the most Politic; Fling Dirt enough, And some will stick.
1857 Tom Brown's Schooldays I. viii. Whatever harm a .. venomous tongue could do them, he took care should be done. Only throw dirt enough and some of it is sure to stick.
1979 Service of all Dead xli. If I tell everybody you're having an affair .. you'd suddenly find yourself trying like hell to prove you weren't ... Like they say, you throw enough mud and some of it'll stick.

malice; slander
dirt
see also we must EAT a peck of dirt before we die.

DIRTY water will quench fire
Mainly used to mean that a man's lust can be satisfied by any woman, however loose or ugly.
□1546 Dialogue of Proverbs I. v. B2 As this prouerbe saieth, for quenchyng hot desire, Foul water as
soone as fayre, wyl quenche hot fire.

1796 Political Censor Sept. 62 That I have made use .. of the British Corporal for a good purpose, I have little doubt—Dirty water will quench fire.

1945 Ragged Robin vi. It's flocks and straw for us ... Well, dirty water's good enough to quench a fire with.

1995 Simeon's Bride xxvi. 173 She had the thick ugly feet of a streetwalker ... ‘How could anyone go with her?’ Dewi shrugged. ‘They do say dirty water puts out fire just as well.’

**necessity; ways and means**

**dirty**
see also it's an ILL bird that fouls its own nest; don't THROW out your dirty water until you get in fresh; one does not WASH one's dirty linen in public.

**disappointed**
see BLESSED is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed.

**DISCRETION is the better part of valour**

Cf. EURIPIDES Suppliants 1. 510 καὶ τὸ ὑπερτάντιμον νόμον αὐτοῦ, and bravery consists in foresight; c 1477 CAXTON Jason (EETS) 23 Than as wyse and discrete he with-drew him sayng that more is worth a good retrayte than a folishe abydinge.

1597–8 Henry IV, Pt. 1 v. iv. 121 The better part of valour is discretion; in the which better part, I have saved my life.

1885 Prince Bismarck I. v. Napoleon .. had vowed that he would free Italy ‘from the Alps to the Adriatic’, but .. he acted on the maxim that discretion is the better part of valour.

1981 Loitering with Intent x. I was tempted to ring up Dottie and confront her with the theft. Discretion is the better part of valour; with difficulty I restrained myself.

1994 Mr. Donaghue Investigates (1997) i. 15 ‘As the great man himself said, “Discretion is the better part of valour.” He was, as in everything he said, perfectly correct.’

**discretion; prudence**

**disease**
see DESPERATE diseases must have desperate remedies.

**disgrace**
see POVERTY is no disgrace, but it is a great inconvenience.

**dish**
see REVENGE is a dish that can be eaten cold.

**dismount**
see he who RIDES a tiger is afraid to dismount.

**dispose**
see MAN proposes, God disposes.

**DISTANCE lends enchantment to the view**

1799 Pleasure of Hope I. 3 Why do those cliffs of shadowy tint appear More sweet than all the landscape smiling near?— 'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view, And robes the mountain in its azure hue.

1827 Poems (1906) 78 What black Mont Blancs arose, Crested with soot and not with snows ... I fear the distance did not 'lend enchantment to the view'.

1901 Captain Jinks II. 118 ‘I wish you'd taise me hout of the second row and put me in the front.’ .. ‘You forget the old adage... “Distance lends enchantment.”'
As ever with Lady Mary's affections, distance lent enchantment to the view, and she was herself the intimate patroness of this idol of the media.

Absence

ditch

see when the BLIND lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

DIVIDE and rule

Government is more easily maintained if factions are set against each other, and not allowed to unite against the ruler. A common maxim (in Latin divide et impera, in German entzwei und gebiete), it should not (pace quot. 1732) be laid at the door of the Italian political philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527), who in fact denounced this principle. Cf. 1588 tr. M. Hurault's Discourse upon Present State of France 44 It hath been alwaies her [Catherine de Medici's] custome, to set in France, one against an other, that in the meane while shee might rule in these diuisions.

Meditations I. 109 For a Prince .. is a sure axiome, Diuide and rule.

1732 Poems III. 805 As Machiavel taught 'em, divide and ye govern.

1907 Spectator 20 Apr. 605 The cynical maxim of ‘Divide and rule’ has never clouded our relations with the daughter-States.

1979 Genesis & Exodus ii. Matters concerning the estate were put in the hands of a secretary and a steward who were responsible not to Benson but to the Governors. But ‘divide and rule’ was not in his nature.

power ; rulers and ruled

divided

see a HOUSE divided cannot stand; UNITED we stand, divided we fall.

divine

see to ERR is human (to forgive divine); on SAINT Thomas the Divine kill all turkeys, geese, and swine.

DO as I say, not as I do

Cf. MATTHEW xxiii. 3 (AV) Do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.

Table-Talk 45 Preachers say, Do as I say, not as I do.

1911 Spectator 24 June 957 It has always been considered allowable to say .. to children, ‘Do as I say, rather than as I do.’

1979 Heberden's Seat v. I saw you spooning sugar into coffee .. Do as I say, not as I do.

1997 Washington Times 17 July A19 Alas, Stanford and other leading universities seem to parody the quintessentially hypocritical attitude, ‘Do as I say, not as I do.’

hypocrisy ; words and deeds

DO as you would be done by

A neater form of DO unto others as you would they should do unto you. The forms are sometimes mixed, e.g. quot. 1991.

c 1596 et al. Sir Thomas More 9 A [he] saies trewe: letts do as we may be doon by.

1747 Letter 16 Oct. (1932) III. 1035 ‘Do as you would be done by,’ is the surest method that I know of pleasing.

1863 Water Babies V. I shall grow as handsome as my sister .. the loveliest fairy in the world;.. her name is Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby.

1928 Mystery at Lynden Sands viii. ‘Do unto others as you'd be done by’ is my motto.
‘Always treat a man as you would wish to be treated yourself …’ ‘Do as you would be done by.’ ‘It's good human relations …’ Mr. Vulgurian paused and stroked his hair, doing to it as he would be done by.

‘Do unto others as you would be done by’ was a more positive social prescription of societies like Toronto.

**reciprocity ; society**

**DO right and fear no man**

□ 1450 Proverbs of Good Counsel in Book of Precedence (EETS) 68 The beste wysdom that I Can [know], Ys to doe well, and drede no man.


□ 1979 Guardian 31 Mar. 10 It used to be, ‘Do right and fear no man. Don’t write and fear no women.’

**action and consequence ; conscience**

**DO unto others as you would they should do unto you**

See **DO as you would be done by above.** With allusion to LUKE vi. 31 (AV) As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

□ 901 Laws of Alfred in F. Liebermann Gesetze Angelsachsen (1903) I. 44 Thæet ge willen, thæet othre men eow ne don, ne doth ge thæet othrum monnum [What you do not wish others to do to you, do not to other men].

□ 1477 Dicts of Philosophers 62 Do to other as thou woldest they should do to the, and do to noon other but as thou woldest be doon to.

□ 1790 Letter 9 July (1979) 48 He wished to have him out, merely because ‘he would do to others as he would be done to’.

□ 1880 Life of Cicero II. xii. The lesson which had governed his [Cicero's] life: ‘I will do unto others as I would they should do unto me.’

□ 1903 Man & Superman 227 Do not do unto others as you would that they should do unto you. Their tastes may not be the same.

□ 1985 Diamond Rock v. You've got to learn to follow the golden rule. Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.

**reciprocity ; society**

**do**

see also never do EVIL that good may come of it; the KING can do no wrong; whatever MAN has done, man may do; when in ROME, do as the Romans do; if you WANT a thing done well, do it yourself; also DOES, DOING, DONE.

**doctor**

see an APPLE a day keeps the doctor away.

**The best DOCTORS are Dr Diet, Dr Quiet, and Dr Merryman**

Cf. □ 1449 LYDGATE Minor Poems (EETS) 704 Thre lechees [doctors] consarue a mannys myht, First a glad hert .. Temperat diet .. And best of all, for no thyng take no thouht.

□ 1558 Government of Health 50V I should not staye my selfe vpon the opinion of any one phisicion, but rather vpon three … The first was called doctor diet, the seconde doctor quiet, the thirde doctor mery man.

□ 1738 Polite Conversation II. 154 The best Doctors in the World, are Doctor Dyet, Doctor Quiet, and Doctor Merryman.

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1909 Spectator 30 Jan. 175 A proverb prescribes for sickness Dr. Diet, Dr. Quiet, and Dr. Merryman. The merry heart goes all the way in all but the worst sicknesses.

doctors; health
doer
see EVIL doers are evil dreaders.
does
see he who CAN, does; it's DOGGED as does it; EASY does it.

Give a DOG a bad name and hang him
The principle is that a person's plight is hopeless once his reputation has been blackened. Similar to he that has an ILL name is half hanged.

1706 Spanish & English Dict. s.v. Perro, We say, Give a Dog an ill name and his work is done.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 124 Give a Dog an ill Name, and he'll soon be hanged. Spoken of those who raise an ill Name on a Man on purpose to prevent his Advancement.

1803 Norfolk (Virginia) Herald 14 Apr. 3 It is an old saying, ‘give a dog a bad name and hang him’.

1797 Summer Scandal xiii. ‘A man is innocent till he's proved guilty. That's English law, isn't it?’ ‘This is Scotland … Give a dog a bad name—.’

reputation; slander

DOG does not eat dog
Cf. VARRO De Lingua Latina VII. 32 canis caninam non est, a dog does not eat dog's flesh.

1543 Hunting of Romish Fox A2 The proverb .. on dog will not eat of an other dogges fleshe.

1602 Troilus & Cressida V. vii. 19 One bear will not bite another, and wherefore should one bastard?

1790 Epistle to Bruce 31 Dog should not prey on dog, the proverb says: Allow then brother-trav'lers crumbs of praise.

1837 French Revolution III. 1. i. How changed for Marat, lifted from his dark cellar!.. All dogs have their day; even rabid dogs.

Every DOG has his day

1545 tr. Erasmus' Adages (ed. 2) 63 A dogge hath a day.

1600–1 Hamlet V. i. 286 Let Hercules himself do what he may, The cat will mew, and dog will have his day.

1611 Dict. French & English s.v. Fevrier, Euerie dog hath his day.

1726 Odyssey V. xxii. Dogs, ye have had your day; ye fear'd no more Ulysses vengeful from the Trojan shore.

1837 French Revolution III. I. i. How changed for Marat, lifted from his dark cellar!.. All dogs have their day; even rabid dogs.

1863 Water Babies ii. Young blood must have its course, lad, And every dog his day.

1978 Were He Stranger x. ‘She could be his sister.’ ‘No way—not with a face like that.’ ‘Well, every dog deserves his day.’
Every DOG is allowed one bite

The proverb is based on the common law rule (dating at least from the seventeenth century) by which the keeper of a domestic animal was not liable for harm done by it unless he knew of its vicious propensities. The first time a dog bit someone might not be evidence that it was dangerous.

1902 Collectanea I. 439 Every dog is allowed his first bite i.e. is not punished.

1913 Spectator 15 Mar. 440 Every dog is allowed by the law one free bite. After the dog has once bitten a person it is presumed that its owner knows it to be ‘savage.’

1968 Politics of Harold Wilson x. In March 1967 .. Wilson rounded on the Left at a Parliamentary Party meeting, warning them that ‘a dog is only allowed one bite’ and threatening them with a General Election unless they came to heel.

1980 Consequence of Crime (1981) ii. She got arrested … They say every dog [is] allowed one bite … But it was a vice thing … I told her to get out.

The DOG returns to its vomit

The expression is frequently found in various metaphorical and allusive forms, such as to return like a dog to his vomit, as illustrated below. Before 1534 (see quot.), the proverb is used in more or less similar forms in earlier versions of, and commentaries upon, the Bible. The concept enjoyed wide popularity in the Middle Ages. The biblical passages involved are: PROVERBS xxvi. 11 (AV) As a dog returneth to his vomit: so a fool returneth to his folly; also 2 PETER ii. 22 (see below).

1390 Parson’s Tale l. 137 Ye trespassen so ofte tyme as dooth the hound that retourneth to eten his spewyng.

1534 tr. Bible 2 Peter ii. 22 It is happened vnto them accordinge to the true proverbe: The dogge is turned to his vomet agayne.

1832 Diary of Late Physician II. vi. His infatuated wife betook herself—‘like a dog to his vomit’..—to her former .. extravagance and dissipation.

1981 Shard calls Tune xvi. The old saying that the dog returns to his vomit, the criminal to the scene of his crime.

1993 Rotary Club Murder Mystery 44 ‘You know what the Bible says,’ Harriet replied. ‘“The dog shall return to his vomit and the old hog to his wallowing in the mire.”’

A DOG that will fetch a bone will carry a bone

A gossip carries talk both ways.

1830 Vocabulary of East Anglia 429 ‘The dog that fetches will carry.’—i.e. A talebearer will tell tales of you, as well as to you.

1941 Little Town on Prairie XV. So Nellie twisted what you said and told it to Miss Wilder … ‘A dog that will fetch a bone, will carry a bone.’

1959 Devil in Bucks County II. iii. All this gossip reminded Shirley .. of the saw The dog who brings a bone also will carry one away.

A dog

see also a BARKING dog never bites; BRAG is a good dog, but Holdfast is better; the CAT, the rat, and Lovell the dog, rule all England under the hog; he is a GOOD dog who goes to church; why KEEP a dog and bark yourself?; if you LIE down with dogs, you will get up with fleas; a LIVE dog is better than a dead lion; LOVE me, love my dog: it is a POOR dog that's not worth whistling for; let SLEEPING dogs
lie; it is easy to find a STICK to beat a dog; you can't TEACH an old dog new tricks; THREE things are not to be trusted; while TWO dogs are fighting for a bone, a third runs away with it; there are more WAYS of killing a dog than choking it with butter; there are more WAYS of killing a dog than hanging it; a WOMAN, a dog, and a walnut tree, the more you beat them the better they be; also DOGS.

It's DOGGED as does it

Similar in form to the expression EASY does it.

1864 Diary 6 Aug. (1949) 429 ‘It's dogged as does it,’ says Isabella.

1867 Last Chronicle of Barset lxii. There ain't nowt a man can't bear if he'll only be dogged ... It's dogged as does it. It's not thinking about it.

1916 Greenmantle i. We've got the measure of the old Boche now, and it's dogged as does it.

1942 Death & Dancing Footman x. ‘If we stick .. they can damn well produce a farm animal to lug us out.’ .. ‘It's dogged as does it,’ said Chloris.

1965 Some Beasts no More V. It was Colonel Rodgers. ‘Any progress?’ .. ‘Very little, it's dogged as does it, sir.’

 persevarance

DOGS bark, but the caravan goes on

Quot. 1956 is a humorous inversion of the proverb. In most instances of this proverb, caravan is in its original sense of ‘a company of people travelling together in the desert’, but quot. 1956 uses the ‘mobile home’ sense.

1891 Beast & Man in India ix. 252 ‘The dog barks but the elephant moves on’ is sometimes said to indicate the superiority of the great to popular clamour, but the best form of the phrase is, ‘Though the dog may bark the caravan (kafila) moves on.’

1924 tr. Proust's Within Budding Grove I. 45 In the words of a fine Arab proverb, ‘The dogs may bark; the caravan goes on!’ .. Its effect was great, the proverb being familiar to us already. It had taken the place, that year, among people who ‘really counted’, of ‘He who sows the wind shall reap the whirlwind.’

1930 Time 4 July 17 I was struggling to explain the situation to an old Moor ... After thinking it over he murmured: ‘Dogs bark but the caravan goes on.’

1956 Hundred & One Dalmatians xiv. The shut-in Romany dogs heard them [the Dalmatians] and shook the caravans in their efforts to get out ... ‘The caravans bark but the dogs move on,’ remarked Pongo, when he felt they were out of danger.

1998 Times 9 Jan. 2/6 He [Michael Portillo] was less clear on the subject of his Conservative leadership ambitions. Questioned by a reporter ..., he said: ‘The dogs bark and the caravan moves on.’

great and small; malice
doing

see if a THING'S worth doing, it's worth doing well.

What's DONE cannot be undone

Also found in the more casual form what's done is done. Cf. SOPHOCLES Ajax 1. 378 οὐ υἱῷ ἀνταὐτῶν ὁ διξώδεξχειν things could not now be otherwise; early 14th-cent. Fr. mez quant ja est la chose fecte, ne puet pas bien estre desfecte, but when a thing is already done, it cannot be undone.

1450 King Ponthus in Publications of Modern Language Association of America (1897) XII. 107 The thynges that be doone may not be undoone.

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs I. x. C4 Things done, can not be undoone.

1605–6 Macbeth III. ii. 12 Things without all remedy Should be without regard. What's done is done. Ibid. v. i. 65 What's done cannot be undone.
What has been done cannot be undone, and it would be unfortunate if disputes amongst the friends of the federal City should arm the enemies of it with weapons to wound it.

I hope you will think twice about it. Second thoughts are best. What's done cannot be undone.

What's done is done. I'll see you don't suffer for it.

What is done cannot be undone, but you must take responsibility for it.

A door must either be shut or open
Said of two mutually exclusive alternatives. Cf. Fr. il faut qu'une porte soit ouverte ou fermée, it is necessary that a door be open or shut.

There are but the two ways; the door must either be shut, or it must be open.

Fiction .. pleads in vain for detailed treatment. For all doors must be shut or open; and this door must now be shut.

We .. returned to France, the land of good sense .. where a door has got to be either open or shut.

A CREAKING door hangs longest; a GOLDEN key can open any door; when ONE door shuts, another opens; OPPORTUNITY never knocks twice at any man's door; a POSTERN door makes a thief; when POVERTY comes in at the door, love flies out of the window; it is too late to shut the STABLE-door after the horse has bolted.

If every man would sweep his own doorstep the city would soon be clean.

When in doubt, do nowt
Nowt is a dialect form of 'nought' = 'nothing', here used for the rhyme.

I should wait. When in doubt what to do, he is a wise man who does nothing.

Err ever on the side that's safe, And when in doubt, abstain.

This shows the cautious Cheshireman at his best.

I don't know. I think it's one of those occasions where it's best to follow the maxim: When in doubt, don't.

'When in doubt say nowt' is a precept enshrined over most magistrates' courts.

'When in doubt, do nowt,' had always been my grandfather's advice.

When in doubt say nowt

Up like a rocket, down like a stick; what goes up must come down.

Whatever draws his sword against the prince must throw the scabbard away
Whoever seeks to assassinate or depose a monarch must remain constantly prepared to defend himself, and his sword will never be able to return to its scabbard.
His King, against whom when yee drawe the sword, ye must throw the scabberd into the riuver.

Who draweth his sword against his Prince, must throw away the scabbard.

[The Military] must still fear the results of a fall from power ... ‘Whoseover draws his sword against the prince must throw the scabbard away’. pithily express[es] the logic of the situation.

**hope and despair ; rulers and ruled**

draws

see also **BEAUTY draws with a single hair**.

dread

see a **BURNT child dreads the fire**.

dreader

see **EVIL doers are evil dreaders**.

**DREAM of a funeral and you hear of a marriage**

An illustration of the principle of **DREAMS go by contraries**, the proverb is also found in the reverse form.

Paræmiologia Anglo-Latina 236 After a dreame of weddings comes a corse [corpse].

1766 Vicar of Wakefield x. My wife had the most lucky dreams in the world ... It was one night a coffin and cross-bones, the signs of an approaching wedding.

1883 Shropshire Folklore xx. We have the sayings .. ‘Dream of a funeral, hear of a wedding’ .. and vice versa.

1909 British Weekly 8 July 331 ‘Dream of a funeral and you hear of a marriage’ .. has probably been verified many times in the experience of ordinary people.

**dreams**

dream

see also **MORNING dreams come true**.

**DREAMS go by contraries**

Beryn (EETS) l. 108 Comynly of these swevenys [dreams] the contrary man shul fynde.

1584 Sappho & Phao IV. iii. I dreamed last night, but I hope dreams are contrary, that .. all my hair blazed on a bright flame.

1673 Gentleman Dancing-Master IV. 64 Ne’re fear it, dreams go by the contraries.

1731 Grub-Street Opera I. xi. Oh! the perjury of men! I find dreams do not always go by contraries.

1860 Season-Ticket 30 The events of life, like dreams, appear in the words of the old proverb, ‘to go by contraries’.

1932 Capital City Murder iv. There was no sign .. of Lester Armande. ‘Dreams go by contraries,’ said Lily.

1973 Stretchford Chronicles (1980) 198 They say dreams go by opposites ...Perhaps you'll dream about that AA man again.

**dreams**

drink

see you can take a HORSE to the water, but you can't make him drink.

*He that DRINKS beer, thinks beer*

Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon vii. 70 (footnote) They who drink beer will think beer.

Beyond Mississippi i. ‘They who drink beer think beer,’ but Catawba and Muscatel neither muddle
the brain nor fire the passions.

1912 Mystery of 31, New Inn v. ‘You despise the good old British John Barleycorn.’ ‘He that drinks beer thinks beer,’ retorted Thorndyke.

1958 Death in Seven Volumes xii. ‘He who drinks beer, thinks beer,’ was one of his favourite aphorisms.

A DRIPPING June sets all in tune

1742 Agreeable Companion 35 A dripping June Brings all Things in Tune.
1883 Weather Sayings 22 A dry May and a dripping June brings all things in tune.
1912 Spectator 28 Dec. 1094 ‘A dripping June sets all in tune,’ and on sandy soils not only farm crops but garden flowers do best in a wet summer.

DRIVE gently over the stones

1711 Letter 30 June in Journal to Stella (1948) I. 301 A gallop: sit fast, sirrah, and don’t ride hard upon the stones.
1788 in Observer IV. cxx. We now stept into our hack, but not without a caution from Ned to the coachman to drive gently over the stones.
1844 Martin Chuzzlewit xxix. Gently over the stones, Poll. Go a-tiptoe over the pimples! Poll. Go a-tiptoe over the pimples! Poll .. scraped the lather off again with particular care.
1885 How to be Happy though Married xi. Drive gently over the stones! This piece of advice .. given to inexperienced whips, may be suggested metaphorically to the newly-married.

You can DRIVE out Nature with a pitchfork, but she keeps on coming back

Originally HORACE Epistles I. x. 24 naturam expelles furca, tamen usque recurret, you may drive out nature with a pitchfork, but she will always return.

1539 tr. Erasmus’ Adages 44 Thurst out nature wyth a croche [staff], yet woll she styll runne backe agayne.

1831 Crotchet Castle i. Mr. Crotchet .. seemed .. to settle down .. into an English country gentleman … But as, though you expel nature with a pitchfork, she will always come back.

1867 Short Studies II. 252 Drive out nature with a fork, she ever comes running back.
1927 Blind Corner vi. There’s a proverb which is rather in point. ‘You can drive Nature out with a pitchfork, but she’ll always come back.’ I know you’re using a bucket instead. But .. the result is the same.

1980 How sleep Brave xiv. There was feminine logic for you!.. ‘You can drive out Nature with a pitchfork …but she keeps on coming back.’

1996 National Review 2 Sept. 22 Horace said it, when the original Olympics were still being held: You can throw Nature out with a pitchfork, it will still come back at you.

You can DRIVE out Nature with a pitchfork, but she keeps on coming back

Nature ; persistence

drive
see also BAD money drives out good; HUNGER drives the wolf out of the wood; NEEDS must when the Devil drives; ONE nail drives out another.

drop
see the LAST drop makes the cup run over.

dropping
see CONSTANT dropping wears away a stone.
drowned
see if you're BORN to be hanged then you'll never be drowned.

A DROWNING man will clutch at a straw
One grabs at the slightest chance when all hope is slipping away. To clutch at a straw (or straws) is frequently used as a metaphorical phrase.

1534 Dialogue of Comfort (1553) iii. Lyke a man that in peril of drowning catcheth whatsoeuer cometh next to hand .. be it neuer so simple a sticke.

1583 Fruitful & Brief Discourse I. 30 We do not as men redie to be drowned, catch at euery straw.

1623 Contemplations VII. xix. 252 The drowning man snatches at every twig ... The messengers of Benhadad catch hastily at that stile of grace, and hold it fast.

1748 Clarissa VII. i. A drowning man will catch at a straw, the Proverb well says.

1877 My Lady's Money xv. His gratitude caught at those words, as the drowning man is said to catch at the proverbial straw.

1915 Victory IV. viii. Wang seemed to think my insistence .. very stupid and tactless. But a drowning man clutches at straws.

1967 & English Proverbs Explained 49 A drowning man will clutch at a straw.

1967 Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead III. 80 We drift down time, clutching at straws. But what good's a brick to a drowning man?

hope and despair
drunken
see CHILDREN and fools tell the truth; HEAVEN protects children, sailors, and drunken men.
druv (drove, driven):
see SUSSEX won't be druv.
dry
see you never MISS the water till the well runs dry; sow dry and set wet; put your TRUST in God and keep your powder dry.
due
see give CREDIT where credit is due; GIVE the Devil his due.
dumb
see a CHERRY year a merry year.
dunhill
see every COCK will crow upon his own dunghill.
dust
see a PECK of March dust is worth a king's ransom.
duty
see the FIRST duty of a soldier is obedience.
dying
see you cannot SHIFT an old tree without it dying.
dyke
see FEBRUARY fill dyke, be it black or be it white.
eagle
see where the CARCASE is, there shall the eagles be gathered together.

EAGLES don't catch flies
Great or important people do not concern themselves with trifling matters or insignificant people. Cf. ERASMUS Adages III. ii. *aquila non captat muscas*, the eagle does not catch flies.

1563 Mirror for Magistrates (1938) 405 The iolly Eagles catche not little flees.
1581 tr. S. Guazzo's Civil Conversation II. 48 That is the right act of a Prince, and therefore it is well saide, That the Egle catcheth not flies.
1786 Anecdotes of Johnson 185 With regard to slight insults. 'They sting one (says he) but as a fly stings a horse; and the eagle will not catch flies.'
1942 Nobody's Vineyard i. ‘Eagles don't catch flies.’ ‘What do you mean?’ ‘Inspectors of Police don’t trail urchins.’
1980 Birds of Air (1987) 92 ‘Aquila non captat muscas,’ she told him in a reassuring whisper. ‘Eagles don’t catch flies.’

**great and small**
ear
see FIELDS have eyes, and woods have ears; LITTLE pitchers have large ears; you can't make a SILK purse out of a sow's ear; WALLS have ears.

The EARLY bird catches the worm

1636 Remains concerning Britain (ed. 5) 307 The early bird catcheth the worme.
1859 Geoffrey Hamlyn II. xiv. Having worked .. all the week .. a man comes into your room at half-past seven .. and informs you that the ‘early bird gets the worm.’
1892 Big Bow Mystery i. Grodman was not an early bird, now that he had no worms to catch. He could afford to despise proverbs now.
1935 ‘” Question of Proof xii. You're very skittish this morning, superintendent. I shall always know now what the early bird looks like when it has caught the worm.
1979 Black Jack vii. The early bird catches the worm, Dr. Ellis. We have been looking for you for a long time.
1996 Return to House of Usher ix. 167 ‘I got home at midnight last night and I'm here at seven. Where are they?.. Well, it's the early bird that catches the worm, and no mistake.’

*diligence: efficiency and inefficiency*
The EARLY man never borrows from the late man

1659 Proverbs (English) 17 The rath [early] sower never borroweth of the late.
1732 Gnomologia no. 4492 The early Sower never borrows of the Late.
1978 Calendar of Country Customs iii. Oats, too, benefit from early sowing .. Another agricultural proverb .. declares that, ‘the early man never borrows from the late man.’

*borrowing and lending*

EARLY to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise

1496 Treatise of Fishing with Angle H1 As the olde englysshe prouerbe sayth in this wyse. Who soo woll ryse erly shall be holy helthy and zely [fortunate].
1523 Husbandry (1530) 52 At gramer scole I lerned a verse,.. erly rysynge maketh a man hole in body, holer in soule, and rycher in goodes.
1639 Parœmiologia Anglo-Latina 91 Earley to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and
wise.

1853 Sponge's Sporting Tour ix. Early to bed and early to rise being among Mr. Sponge's maxims, he was enjoying the view .. shortly after daylight.

1984 Fade Out ii. ‘Early to bed and early to rise’. Makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise, McGuffin replied to himself. But in Ben Volper's case it was perhaps two out of three at best.

diligence ; health ; riches

earned

see a PENNY saved is a penny earned.

easier

see it is easier to PULL down than to build up; it is easier to RAISE the Devil than to lay him; also EASY.

EAST, west, home's best

1859 Proverbs of all Nations 36 ‘East and west, at home the best’ (German)... Ost und West, daheim das Best.

1869 John Ploughman's Talk xiii. ‘East and west, Home is best.’

1920 Verena in Midst cxiii. None the less I don't envy the traveller. ‘East, west, home's best.’

1949 ” Hunting Fairies xviii. I thought what a bully time I'd had in Scotland but all the same I was glad to be going home because East West home's best.

1979 Times 21 Dec. 9 All the most prosaic and conservative morals: East, West, home's best; .. nothing succeeds like success.

home

east

see also when the WIND is in the east, 'tis neither good for man nor beast.

EASY come, easy go

LIGHT come, light go and QUICKLY come, quickly go are less frequent expressions of the same concept. Cf. early 15th-cent. Fr. tost acquis tost se despens, soon acquired, soon spent.

1650 Tenth Muse 126 That which easily comes, as freely goes.

1832 Diary of Late Physician II. xi. ‘Easy come, easy go’ is .. characteristic of rapidly acquired commercial fortunes.

1960 Dignity & Purity ii. She's your only daughter, isn't she .. Well, easy come, easy go.

1985 Plain Old Man xiv. These places cost a fortune in dues, but what does he care? Easy come, easy go.

1997 Washington Times 28 Jan. A18 Mayor Barry doesn't think the matter of the lost $34.7 million worth pursuing. Easy come, easy go, one supposes.

getting and spending

EASY does it

Also gently does it. Similar in form to it's DOGGED as does it.


1928 Showgirl 21 No high pressure stuff, sis. Easy does it with Dick.

1955 Perfect Woman xxx. I won't ask her yet what's the matter he decided. Easy does it.

1972 Colonel Butler's Wolf iii. Easy does it—the nails are big, but they are old and brittle.

1981 Midnight's Children I. 103 Important to build bridges .. between the faiths. Gently does it.

tact ; ways and means

easy

see it is easy to find a STICK to beat a dog; it is easy to be WISE after the event; also EASIER.

You are what you EAT

Ger. Mann ist was Mann isst, man is what man eats. The saying is sometimes attributed to the French
gastronome Anthelme Brillat-Savarin who wrote in his Physiologie du Goût (1825): Dis-moi ce que tu manges, je te dirai ce que tu es. Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are.

1930 Subtle Trail ii. 55 There flashed through her mind the German saying, ‘One is what one eats.’

1940 (title) You are what you eat.

1980 Consuming Passions 3 Food faddists in recent decades have declared, ‘You are what you eat.’

1997 New Scientist 6 Sept. 39 ‘Isotopically speaking, you are what you eat’… Any carnivore that eats a lot of salmon will raise the proportion of heavy nitrogen and carbon in its body.

food and drink
We must EAT a peck of dirt before we die
A consolatory expression, frequently used in literal contexts. A peck is a dry measure of two gallon. Cf.

1603 H. CHETTLE et al. Patient Grisel A3V I thinke I shall not eate a pecke of salt: I shall not liue long sure.

1738 Polite Conversation I. 48 ‘Why then, here’s some Dirt in my Tea-cup.’.. ‘Poh! you must eat a Peck of Dirt before you die.’

1819 Letter 19 Mar. (1952) 314 This is the second black eye I have had since leaving school .. we must eat a peck before we die.

1839 Lark Rise vi. The children .. were told: ‘Us’ve all got to eat a peck o’ dust before we dies, an’ it’ll slip down easy in this good yarb [herb] beer.’

1879 Twelve Deaths of Christmas xxix. She tried to rinse off the ice cubes. ‘Never mind … They say, we all have to eat a peck of dirt before we die!’

health; mortality
He that would EAT the fruit must climb the tree
Cf. 1577 J. GRANGE Golden Aphroditis M1 Who will the fruyte that haruest yeeldes, must take the payne.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 141 He that would eat the Fruit must climb the Tree.

1843 “ New Purchase I. xxiv. It is a proverb, ‘He that would eat the fruit must first climb the tree and get it’: but when that fruit is honey, he that wants it must first cut it down.

1870 Great Affair xiv. ‘Son, are you one of those who like to eat the fruit and then walk away from the tree?’ ‘I want to marry her.’

wanting and having
EAT to live, not live to eat
Attributed to SOCRATES (Diogenes Laertius Socrates II. xxxiv.) ἐλέγετετο ἐνᾶλαμα οὖν, and he said that other men live to eat, but he eats to live. Cf. CICERO Rhetoricorum IV. vii. edere oportet ut vivas, non vivas ut edas, one must eat to live, not live to eat.

1387 tr. Higden's Polychronicon (1871) III. 281 Socrates seide that meny men wil leve forto ete and drynke, and that they wolde ete and drynke .. forto lyve.

1410 in Secreta Secretorum (1898) 67 I will ete so that y leue, and noght lyf that y ete.

1672 Miser 46 Eat to live, not live to eat; as the Proverb says.

1733 Poor Richard's Almanack (May) Eat to live, and not live to eat.

1912 Preserving Mr. Panmure II. 85 I shall eat sufficient …But I eat to live; I don’t live to eat.

1982 New York Times 31 Oct. iv. 18 Until recently the world was divided into those who eat to live and those who live to eat.

food and drink
eat
see also the CAT would eat fish, but would not wet her feet; DOG does not eat dog; you cannot HAVE your cake and eat it; if you won't WORK you shan't eat.

eaten
see REVENGE is a dish that can be eaten cold.

eating
see APPETITE comes with eating; the PROOF of the pudding is in the eating.

eavesdroppers
see LISTENERS never hear any good of themselves.

egg
see as good be an ADDLED egg as an idle bird; you cannot make an OMELETTE without breaking eggs; there is REASON in the roasting of eggs; don't TEACH your grandmother to suck eggs.

Don't put all your EGGS in one basket
Don't chance everything on a single venture, but spread your risk. To put all one's eggs in one basket is commonly used as a metaphorical phrase.

1662 Italian Proverbial Phrases 125 To put all ones Eggs in a Paniard, viz. to hazard all in one bottom [ship].

1670 Proverbs 344 Don't venture all your Eggs in One Basket.

1894 “ Pudd'nhead Wilson in Century Mag. XLVII. VI. 817 Behold, the fool saith, ‘Put not all thine eggs in the one basket’—which is but a manner of saying, ‘Scatter your money and your attention’; but the wise man saith, ‘Put all your eggs in the one basket and—watch that basket.’

1935 England made Me II. ii. It must seem odd my asking you like this, but I've never put so many eggs into one basket before.

1967 & English Proverbs Explained 46 Don't put all your eggs in one basket.

182 & Life & Death on Corporate Battlefield iii. The most compelling reason for large companies to expand in several directions is simply to avoid the danger of putting all their eggs in one basket.

prudence

eight
see SIX hours' sleep for a man, seven for a woman, and eight for a fool

eleven
see POSSESSION is nine points of the law; RAIN before seven, fine before eleven.

Every ELM has its man
Cf. 1906 R. KIPLING Puck of Pook's Hill 32 Ellum she hateth mankind, and waiteth Till every gust be laid To drop a limb on the head of him That any way trusts her shade.

1928 Times 29 Nov. 10 Owing to the frequency with which this tree sheds its branches, or is uprooted in a storm, it has earned for itself a sinister reputation. ‘Every elm has its man’ is an old country saying.

death : fate and fatalism

EMPTY sacks will never stand upright
Extreme need makes survival impossible. Also used as an argument for taking food or drink (see quot. 1978)

1642 Select Italian Proverbs 90 Sacco vuoto non può star in piedi. An emptie sack cannot stand upright: nota, Applied to such as either pinch themselves, or are pincht by hard fortune.

1758 Poor Richard's Almanack (Introduction) Poverty often deprives a Man of all Spirit and Virtue; 'Tis hard for an empty Bag to stand up-right.

1860 Mill on Floss I. i. viii. There's folks as things 'ull allays go awk'ard with: empty sacks 'ull never stand upright.
My Confidences (1896) 395 Gibbs .. by this artifice .. made a hundred per cent .. Gibbs was a needy man, and .. would often say, ‘It's hard for an empty sack to stand upright.’

Borstal Boy III. 310 We've a long night before us and an empty sack won’t stand.

Getting Through 99 ‘Give this man something.’.. ‘A cup of tea will do fine,’ he had protested .. ‘Nonsense ... Empty bags can’t stand.’

1895 hunger; poverty

EMPTY vessels make the most sound

Foolish or witless persons are the most talkative or noisy; also used of achievement (see quot. 1932). Vessel here means a receptacle, as a drinking-vessel.

Pilgrimage of Man (EETS) l. 15933 A voyde vessel .. maketh outward a gret soun, Mor than .. what yt was ful.

Treatise of Moral Philosophy IV. Q4 As emptye vesselles make the lowdest sounde: so they that haue least wyt, are the greatest babblers.

Henry V iv. 64 I did never know so full a voice issue from so empty a heart: but the saying is true —The empty vessel makes the greatest sound.

Essay on Faculties of Mind I. 249 Empty Vessels sound loudest.

Harbourmaster ii. ‘You think we don't show up too well in the test?’.. ‘Oh, dear, no. It is the empty vessel that makes the most noise.’

English Proverbs Explained 51 Empty vessels make the most sound.

Brock & Defector xiii. ‘All talk and no action ..’. ‘Empty vessels make the most noise,’ Brock agreed.

boasting; words and deeds

empty

see don't THROW the baby out with the bathwater.

enchantment

see DISTANCE lends enchantment to the view.

The END crowns the work

Cf. L. finis coronat opus, the end crowns the work; 15th-cent. Fr. la fin loe l’œuvre, the end praises the work.

Ship of Fools Dd1 For the ende crowneth.

French Alphabet II. 29 The end doth crowne the worke ... La fin couronne l’œuvre.

Troilus & Cressida IV. v. 223 The end crowns all; And that old common arbitrator, Time, Will one day end it.

Abbot I. xiii. As the end crowns the work, it also forms the rule by which it must be ultimately judged.

Edwin Drood xviii. Proof, sir, proof, must be built up stone by stone ... As I say, the end crowns the work.

Uncle Harry I. 5 But the end crowns the work, Mr. Jenkins. Murderers, like artists, must be hung to be appreciated.

One for my Dame iii. That the end should crown the work, that I had given no more lies than I had been told made no difference. You either played it straight or you didn’t.

finality

The END justifies the means

Cf. OVID Heroides ii. 85 exitus acta probat, the outcome justifies the deeds. The negative of this is also often asserted.

Exposition of Commandments 260 The ende good, doeth not by and by make the meanes good.
1718 Literary Works (1971) I. 186 The End must justify the Means: He only, Sins who Ill intends.
1941 “ Smiling Corpse 238 ‘The police don't like to have their bodies moved.’.. ‘In this case the end justifies the means.’
1979 Petrograd Consignment 65 Ulyanov has demonstrated that the end justifies the means.

Action and consequence
End
see also (noun) ALL good things must come to an end; the DEVIL can quote Scripture for his own ends; EVERYTHING has an end; he who WILLS the end, wills the means; (verb) all's WELL that ends well.
Ending
see a GOOD beginning makes a good ending
Endured
see what can't be CURED must be endured.
Enemy
see the BEST is the enemy of the good; it is good to make a BRIDGE of gold to a flying enemy; the GOOD is the enemy of the best; there is no LITTLE enemy; SAVE us from our friends.

England is the paradise of women, the hell of horses, and the purgatory of servants
Cf. 1558 BONAVVENTURE DES PERIERS Nouvelles Recreations N1 Paris .. c'est le paradis des femmes, l'enfer des mules, et le purgatorie des soliciiteurs; 1583 R. D. Mirrour of Mirth K1 Paris is a paradise for women, a hell for mules Horses, and a Purgatorye for those that followe suits of Law.
1591 Second Fruits 205 She takes her ease, and follows her busines at home … England is the paradise of women, the purgatory of men, and the hell of horses.
1617 Itinerary III. I. iii. England.. is said to be the Hell of Horses, the Purgatory of Servants, and the Paradise of Weomen.
1787 Provincial Glossary s.v. England, England is the paradise of women, hell of horses, and purgatory of servants.
1962 What Butler Saw i. An ancient proverb said that England was ‘the hell of horses, the purgatory of servants and the paradise of women’. When the eighteenth century came in, England was still the hell of horses, but there were loud complaints that it had become the paradise of servants and the purgatory of women.

National characteristics
England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity

1856 Tribune 19 Jan. 188 Some few years ago, we followed O'Connell, and when he declared that ‘England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity’, we threw our hats in the air.
1916 in New York Times (Mag.) 9 Apr. 2 The cry that ‘England's Difficulty Is Ireland's Opportunity’ is raised in the old senseless, spiteful way as a recommendation to stab England in the back when she is fighting some one else.
1969 Year of Liberty i. Successive plantations—of Scottish Presbyterians in Ulster .. did not secure Ireland. The Catholics' watchword remained: ‘England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity.’
1982 in Observer 17 Oct. 7 During the Second World War, de Valera executed Republicans who tried to put into practice that impeccably Republican motto ‘England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity.’
1997 Times 15 Oct. 8 Britain's difficulty became Ireland's opportunity last night when .. Sir Denis Mahon presented three Baroque paintings originally destined for Liverpool to the National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin.

Opportunity & politics
England

see also the CAT, the rat, and Lovell the dog, rule all England under the hog; what MANCHESTER says today, the rest of England says tomorrow; TURKEY, heresy, hops, and beer came into England all in one year.

The ENGLISH are a nation of shop-keepers
Attributed to Napoleon in B. E. O'Meara Napoleon in Exile (1822) I. 103 L'Angleterre est une nation de boutiquiers. The concept of the shopkeeping nation is however earlier: 1766 J. TUCKER Letter from Merchant 46 A Shop-keeper will never get the more Custom by beating his Customers; and what is true of a Shop-keeper, is true of a Shop-keeping Nation; 1776 A. SMITH Wealth of Nations II. IV. vii. To found a great empire for the sole purpose of raising up a people of customers, may at first sight appear a project fit only for a nation of shopkeepers.

1831 Young Duke I. xi. Hast thou brought this, too, about that ladies' hearts should be won .. over a counter .. We are indeed a nation of shopkeepers.
1911 Times Weekly 17 Feb. 132 Napoleon .. described the English as a nation of shopkeepers. Uttered in a sneering spirit, it embodied .. the profound truth that our prosperity is based upon our trade.
1981 Put on by Cunning xiv. Americans .. are a nation of salesmen just as the English are a nation of small shopkeepers.

National characteristics
One ENGLISHMAN can beat three Frenchmen
Now also used of other nationalities, and in different proportions.

1599 Henry V III. vi. 144 When they were in health .. I thought upon one pair of English legs Did march three Frenchmen.
1745 Letter 13 July (1941) IX. 17 We, who formerly .. could any one of us beat three Frenchmen, are now so degenerated that three Frenchmen can evidently beat one Englishman.
1834 Peter Simple III. viii. My men .. there are three privateers .. It's just a fair match for you—one Englishman can always beat three Frenchmen.
1851 Lavengro I. xxvi. In the days of pugilism it was no vain boast to say, that one Englishman was a match for two of t'other race [the French].
1913 Harrovians i. Peter knew that an Englishman can tackle three foreigners, and forgot that the inventor of this theory took care to oppose three Englishmen to one foreigner as often as possible.
1981 London Review of Books 16 July–5 Aug. 5 Spain's conquest of Mexico 'gave Europeans a new and potent myth', the conviction of one European as equal to twenty others.

boasting; national characteristics
An ENGLISHMAN's house is his castle

1581 Positions xl. He is the appointer of his owne circumstance, and his house is his castle.
1642 Fast Sermon 28 It was wont to be said A mans house is his Castle but if this Castle of late hath proved unable to secure any, let them make their conscience their castle.
1791 Life of Johnson II. 284 In London .. a man's own house is truly his castle, in which he can be in perfect safety from intrusion.
1837 Pickwick Papers xxiv. Some people maintains that an Englishman's house is his castle. That's gammon [nonsense].
1906 Charles Dickens vii. The man who said that an Englishman's house is his castle said much more than he meant.
1998 Garden (Royal Horticultural Society) May 313 An Englishman's house may be his castle, but does it follow that his garden is his forest?
An ENGLISHMAN's word is his bond

1500 Lancelot of Lake (STS) l. 1671 O kingis word shuld be o kingis bonde.

1642 Holy State V. xiii. He hath this property of an honest man, that his word is as good as his band.

1754 Grandison I. Letter ix. I am no flincher ... The word of Sir Rowland Meredith is as good as his bond.

1841 Old Curiosity Shop lviii. ‘Marchioness,’ said Mr. Shriveller, rising, ‘the word of a gentleman is as good as his bond—sometimes better, as in the present case.’

1916 Letter 14 Sept. in Inglorious Soldier iii. [List of fictions underlying national conceit:] 3. That English justice is something much more superfine than any other sort of justice (owing to Public School training!) and that an Englishman's word is his bond.

1981 Forgotten Colony xvi. If a verbal promise is made the native, to seal the contract, usually says palabra de inglés,.. meaning that he will act as an Englishman, whose word is his bond.

ENOUGH is as good as a feast

1375 Bruce (EETS) xiv. 363 He maid thame na gud fest, perfay [truly], And nocht-for-thi [nevertheless] yneuch had thai.

1470 Morte d'Arthur (1967) I. 246 Inowghe is as good as a feste.

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs II. xi. M1 Here is enough, I am satisfied (sayd he) .. For folke say, enough is as good as a feast.

1833 Elia's Last Essays vi. That enough is as good as a feast. Not a man, woman, or child in ten miles round Guildhall, who really believes this saying.

1928 Woman who rode Away 165 I'll live with another woman but I'll never marry another. Enough is as good as a feast.

1976 New Yorker 26 Apr. 77 If he's so smart he'll amount to something in good time—enough is as good as a feast: that's an old saying and a true one.

To ERR is human (to forgive divine)

Although known in Latin (humanum est errare, it is human to err) and in earlier English versions, this saying is generally quoted in Pope's words (quot. 1711). Cf. c 1386 CHAUCER Tale of Melibee 1. 1264 The proverbe seith that ‘for to do synne is mannyssh, but certes for to persevere longe in synne is werk of the devel’; 1539 R. MORISON tr. J. L. Vives' Introduction to Wisdom D7 It is naturally gyuen to al men, to erre, but to no man to perseuer .. therein.

1578 tr. J. Yver's Courtly Controversy E3 To offend is humaine, to repent diuine, and to persecue diuelish.

1659 Proverbs (French) 12 To erre is humane, to repent is divine, to persevere is Diabolicall.

1711 Essay on Criticism 1.525 Good-Nature and Good-Sense must ever join; To Err is Humane; to Forgive, Divine.

1908 Times Literary Supplement 27 Mar. 1 The modern moralist pardons everything, because he is not
certain of anything, except that to err is human.

1980 " Passing Strange xiv. After all ‘to err was human’ and—dedicated dominie [pedagogue] that he was—Burton knew all about mistakes.

■ forgiveness; wrong-doers

escape
see LITTLE thieves are hanged, but great ones escape.

eternal
see HOPE springs eternal.

Eve
see when ADAM delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?

even
see (adjective) don't get MAD, get even; never give a SUCKER an even break; (adverb) even a WORM will turn.

evensong
see be the DAY weary or be the day long, at last it ringeth to evensong.

event
see COMING events cast their shadows before; it is easy to be WISE after the event.

EVERY little helps
Cf. 1590 G. MEURIER Deviz Familiers A6 peu ayde, disçoit le formy, pissant en mer en plein midy, every little helps, said the ant, pissing into the sea at midday.

1602 Letters (1906) 118 The wrenn sayde all helpte when she—in the sea.

1623 Remains concerning Britain (ed. 3) 268 Every thing helps, quoth the Wren when she pist i' the sea.

1787 in Collections of Massachusetts Hist. Society (1877) 5th Ser. II. 477 A guinea is a guinea, and every little helps.

1840 Poor Jack xiii. It's a very old saying, that every little helps ...Almost all the men were on the larboard side.

1980 Death & Pregnant Virgin xxi. 'I'll see if we can't put it off a day or two.' 'Every little helps.'

■ assistance; great and small

EVERY man for himself
See also the later expanded forms in the next two proverbs.

c 1386 Knight's Tale 1. 1182 At the kynges court, my brother, Ech man for hymself, ther is noon oother.

1478 Letter 20 May in Paston Letters (1976) II. 427 Your moder .. hath made her wyll, the wyche ye shall understond more when I com, for ther is every man for hym self.

1678 English Proverbs (ed. 2) (Scottish) 366 Every man for himself (quoth the Merteine).

1795 Letter 6 June in Virginia Magazine of Hist. & Biography (1922) XXX. 224 The old adage might well be applied in many cases. Every man for himself.

1974 Other Paths to Glory II. vi. It was pretty much every man for himself. But I was hit quite early on.

■ self-preservation

EVERY man for himself, and God for us all

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs II. ix. L2 Praie and shifte eche one for hym selfe, as he can. Every man for hym selfe, and god for us all.

1615 White Devil (ed. 2) 83 That by-word, Every man for himselfe, and God for vs all, is vncharitable, vngodly.

1830 King's Own III. xiii. The captain .. ordered the sailor to leave the boat. ‘Every man for himself, and
God for us all!’ was the cool answer of the refractory sea-man.

1979 Times 29 Dec. 12 Each for himself, and God for us all, as the elephant said when he danced among the chickens.

EVERY man for himself, and the Devil take the hindmost

The two earliest examples are more closely aligned in form to the preceding proverb. See also DEVIL take the hindmost.

1530 Eclogues (EETS) i. 1009 Eche man for him selfe, and the fiende for all.

1573 108VEvery man for him selfe; and the Deuill for all.

1858 Women's Thoughts about Women ii. The world is hard enough, for two-thirds of it are struggling for the dear life—‘each for himself, and de'il tak the hindmost.’

1939 By Shores of Silver Lake xxv. There wasn’t any standing in line ...It was each fellow for himself and devil take the hindmost.

1957 tr. G. Guareschi’s Don Camillo & Devil iv. ‘I'm paying for what I eat.’ ..‘Every man must pay for himself and the devil take the hindmost.’

EVERY man has his price

1734 in Bee VIII. 97 ‘It is an old Maxim, that every Man has his Price,’ if you can but come up to it.

1798 Memoirs of Sir Robert Walpole. I. lxiv. The political axiom generally attributed to him [Walpole] .. was perverted by leaving out the word those... He ascribed to the interested views of themselves .. the declaration of pretended patriots, of whom he said, ‘All those men have their price.’

1845 Smuggler I. x. ‘You can do nothing with Mowle. He never took a penny in his life.’ ‘Oh, every man has his price.’

1949 Naked & Dead II. xi. It was the sort of deal his father might have pulled. ‘Every man has his price.’

1984 San Andreas ix. People are capable of being suborned, and while it may not be true that every man has his price, there are always those who have.

EVERY man is the architect of his own fortune

Although attributed to Bacon in quot. 1991, this was a saying of the Roman censor Appius Claudius Caecus (4th-3rd cent. BC): PSEUDO-SALLUST Ad Caesarem Senem i. sed res docuit id verum esse, quod in carminibus Appius ait, fabrum esse suae quemque fortunae, but experience has shown what Appius said in his verses to be true, that each man is the architect of his own fortune.

1533 Flowers for Latin Speaking (1560) 24 A prouerbiall spekying ...Every man .. is causer of his own fortune.

1649 Eikonoklastes III. 542 They in whomsoever these vertues dwell .. are the architects of thir own happiness.

1707 Athenian Sport 454 We are .. architects of our own fortune.

1818 Marriage III. vi. As every man is said to be the artificer of his own fortune, so every one .. had best be the artificer of their own friendship.

1873 Notes & Queries 4th Ser. XII. 514 We have not a commoner saying among us than ‘Every man is the architect of his own fortune,’ and we have very few much older.

1991 Times 5 June 18 Educationists complain of the limitations on their resources; but quantifying this in league tables proves the long-term truth of Bacon's dictum quisque faber suae fortunae, each the maker of his own fate.

self-help
EVERY man to his taste
Cf. Fr. chacun á son goût, each to his taste.

1580 Euphues & his England II. 161 Betweene them it was not determined, but every one as he lyketh.
1640 Old Law II. ii. Every one to their liking. But I say An honest man's worth all.
1760 Tristram Shandy I. vii. I own I never could envy Didius in these kinds of fancies of his:—But every man to his own taste.
1849 Caxtons III. XVII .. ‘Sheep are dull things to look at after a bullhunt.’ .. ‘Every man to his taste in the Bush.’

EVERY man to his trade
With allusion to I CORINTHIANS vii. 20 (AV) Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Cf. 1539 R. TAVERNER tr. Erasmus' Adages E1 Let euerye man exercise hym selfe in the facultie that he knoweth. 1590–1 SHAKESPEARE Henry VI, Pt. 2 IV. ii. 15 And yet it is said ‘Labour in thy vocation’; which is as much to say as ‘Let the magistrates be labouring men’; and therefore should we be magistrates.

EVERYBODY loves a lord

1869 in Queen Elizabeth's Academy (EETS) p. xii. The second tract .. is printed, not mainly because ‘John Bull loves a Lord’.. but because the question of Precedence was so important a one in old social arrangements.
1908 Spectator 3 July 9 It is always said that an Englishman loves a lord. It would be more exact to say that he is in love with lordliness.
1980 Importance of being Oscar (1981) 58 If pressed, he would probably have admitted that he was no exception to the adage that ‘Everybody Loves a Lord.’
EVERYBODY's business is nobody's business

Cf. ARISTOTLE Politics II.i. μὴ ἴση πολλὰς πλεονεκρύς, a matter common to most men receives least attention.

1611 Dict. French & English s.v. Ouvrage, Euerie bodies worke is no bodies worke.

1655 Compleat Angler (ed.2) I.ii. A wise friend of mine did usually say, That which is every bodies businesse, is no bodies businesse.

1725 (title) Every-Body's Business, is No-Body's Business;.. exemplified in the pride of our Woman-Servants.

1834 Parochial Sermons I. xix. It is commonly said, that what is every one's business is practically no one's.

1914 Misalliance 10 ‘The danger of public business is that it never ends’.. ‘What I say is that everybody's business is nobody's business.’

1981 Longest Pleasure V. It's unfair to try to make points by misquoting. What you should have said is ‘everybody's business is nobody's business’, and that doesn't fit our present case at all.

busybodies

everyone

see you can't PLEASE everyone; everyone SPEAKS well of the bridge which carries him over; everyone STRETCHES his legs according to the length of his coverlet.

EVERYTHING has an end

Cf. mid 14th-cent. Fr. mais il n'est chose qui ne fine, ne qui ne viengne à son termine, but there is nothing which doesn't end, which comes to its conclusion.

1385 Troilus & Criseyde III. 615 At the laste, as every thyng hath ende, She took hire leve.

1616 Crossing of Proverbs A6 ‘Every thing hath an end’ .. ‘Not so, a Ring hath none.’

1841 Barnaby Rudge XX. Everything has an end. Even young ladies in love cannot read their letters for ever.

1980 Reflex viii. Can't go on for ever, more's the pity. Everything ends, doesn't it.

finality

everything

see also ALL things come to those who wait; when all you have is a HAMMER, everything looks like a nail; MONEY isn't everything; a PLACE for everything, and everything in its place; there is a REMEDY for everything except death; there is a TIME and place for everything; there is a TIME for everything.

evidence

see what the SOLDIER said isn't evidence.

EVIL communications corrupt good manners

Proper conduct is harmfully influenced by false information or knowledge; also used to assert the deleterious effect of bad example. With allusion to I CORINTHIANS XV.33 (AV) Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.
1425 Treatises of Fistula (EETS) 5 Shrewed speche corrupth gode maners.
1533 Debellation [subjugation] of Salem xiv. (As saynt Poule speketh of such heresyes) euyl communication corrupteth good maners.
1749 Tom Jones IV. XII. iii. I heartily wish you would not think of going among them.—Evil Communication corrupts good Manners.
1829 Advice to Young Men V. cccviii. Evil communications corrupt good manners.
1874 Phineas Redux I. xvi. [The horse] would have taken the fence but Dandolo had baulked and evil communications will corrupt good manners.
1939 Christmas Holiday ii. A disposition of such sweetness that no evil communication could corrupt his good manners.
1973 Appleby's Answer ii. One can't be too careful in choosing a well-bred cat's company ... Evil communications corrupt good manners.

conduct; example, good and bad

Never do EVIL that good may come of it

With allusion to ROMANS iii. 8 (AV) And not .. Let us do evil, that good may come.

Anatomie of Abuses K5 We must not doo euil, that good may come of it: yet the lawes in permitting certain reasonable gain to be received for the loane of money lent .. haue not doone much amisse.

1689 Letter in Coll. Connecticut Hist. Society (1860) I. 59 If I knew any thing whereby to justify the present proceeding, I should not conceal it; but we must not do evil that good may come of it.

1882 Unknown to History II. ix. Walsingham's agents .. did evil that good might come, thinking Mary's death alone would ensure them from Pope and Spaniard.

1950 Murder Included 127 What .. were the ethics? A promise made to a silly child, was it binding? You mustn't do evil that good may come of it .. but the boy was only fourteen and practically half-witted, and Lisa was an absurd little Quixote.

good and evil; ways and means

EVIL doers are evil dreaders

Schoolmaster (1570) I. 27 Ill doinges, breed ill thinkinges. And corrupted manners, spryng perverted judgements.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 176 Ill doers, ill deemers.

1828 Fair Maid of Perth II. v. Put me not to quote the old saw, that evil doers are evil dreaders.—It is your suspicion, not your knowledge, which speaks.

1886 Kidnapped xxvii. If you were more trustful, it would better befit your time of life ... We have a proverb .. that evil doers are aye evil-dreaders.

conscience; wrong-doers

evil

see also a GREAT book is a great evil; IDLENESS is the root of all evil; MONEY is the root of all evil; SEE no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil; SUFFICIENT unto the day is the evil thereof.

Of two EVILS choose the less

Cf. ARISTOTLE Nicomachean Ethics II. ix. 1109a For of harms two, the lesse is for to chese. 1385 Troilus & Criseyde II. 470 Of harms two, the lesse is for to chese.
EXAMPLE is better than precept

The EXCEPTION proves the rule
‘The very fact of an exception proves there must be a rule’ (Brewer); now frequently misunderstood and used to justify inconsistency. Cf. L. exceptio probat regulam in casibus non exceptis, the exception confirms the rule in cases not excepted.

There is an EXCEPTION to every rule
See also the preceding entry and RULES are made to be broken.

There is an EXCEPTION to every rule
The rules of Grammer cannot, in any language, be reduced to a strict analogy; but all general rules have some exceptions.

There are exceptions to every rule. To-day I am forced to break the rule that generally guides me.

‘There is still something awe-inspiring about a duke,’ we are informed. Only those who share such values will want to read Heirs and Graces. Even they should remember that there is an exception to every rule.

A fair EXCHANGE is no robbery

A fair dealing

He who EXCUSES, accuses himself

What can you EXPECT from a pig but a grunt?

Who excuses himself accuses himself.

A good exchange is no robbery, I believe?

A fair exchange, they say, is no robbery.

For that matter, it wasn't inconceivable that departing guests often went through her purse on the way out, or that she considered such actions not theft but a quid pro quo. A fair exchange, they say, is no robbery.

BAD excuse is better than none; IGNORANCE of the law is no excuse for breaking it.

He who EXCUSES, accuses himself

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A good exchange is no robbery, I believe?
They refuse a draught of £20, because, in mistake, it was £8 overdrawn. But what can be expected of a sow but a grumph?

Of a coarse, ill-mannered man, who uses unmannery language: ‘What could you expect from a pig but a grunt.’

What can one expect from a pig but the grunt! What could the likes of you know about fairies anyway?

But what can you expect from a pig but a grunt? What could you expect from a pig but a grunt?

What can one expect from a pig but the grunt! What could the likes of you know about fairies anyway?

References in Mr Cole’s letter to the ‘bottle’ were, to say the least, distasteful. But then, as they say, ‘What can you expect from a pig but a grunt?’

EXPERIENCE is the best teacher
The Latin tag experientia docet, experience teaches, gave rise to a large number of proverbs. There is no standard form, and the sayings given below illustrate the themes that ‘one learns (also, fools learn) by experience’ and that ‘experience is a hard teacher’. See also EXPERIENCE keeps a dear school.

Experientia docet; human nature expect

see also BLESSED is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed.

EXPERIENCE is the best teacher
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EXPERIENCE is the father of wisdom
Cf. ALCMAN Fragments cxxv. (Page) πάτα τα θεν, θάρσει, experience is the beginning of knowledge.

This be commonly true, for experience is mother of prudence, yet suche prudence & wysedom cost the comon weale moch.

He by the longe and often alternate proof .. had gotten by greate experience the very mother and mastres of wisedome.

Experience is the father of wisedom, and memorie the mother.

If it be true, that experience is the mother of wisdom, history must be an improving teacher.

Experience is the father of wisdom, remember.
Experience keeps a dear school

Poor Richard's Almanack (Dec.) Experience keeps a dear school, but Fools will learn in no other. Story of British Army vii. But the British leaders were to learn the fact, they might have foreseen, in the ‘only school fools learn in, that of experience’.

The various Governments had .. to learn their lesson in blood and tears, for ‘experience keeps a dear school’.

You're a fool, that's what you are, and as the man said: Experience keeps a dear school but fools will learn in no other.

Opposite extremes have much in common. Cf. a 1662 PASCAL Pensées (new ed., 1835) I.iv. les extrêmes se touchent, extremes meet.

But as extremes meet we may possibly the sooner have a peace for it.

This Olifaunt is a Puritan?—not the less like to be a Papist .. for extremities meet.

Let us place at least one ‘barring out’ [i.e. action of schoolboys barricading themselves in a room] upon record, in order to let the radicals see, and seeing hope, when they find how nearly extremes meet, what a slight step there is from absolute despotism to absolute disorganization.

It is a venerable saying that extremes meet.

It is a case of extremes meeting, but it may be suggested that extremes meet always on common ground.

Groups of the extreme left and extreme right are each other's total opposites and avowed enemies. But in some respects these extremes meet.

What the EYE doesn't see, the heart doesn't grieve over

What one does not see does not harm the heart.
The EYE of a master does more Work than both his hands.

1744 Poor Richard's Almanack (Oct). The eye of a Master, will do more Work than his Hand.
1876 Manchester Man I. xiv. She was wont to say, ‘The eye of a master does more work than both his hands,’ accordingly in house or warehouse her active supervision kept other hands from idling.

Employers and employees

Eye see also BEAUTY is in the eye of the beholder; the BUYER has need of a hundred eyes, the seller of but one; FIELDS have eyes, and woods have ears; FOUR eyes see more than two; HAWKS will not pick out hawks' eyes; PLEASE your eye and plague your heart.

The EYES are the window of the soul

The variant form the face is the index of the mind is among those also exemplified below. Cf. CICERO Orator lx. ut imago est animi voltus sic indices oculi, the face is a picture of the mind as the eyes are its interpreter; L. vultus est index animi (also oculus animi index), the face (also, eye) is the index of the mind.

1545 Regiment of Life 14 The eyes .. are the wyndowes of the mynde, for both ioye & anger .. are seene .. through them.
1575 Nehemiah (1585) i. The affections of the minde declare them selues openlie in the face.
1601 Cynthia's Revels D3\(^V\) I can refell [refute] that Paradox .. of those, which hold the face to be the Index of the minde.
1781 in et al. Adams Family Correspondence (1973) IV. 215 I did not study the Eye that best Index to the mind.
1864 Trevlyn Hold I. i. You have not to learn that the face is the outward index of the mind within.
1940 Scott of Antarctic II. 48 The eye, which is the reflector of the external world, is also the mirror of the soul within.
1979 Omega Factor iii. If the old saying, the eyes are the window of the soul, were true then this young girl had misplaced her soul.
1985 Shadow Kills xviii. I .. thought, they say the eyes are the portals of the soul. Are they likewise the portals of madness?
1997 Windows Magazine Feb. 205 If the eyes are the windows to the soul, then the monitor is the window to your system.

Appearance, significant

Face

See don't CUT off your nose to spite your face; the EYES are the window of the soul.

FACT is stranger than fiction

An alliterative version of TRUTH is stranger than fiction.

1853 Sam Slick's Wise Saws 5 Facts are stranger than fiction, for things happen sometimes that never entered into the mind of man to imagine or invent.
1881 Arcady for Better or Worse iii. I have no desire to convince the world that .. in this .. case fact is
stranger than fiction. But the following instance of Mr. Chowne’s ‘cunning’ may be verified.

1910 Studies in Religion & Theology II. v. Forgetting the fact which is stranger than fiction, that the sagest man in the theory of State may be the unwisest man in statecraft.

1929 Copper Bottle 64 Facts may be stranger than fiction,.. but fiction is generally truer than facts.

1980 Christian Science monitor 30 May B3 Some of the research seems almost eerie to the outsider, covering some genuine fact-is-stranger-than-fiction ground.

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**reality and illusion**

**FACTS are stubborn things**

- 1732 Liberty & Progress ii. Plain matters of fact are terrible stubborn things.
- 1749 Continuation of Essay on Field Husbandry 20 Facts are stubborn things.
- 1866 Cradock Nowell III. vi. Facts, however, are stubborn things, and will not even make a bow to the sweetest of young ladies.
- 1942 Murder is Out xxvii. You’re .. too intelligent to think that suggestion would have any weight with a jury …Facts are stubborn things.

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**reality and illusion**

**fail**

see when all FRUIT fails welcome haws.

**failure**

see SUCCESS has many fathers, while failure is an orphan.

**FAINT heart never won fair lady**

Cf. c 1390 GOWER Confessio Amantis v. 6573 Bot as men sein, wher herte is failed, Ther schal no castell ben assailed.

- 1545 tr. Erasmus' Adages (ed. 2) 10 A coward verely neuer obteyned the love of a faire lady.
- 1580 Euphues & his England II. 131 Faint hart Philautus neither winneth Castell nor Lady: theryfore endure all thinges that shall happen with patience.
- 1614 Remains concerning Britain (ed. 2) 306 Faint heart neuer wonne faire Lady.
- 1754 Grandison I. xvi. Then, madam, we will not take your denial …Have I not heard it said, that faint heart never won fair lady.
- 1899 Crown of Life xiii. Could he leave England, this time, without confessing himself to her? Faint heart—he mused over the proverb.
- 1972 Palace of Art xix. ‘You proceed as planned.’ ‘Faint heart never won fair lady?’
- 1996 National Review 29 July 60 It might even help close the gender gap; after all, as everyone knows, ‘Faint heart never won fair lady.’

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**boldness ; love**

**FAIR and softly goes far in a day**

- c 1350 Douce MS 52 no. 50 Fayre and softe me [one] ferre gose.
- 1670 English Proverbs 87 Fair and softly goes far in a day …He that spurs on too fast at first setting out, tires before he comes to his journeys end. Festina lente.
- 1818 Heart of Midlothian IV. viii. Reuben Butler isna the man I take him to be, if he disna learn the Captain to fuff [puff] his pipe some other gate [place] than in God's house, or [before] the quarter be ower. ‘Fair and softly gangs far,’ said Meiklehose.
- 1914 Folk of Furry Farm ii. Maybe I'm like the singed cat, better than I look! I'm slow, but fair and easy goes far in a day.

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**gentleness ; tact**

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www.EnglishPro.ir
All's FAIR in love and war
Cf. 1578 LYLY Euphues I. 236 Anye impietie may lawfully be committed in loue, which is lawlesse.

1620 tr. Cervantes' Don Quixote II. xxi. Love and warre are all one ...It is lawfull to use sleights and stratagems to .. attaine the wished end.

1845 Smuggler II. iv. In love and war, every stratagem is fair, they say.

1850 Frank Fairleigh xlix. 'You opened the letter!'.. 'How was I to read it if I hadn't? All's .. fair in love and war, you know.'

1972 Palace of Art xii. 'Do you really suppose I would tell?' he demanded coldly. 'Might do. All's fair in —.'

1986 Nice Class of Corpse xl. Then Eulalie's eyes narrowed and she looked hard at her companion. 'Do you believe that all is fair in love and war?'

fair dealing ; love ; warfare

FAIR play's a jewel

1809 Hist. New York II. vi. vii. The furious Risingh, in despight of that noble maxim .. that 'fair play is a jewel', hastened to take advantage of the hero's fall.

1823 Pioneers II. v. Well, fair play's a jewel. But I've got the lead of you, old fellow.

1935 Lucia's Progress viii. There's been a lil' mistake ...I want my lil' rubber of Bridge. Fair play's a jewel.

1948 Trevannion iv. 'It ain't good to win crooked.' 'Good for you, Stan. I agree. Fair play's a jewel.'

fair dealing

fair

see also none but the BRAVE deserve the fair; a fair EXCHANGE is no robbery; FAINT heart never won fair lady; GIVE and take is fair play; if SAINT Paul's day be fair and clear, it will betide a happy year; SAINT Swithun's day if thou be fair for forty days it will remain; TURN about is fair play.

FAITH will move mountains

With allusion to MATTHEW xvii. 20 (AV) If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain; Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove.

1897 ‘ Beth Book xvi. If mountains can be moved by faith, you can surely move your own legs!

1933 Ghastly Good Taste iii. As faith can move mountains, so nothing was impossible to Holy Church.

1948 Home Book of Proverbs (rev. ed.) 745 Faith will move mountains.

1980 With no Crying xix. Faith moves mountains, they say: and Hope lights up our darkness.

faith

fall

see (noun) hasty CLIMBERS have sudden falls; PRIDE goes before a fall; (verb) the APPLE never falls far from the tree; BETWEEN two stools one falls to the ground; the BIGGER they are, the harder they fall; when the BLIND lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch; the BREAD never falls but on its buttered side; a REED before the wind lives on, while mighty oaks do fall; if the SKY falls we shall catch larks; when THIEVES fall out, honest men come by their own; as a TREE falls, so shall it lie; UNITED we stand, divided we fall.

fame

see COMMON fame is seldom to blame.

FAMILIARITY breeds contempt

Cf. ST. AUGUSTINE Scala Paradisi 8 (Migne 40, col. 1001) vulgare proverbium est, quod nimia familiaritas parit contemptum, it is a common proverb, that too much familiarity breeds contempt.
Tale of Melibee 1. 1685 Men seyn that ‘over-greet hoomlynesse [familiarity] engendreth dispreisyng.’

Garden of Wisdom II. 4
Hys specyall frendes counsailled him to beware, least his ouermuche familiaritie myght breade him contempte.

Comment on Ruth 176 With base and sordid natures familiarity breeds contempt.

He knew He was Right II. lvi. Perhaps, if I heard Tennyson talking every day, I shouldn't read Tennyson. Familiarity does breed contempt.

Phoenix II (1968) 598 We say .. Familiarity breeds contempt …That is only partly true. It has taken some races of men thousands of years to become contemptuous of the moon.

Sense of Order ii. Familiarity, it is said, breeds contempt and Jones' treatment of the Chinese tradition is not very far from contempt.

Washington Times 18 Mar. A19 After three days of Senate hearings on Anthony Lake's nomination .. a variation of the old adage ‘familiarity breeds contempt’ seemed at work …

familiarity

The FAMILY that prays together stays together
The saying was invented by Al Scalpone, a professional commercial-writer, and was used as the slogan of the Roman Catholic Family Rosary Crusade by Father Patrick Peyton (P. Peyton, All for Her, 1967). The crusade began in 1942 and the slogan was apparently first broadcast on 6 Mar. 1947 during the radio programme Family Theater of the Air. The Crusade in Britain started in 1952, and the expression now has many (often humorous) variant forms.

St. Joseph Mag. (Oregon) Apr. 3 ‘More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of’, and ‘The family that prays together stays together.’ Such religious themes are hardly what one would expect to hear propounded over the air waves of our modern radio.

Catholic Digest June 98 ‘The family that prays together stays together.’ That is what Father Peyton has made it his business to remind you of every week.

Parents' Magazine Feb. 119 The family that plays together stays together.

Times 28 Nov. 8 One [Texas] hoarding said ..‘A family that prays together stays together.’

Spy's Wife xxi. The family that spies together, sties together. Old Cockney Russian proverb.

Washington Post 15 Mar. B3 First, Mother Teresa opined on the divorce of Princess Di and Prince Charles …‘The family that prays together stays together; and if you stay together, you will love one another with the same love with which God loves each one of us.’

Family

see also ACCIDENTS will happen (in the best-regulated families).

far
see BLUE are the hills that are far away; FAIR and softly goes far in a day.

fare
see GO further and fare worse.

FAR-FETCHED and dear-bought is good for ladies
Expensive or exotic articles are suitable for women.

c 1350 Douce MS 52 no. 7 Ferre ifet and dere i-bowght is goode for ladys.

1583 Philotimus 18 Pallas .. is .. hard to be found, but easy to be intreated, to be farre fetchte & deare boughte, but that we say is good for Ladies.

1616 Epicæne V. 163 When his cates [delicacies] are all in brought, Though there be none far fet, there will dear-bought, Be fit for ladies.

1738 Polite Conversation I. 60 But you know, farfetch'd and dear-bought is fit for Ladies. I warrant, this
cost your Father Two pence half-penny.

1876 Manchester Man III. x. ‘Where did these beautiful things come from?’ .. ‘India .. They are “far-fetched and dear-bought”, and so must be good for you, my lady.’

novelty : taste

fashion
see BETTER be out of the world than out of the fashion; when the GORSE is out of bloom, kissing’s out of fashion.

fast
see BAD news travels fast; a MONEYLESS man goes fast through the market.

fastest
see he TRAVELS fastest who travels alone.

fasting
see it's ill speaking between a FULL man and a fasting.

fat
see a GREEN Yule makes a fat churchyard; the OPERA isn't over till the fat lady sings.

Like FATHER, like son
The variant form like father, like daughter also occurs. Like MOTHER, like daughter evolved separately, although both it and this proverb were fixed in this form in the seventeenth century. Cf. L. qualis pater talis filius, as is the father, so is the son.

c 1340 Psalter (1884) 342 Ill sunnys folous ill fadirs.

1509 Ship of Fools 98 An olde proverbe hath longe agone be sayde That oft the sone in maners lyke wyll be Vnto the Father.

1616 Adages 149 Like father like sonne.

1709 English Proverbs 30 Like Father, like Son ...How many Sons inherit their Fathers Failings, as well as Estates?

1841 Ten Thousand a Year II. xiii. Two such bitter Tories .. for, like father, like son.

1936 South Riding v.i. Perhaps Lydia might do it once too often ...Like father, like daughter.

1977 Time 22 Aug. 41 Like father, like son—usually perhaps, but not in the Hunt family.

1983 ‘’ Appleby & Honeybath xii. And like son, like father, if one may so vary the old expression. Neither of them reading men.

children and parents ; similarity and dissimilarity

father
see also the CHILD is father of the man; EXPERIENCE is the father of wisdom; SUCCESS has many fathers, while failure is an orphan; it is a WISE child that knows its own father; the WISH is father to the thought.

A FAULT confessed is half redressed

1558 Interlude of Wealth & Health D2¥Yf thou haue doone amisse, and be sory therfore, Then helfe a mendes is made.

1592 Arden of Feversham H1¥A fault confessed is more than half amends, but men of such ill spirite as your selfe Worke crosses [arguments] and debates twixt man and wife.

1732 Gnomologia no. 1140 Confession of a Fault makes half amends.

1822 Nigel III. v. Come, my Lord, remember your promise to confess; and indeed, to confess is, in this case, in some slight sort to redress.

1855 Handbook of Proverbs 285 A fault confessed is half redressed.
concession; error

favour

see (noun) KISSING goes by favour; (verb) FORTUNE favours fools; FORTUNE favours the brave.

FEAR the Greeks bearing gifts
The saying is often used allusively. The original Latin version is also quoted: VIRGIL Aeneid II. 49 timeo Danaos, et dona ferentes, I fear the Greeks, even when bringing gifts (said by Laocoön as a warning to the Trojans not to admit the wooden horse); thus 1777 S. JOHNSON Letter 3 May (1952) II. 515 Tell Mrs. Boswell that I shall taste her marmalade cautiously at first. Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes. Beware, says the Italian proverb, of a reconciled enemy.

1873 Phineas Redux I. xxxiii. The right honourable gentleman had prided himself on his generosity as a Greek. He would remind the right honourable gentleman that presents from Greeks had ever been considered dangerous.

1929 Times 26 Oct. 13 Mr. Moses .. must now be reflecting on the wisdom of the advice to ‘fear the Greeks even when they bring gifts’.

1943 Case of Drowsy Mosquito vi. ‘It wasn’t a trap, I tell you.’ Nell Sims said .. ‘Fear the Greeks when they bear olive branches.’

1980 Assassination Run iv. Fear the Greeks bearing gifts was the maxim to be drummed into every novice in the department.

deception; giving and receiving

fear

see also DO right and fear no man; FOOLS rush in where angels fear to tread.

feast

see the COMPANY makes the feast; ENOUGH is as good as a feast.

feather

see BIRDS of a feather flock together; FINE feathers make fine birds.

FEBRUARY fill dyke, be it black or be it white
February is traditionally a month of heavy rain (black) or snow (white), but see quot. 1978.

1557 Husbandry D1 Feuerell fill dyke, doth good with his snowe.

1670 English Proverbs 40 February fill dike Be it black or be it white; But if it be white, It's the better to like.

1906 Country Diary of Edwardian Lady (1977) 13 February fill dyke Be it black or be it white.

1978 Calendar of Country Customs iii. Though February is notoriously associated with floods, as in the appellation ‘February filldyke’, it is statistically one of the driest months of the year.

calendar lore

If in FEBRUARY there be no rain, 'tis neither good for hay nor grain
An earlier expression of this idea is: 1670 J. RAY English Proverbs 40 All the moneths in the year curse a fair Februeer.

1706 Spanish & English Dict. s.v. Febrero, When it does not rain in February, there's neither good Grass nor good Rye.

1906 Country Diary of Edwardian Lady (1977) 13 If February bring no rain 'Tis neither good for grass nor grain.

1978 Calendar of Country Customs iii. One farming adage asserts that ‘If in February there be no rain Tis neither good for hay nor grain.’

weather lore

FEED a cold and starve a fever
Probably intended as two separate admonitions, but the alternative interpretation is explained in quot.

1939. Early medical advice is represented by: 1574 J. WITHALS Dict. 66 Fasting is a great remedie in feuers.

1852 Polonius p. ix. ‘Stuff a cold and starve a fever,’ has been grievously misconstrued, so as to bring on the fever it was meant to prevent.

1867 ‘” Celebrated Jumping Frog 69 It was policy to ‘feed a cold and starve a fever’.

1910 Clayhanger I. xvii. Edwin's cold was now fully developed; and Maggie had told him to feed it.

1939 Kitty Foyle xxxi. I said I better go downstairs and eat a square meal, ‘feed a cold and starve a fever.’.. ‘You misunderstand that.’ he says. ‘It means if you feed a cold you'll have to starve a fever later.’

1985 Beer & Skittles viii. He hasn't eaten anything all day, and Grandmother always says, ‘Feed a cold and starve a fever.’

1997 Washington Times 19 Nov. A8 ‘Forget about feeding a cold and starving a fever,’ Dr. Edelman said, adding there is no medical reason for diet changes.

—health

—feel

see a MAN is as old as he feels, and a woman as old as she looks; PRIDE feels no pain.

—feet

see the CAT would eat fish, but would not wet her feet; also FOOT.

—fell

see LITTLE strokes fell great oaks.

—fellow

see STONE-dead hath not fellow.

The FEMALE of the species is more deadly than the male.
The phrase the female of the species is often used with allusion to the proverb.

1911 in Morning Post 20 Oct. 7 The she-bear thus accosted rends the peasant tooth and nail, For the female of the species is more deadly than the male.

1922 Clicking of Cuthbert ix. The Bingley-Perkins combination, owing to some inspired work by the female of the species, managed to keep their lead.

1979 Guardian 28 Apr. 12 We know phrases about the female of the species being more deadly than the male, but the suffragettes .. seemed to have gone into .. abeyance.

—women

—fence

see GOOD fences make good neighbours; the GRASS is always greener on the other side of the fence.

—fetch

see a DOG that will fetch a bone will carry a bone.

—fever

see FEED a cold and starve a fever.

—few

see MANY are called but few are chosen; you WIN a few, you lose a few.

—fiction

see FACT is stranger than fiction; TRUTH is stranger than fiction.

—fiddle

see there's many a GOOD tune played on an old fiddle.

—fiddler

see they that DANCE must pay the fiddler.
FIELDS have eyes, and woods have ears
The urban equivalent is WALLS have ears.

□ 1225 in Englische Studien (1902) XXXI. 8 Veld haued hege [eye], and wude haued heare—Campus habet lumen et habet nemus auris acumen.

□ c 1386 Knight's Tale 1. 1522 But sooth is seyd, go sithe many yeres, That ‘feeld hath eyen and the wode hath eres.’

1640 Dodona's Grove A4 Hedges have eares, the rurall Proverb sayes.
1738 Polite Conversation III. 199 ‘O, Miss; 'tis nothing what we say among ourselves.’ .. ‘Ay Madam; but they say Hedges have Eyes, and Walls have Ears.’
1905 Starvecrow Farm xxviii. Heedful of the old saying, that fields have eyes and woods have ears, she looked carefully round her before she laid her hand on the gate.

\textbf{eavesdroppers}

\textbf{FIGHT fire with fire}
An injunction to counter like with like. Cf. early 14th-cent. Fr. \textit{lung feu doit estaindre lautre}, one fire must put out another; 1608 SHAKESPEARE Coriolanus IV. vii. 54 One fire drives out one fire; one nail, one nail.

□ 1846 Redskins III. i. If ‘Fire will fight fire’, ‘Indian’ ought to be a match for ‘Injin’ any day.
1869 Struggles & Triumphs xl. I write to ask what your intentions are ...Do you intend to fight fire with fire?
1980 Cut-out ix. ‘You think the other Palestinians have hired some heavies as well?’ ‘Why not? Fight fire with fire.’

\textbf{similarity and dissimilarity ; ways and means}
\textbf{fight}
see also COUNCILS of war never fight; while TWO dogs are fighting for a bone, a third runs away with it.

\textbf{He who FIGHTS and runs away, may live to fight another day}
The phrase to \textit{live to fight another day} is also used allusively. Cf. MENANDER Sent. 56 (Jaekel) \textit{ὁ δὲ ὁ τρίτος ὁ πετῶν χοδαίος, a man who flees will fight again.} The present form of the saying has superseded a pithy Middle English version: \textbf{a 1250 Owl & Nightingale (1960) 1.176 ‘Wel fight that wel flight,’ seth the wise.}

□ 1542 Erasmus' Apophthegms II. 335V \textit{That same manne, that renneth awaye, Maye again fight, an other daye.}
1678 Hudibras III. iii. For, those that fly, may fight againe, Which he can never do that's slain.
1747 Complete Hist. Rebellion 61 The Dragoons .. thought proper .. a sudden Retreat; as knowing that, He that fights and runs away, May turn and fight another Day; But he that is in Battle slain, Will never rise to fight again.
1853 Stray Yankee i. I beat an immediate retreat .. having always had implicit faith in the old proverb touching ‘fighting and running away’, in the hope of ‘living to fight another day.’
1876 Sparks & Cinders 5 \textit{For be it known he kept in view That ancient adage, trite but true, That ‘He who fights and runs away, May live to fight another day.’}
1981 Daily Telegraph 10 June 2 (caption) \textit{He who fights and runs away .. lives to fight another day!}

\textbf{discretion ; ways and means}

\textbf{fill}
see FEBRUARY fill dyke, be it black or be it white; WORK expands so as to fill the time available.
find see the DEVIL finds work for idle hands to do; those who HIDE can find; LOVE will find a way; SAFE bind, safe find; SCRATCH a Russian and you find a Tartar; SEEK and ye shall find; it is easy to find a STICK to beat a dog.

FINDERS keepers (losers weepers)
A colloquial variant of the succeeding proverb.

1825 Glossary of North Country Words 89 No halfers—findee keepee, lossee seekee.
1856 Never too Late III. xiii. We have a proverb—‘Losers seekers finders keepers.’
1874 Circuit Rider XV. If I could find the right owner of this money, I'd give it to him; but I take it he's buried ... ‘Finders, keepers,’ you know.
1869 Daily Express 17 Mar. 9 Where I come from it's finders keepers, losers weepers.
1985 Ratings are Murder xviii. Besides, someone else may have found the money before you got there. Finders, keepers.

FINDINGS keepings
See also the preceding proverb. Cf. PLAUTUS Trinummus 1.63 habeas ut nanctu's, he may keep that finds. The principle was current in England before the present formulation; 1595 A. COOKE Country Errors in Harley MS 5247 108V That a man finds is his own, and he may keep it.

1863 Discovery of Source of Nile V. The scoundrels said, ‘Findings are keepings, by the laws of our country; and as we found your cows, so we will keep them.’
1904 Daily Chronicle 27 Sept. 1 Harsh sentences of imprisonment for ‘findings-keepings’ offences.
1963 Sense of Reality 38 ‘I found them in the passage.’ .. ‘Finding's [i.e. the action or fact of finding, rather than the objects found, as in earlier examples] not keeping here,’ he said, ‘whatever it may be up there.’

FINE feathers make fine birds
Beautiful clothes confer beauty on the wearer. Cf. early 16th-cent. Fr. les belles plumes font les beaux oiseaux. Identified as a Gascon saying by 1583 J. SPONDANUS in tr. Odyssey VI. 81 apud meos Vascones .. hac parœmia ..: speciosae plumae avem speciosam constituunt, this is a proverb amongst my fellow Gascons: beautiful feathers make a beautiful bird.

1592 French Alphabet II. 29 The faire feathers, makes a faire foule.
1658 Mysteries of Love & Eloquence 162 Fine feathers make fine birds. As you may see in Hide Park.
1858 Ask Mamma X. Mrs. Joe .. essayed to pick her to pieces, intimating that she was much indebted to her dress—that fine feathers made fine birds.
1952 Man on Donkey I. 69 ‘Well, if fine feathers'll make a fine bird—’ he said, and brushed her cheek with the back of his hand.
1968 Life on Tiger Mountain xiv. I feel,.. if, indeed, ‘fine feathers make a fine bird’, then I would just as soon not be that peculiar kind of fine bird.

FINE words butter no parsnips
Nothing is ever achieved by fine words alone. Parsnips are traditionally garnished with butter before serving.

1639 Parœmiologia Anglo-Latina 169 Faire words butter no parsnips.
1692 Fables of Aesop cccxl. Relations, Friendships, are but Empty Names of Things, and Words Butter No Parsnips.
1763 Citizen I. ii. What becomes of his Greek and Latin now? Fine words butter no parsnips.
1848 Vanity Fair xix. Who .. said that ‘fine words butter no parsnips’? Half the parsnips of society are served and rendered palatable with no other sauce.

1947 ‘’ Rose & Yew Tree xviii. Fine words butter no parsnips. Who will help me to reopen my shop? Who will build me a house?

1978 Men of Dunwich xii. Fine words, they say, butter no parsnips. They certainly build no sea-walls.

1997 Washington Post 27 Jan. C12 (Peanuts comic strip) [Charlie Brown:] ‘Yes, ma’am, he’s a very smart dog. Thank you for saying so.’ [Snoopy:] ‘Fine words butter no parsnips.’

hypocrisy ; words and deeds

fine

see also RAIN before seven, fine before eleven.

FINGERS were made before forks

Commonly used as a polite excuse for eating with one's hands at table.

1567 Loseley MSS (1836) 212 As God made hands before knives, So God send a good lot to the cutler's wives.

1738 Polite Conversation II. 136 (Colonel takes them [some fritters] out with his Hand.) Col. Here, Miss, they say, Fingers were made before Forks, and Hands before Knives.

1857 Barchester Towers II. iii. Miss Thorne .. was always glad to revert to anything and .. would doubtless in time have reflected that fingers were made before forks, and have reverted accordingly.

1934 Why didn't They ask Evans? xxviii. As they truly used to say to me in my youth .. fingers were made before forks—and teeth were used before fingers.

1983 Heroes no More 37 ‘This is ridiculous. However, fingers were made before forks.’ She lifted one of the king prawns from its resting place and began to nibble at it.

excuses ; manners

fingers

see also the DEVIL makes his Christmas pies of lawyers' tongues and clerks' fingers.

FIRE is a good servant but a bad master

1615 Englands Sickness 20 The world, like fire, may be a good servant, will bee an ill Master.

1738 Polite Conversation II. 183 Why, Fire and Water are good Servants, but they are very bad Masters.

1808 Works (1850–6) VI. 533 Like fire, they [i.e. the aristocracy] are good servants, but all-consuming masters.

1948 Northern Farm xxxvi. ‘Fire is a good servant but a bad master.’ So runs the proverb.

1973 Murder Remote XX. Is not whisky the wonderful thing? But like fire, like fire—a good servant but a bad master.

ways and means

fire

see also a BURNT child dreads the fire; DIRTY water will quench fire; FIGHT fire with fire; you should KNOW a man seven years before you stir his fire; if you PLAY with fire you get burnt; no SMOKE without fire; THREE removals are as bad as a fire.

FIRST catch your hare

Commonly thought to originate in the recipe for hare soup in Mrs Glasse's Art of Cookery (1747) or in Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management (1851), but not found there (see quot. 1896). Similar in sentiment to CATCHING'S before hanging. Cf. c 1300 BRACTON De Legibus Angliae IV. xxi. vulgariter dicitur, quod primo opportet cervum capere, & postea cum captus fuerit illum excoriare, it is commonly said that one must first catch the deer, and afterwards, when he has been caught, skin him.
How to dress a dolphin, first catch a dolphin.

‘To seize wherever I should light upon him—’ ‘First catch your hare!’ exclaimed his Royal Highness.

The familiar words, ‘First catch your hare,’ were never to be found in Mrs. Glasse's famous volume. What she really said was, ‘Take your hare when it is cased [skinned].’

I haven’t begun yet. ‘First catch your hare.’

Sloan took his reply straight from the pages of an early cookery book … ‘First, catch your hare.’

First come, first served
Cf. late 13th-cent. Fr. qui ainçois vient au molin ainçois doit moldre, he who comes first to the mill may grind first.

Whoso that first to mille comth, first grynt.

Ye haue a parciall lawe in making of tachments [attachments, i.e. judicial seizure of one's person or goods (obsolete)], first come first serued.

He found Sexton .. making nine graues .. and who so dyes next, first comes, first seru’d.

The traveller who comes first shall be first served.

All must .. take their place as soldiers should, upon the principle of, first come, first served.

In London they formed polite queues .. a nice orderly version of first come, first served.

any other Americans feel their jobs give them the privilege of suspending the democratic ideal of ‘first come, first served.’

The FIRST duty of a soldier is obedience
The last quotation presents a variation of the proverb.

‘What do the wiseacres at head-quarters mean, in sending a detachment there?’ ‘I suppose they scarcely know themselves. But obedience—We all know the adage.’

‘The first duty of a soldier is obedience,’ he answered in great glee.

She had been taught all her life that the first duty of a woman is to obey.

Primacy is popularly expressed by the statement that ‘first impressions are lasting’.

He ought to look neat and tidy …It's half the battle .. making a good first impression.

On the FIRST of March, the crows begin to search

On the first of March, the crows begin to search. Crows are
supposed to begin pairing on this day.

1847 Popular Rhymes of Scotland (ed. 2) 165 On the first of March, The crows begin to search; By the first o'April, They are sitting still.

1906 Country Diary of Edwardian Lady (1977) 132 By the 1. st of March the crows begin to search, By the 1. st of April they are sitting still, By the 1. st of May they are flown away, Creeping greedy back again With October wind and rain.

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**calendar lore**

It is the FIRST step that is difficult

The proverb has various forms. The story to which the French saying alludes is referred to in quot. 1979. Cf. Fr. *ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte*, it is only the first step that costs.

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1616 Dict. (rev.ed.) 576 The first step is as good as halfe ouer.

1876 Wi-Ne-Ma & her People iv. He had fortified himself against the charms of the Indian maiden, as he thought, but consented to visit her. Ah! my man, have you not learned that when the first step is taken the next follows easily.

1979 Backfire is Hostile xi. St. Denis was executed ... Afterwards he picked up his head and walked for six miles ... The wise man said, ‘The distance .. is not important. It was the first step that was difficult.’

1991 “ Only Game vii. 193 What is it they said about that Frenchman who walked three miles after his head had been chopped off? It's the first step that counts.

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**beginnings and endings**

FIRST things first

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1894 (title) First things first: addresses to young men.

1920 Yorkshire Suburb 136 The dear lady was .. incapable .. of putting first things first.

1979 “ Penny Murders iv. They dropped the talking; first things first, as Kate always felt about a pleasant meal.

1990 Washington Deceased xxi. 176 ‘We need Billikin’s cooperation in the long run, but we need Steven’s cooperation in the next twelve hours. The operative principle is first things first.’

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**orderliness**

There is always a FIRST time

Also, there's a first time for everything.

1792 Papers (1961– ) XII. 504 But there is always ‘a first time.’

1929 Little Caesar III. vii. ‘I ain't got nothing to spill ...Did I ever do any spilling?’ ‘There's a first time for everything.’

1950 Kill 'em with Kindness viii. First time for everything. In Ronnie's case, first and last.

1987 “ Pel among Pueblos xvi. ‘He has no record.’ ‘Doesn't mean a thing. There's always a first time.’

1995 Washington Post 17 Aug. A19 As I write, it is still possible that some of the actions threatened .. may actually be taken. Who knows? There's a first time for everything.

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**beginnings and endings**

first

see also every DOG is allowed one bite; whom the GODS would destroy, they first make mad; SELF-preservation is the first law of nature; if at first you don't SUCCEED, try, try, try again; THINK first and speak afterwards; he that will THRIVE must first ask his wife.

**The FISH always stinks from the head downwards**

The freshness of a dead fish can be judged from the condition of its head. Thus, when the responsible part
(as the leaders of a country, etc.) is rotten, the rest will soon follow. Gr. ἐνίαρχον, a fish begins to stink from the head.

1581 tr. S. Guazzo's Civil Conversation III. 51 If the proverbe be true,.. that a fishe beginneth first to smell at the head,.. the faultes of our servantes will be layed vpon vs.

1611 Dict. French & English s.v. Teste, Fish ever begins to taint at the head; the first thing that's deprau'd in man's his wit.

1580 Euphues & his England II. 81 As we say in Athens, fishe and gestes in three dayes are stale.

1648 Hesperides 169 Two dayes y'ave larded here; a third yee know, Makes guests and fish smell strong; pray go.

1736 Poor Richard's Almanack (Jan.) Fish and visitors smell in three days.

1869 Notes & Queries 4th Ser. IV. 272 ‘See that you wear not out your welcome.'This is an elegant rendering of the vulgar saying that ‘Fish and company stink in three days.’

1985 Down East Murders iv. How long should she stay? She remembered the universal truth that fish and guests smell after three days.

rulers and ruled

FISH and guests stink after three days
Cf. PLAUTUS Miles Gloriosus 1.741 nam hospes nullus tam in amici hospitium devorti potest, quin, ubi triduom continuom fuerit, iam odiosus siet, no host can be hospitable enough to prevent a friend who has descended on him from becoming tiresome after three days.

1615 Letter 3 Dec. in M. Gilbert Winston S. Churchill (1972) III. Compan. II. 1309 The guilt of criminality attaches to those responsible. ‘Well,’ said the Aga Khan, ‘fish goes rotten by the head.’

1581 Sunday Telegraph 3 May 16 ‘The fish’, as the saying goes, ‘always stinks from the head downwards.’ Last Sunday we deplored Mr. Michael Foot's liking for the street politics of marches and ‘demos’. Since then, a hundred Labour MPs .. have followed their leader's example.

1997 Washington Times: Commentary 8 Dec. A2 I am sympathetic to this thesis …it echoes my mother's herring-bred wisdom, es shtink funem kop, nisht funem ek: the stench emanates from the head, not from the tail.

hospitality

There are as good FISH in the sea as ever came out of it
Now often used as a consolation to rejected lovers: ‘there are plenty more fish in the sea’.

1573 Letter-Book (1884) 126 In the mayne sea theres good stoare of fishe, And in delicate gardens .. Theres always greate varietye of desirable flowers.

1816 Headlong Hall xiv. There never was a fish taken out of the sea, but left another as good behind.

1822 Nigel III. x. Ye need not sigh sae deeply … There are as gude fish in the sea as ever came out of it.

1944 Razor's Edge iii. I'm a philosopher and I know there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out. I don’t blame her. You’re young. I've been young too.

1962 Mirror Crack'd xiv. Where women are concerned, there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it.

1987 Little Death Music xxvii. ‘Cheer up,’ she said. ‘There are plenty more fish in the sea.’

love, blighted

All is FISH that comes to the net
Everything can be used to advantage. The is frequently replaced by a possessive pronoun or phrase. Similar in form and sense to all is GRIST that comes to the mill.

1520 in Ballads from MSS (1868–72) I. 95 Alle ys ffysshe that commyth to the nett.
Dialogue against Fever 70 Takyng vp commoditie [opportunity], refusyng nothyng: all is fishe that commeth to the nette.

What was his fathers could not escape his fingers, all was fish that came to his net.

I be a jolly fisherman, I takes what I can get, Still going on 'my betters’ plan, all's fish that comes to net.

‘All's fish that comes to your net, I suppose?’ ‘Certainly,’ said Mr. Brogley. ‘But sprats an't whales, you know.’

I don't know that she cares for one more than the other …All's fish that comes to her net at present.

fish
see also BIG fish eat little fish; the CAT would eat fish, but would not wet her feet; LITTLE fish are sweet.

fish-guts
see KEEP your own fish-guts for your own sea-maws.

fit
see if the CAP fits, wear it; if the SHOE fits, wear it.

fix
see if it ain't BROKE, don't fix it.

flag
see TRADE follows the flag.

flattery
see Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

flea
see BIG fleas have little fleas upon their backs to bite them; if you LIE down with dogs, you will get up with fleas; NOTHING should be done in haste but gripping a flea.

flesh
see what's BRED in the bone will come out in the flesh.

flew
see a BIRD never flew on one wing.

flight
see BLESSINGS brighten as they take their flight.

flock
see BIRDS of a feather flock together.

flower
see APRIL showers bring forth May flowers.

fly
see (noun) EAGLES don't catch flies; HONEY catches more flies than vinegar; a SHUT mouth catches no flies; (verb) TIME flies; also FLEW.

flying
see it is good to make a BRIDGE of gold to a flying enemy.

folk
see DIFFERENT strokes for different folks; there's NOWT so queer as folk; YOUNG folks think old folks to be fools, but old folks know young folks to be fools.
follow
see TRADE follows the flag.

He that FOLLOWES freets, freets will follow him
A Scottish proverb. He that looks for portents of the future will find himself dogged by them. Freets are omens.

1700 in Scottish Tragic Ballads (1781) I. 47 Wha luik to freets, my master deir, Freits will ay follow them.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 128 He that follows Freets, Freets will follow him. He that notices superstitious Observations (such as spilling of Salt) .. it will fall to him accordingly.

1804 in Lockhart Life of Scott (1837) II. i. He answered, smiling, ‘Freits (omens) follow those who look to them’ … Scott never saw him again.

1914 Times Literary Supplement 9 Apr. 178 The Kings of Scots have always been beset by omens, and .. to him who follows freits, freits follow.

future ; omens

folly
see where IGNORANCE is bliss, ’tis folly to be wise.

fonder
see ABSENCE makes the heart grow fonder.

A FOOL and his money are soon parted

1573 Husbandry (rev. ed.) ix. A foole and his money be soone at debate: which after with sorow repents him too late.

1587 Defence of Government in Church of England xv. 1294 A foole and his money is soone parted.

1616 Adages 166 A foole, and his money are soone parted.

1771 Humphry Clinker I. 174 She tossed her nose in distain, saying, she supposed her brother had taken him into favour ..: that a fool and his money were soon parted.

1816 Antiquary III. x. ‘It’s a capital piece; it’s a Joe Manton, that cost forty guineas.’ ‘A fool and his money is soon parted, nephew.’

1945 Lark Rise xi. Copperplate maxims: ‘A fool and his money are soon parted’; ‘Waste not, Want not’.. and so on.

1981 Patriarch xx. I can see now I was a fool, perhaps even a greedy fool, and a fool and his money are soon parted.

1995 Washington Times 27 Jan. A20 If the ultimate capitalistic maxim is, ‘A fool and his money are soon parted,’ nowhere is there more evidence than this case.

money ; stupidity

A FOOL at forty is a fool indeed

Cf. 1557 R. EDGEWORTH Sermons 301 When he [Rehoboam] begonne hys raigne he was one and fortye yeares of age … And he that hath not learned some experience or practice and trade of the world by that age will never be wise.

1725 Universal Passion II. 16 Be wise with speed; A fool at forty is a fool indeed.

1751 Visions in Verses 13 He who at fifty is a fool, Is far too stubborn grown for school.

1908 New York Idea III. 112 I shall come or not [to your wedding] as I see fit. And let me add, my dear brother, that a fool at forty is a fool indeed.

1982 Destination Biafra i. ‘What is it they say about a fool at forty?’ ‘I don't think you'll be a fool forever, sir.’

middle age ; stupidity
There's no FOOL like an old fool

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs II. ii. F4V But there is no foole to the olde foole, folke saie.
1721 Scottish Proverbs 256 No fool to an old Fool. Spoken when Men of advanc'd Age behave themselves, or talk youthfully, or wantonly.
1732 Gnomologia no. 3570 No Fool like the old Fool.
1814 Waverley III. xv. And troth he might hae ta'en warning, but there's nae fule like an ould fule.
1910 Rewards & Fairies 257 ‘There are those who have years without knowledge.’ ‘Right,’ said Puck. ‘No fool like an old fool.’
1984 Thin Woman 240 I tried to look after you, but it's true there is no fool like an old fool.
1995 Deadlocked xiii. 147 There's no fool like an old fool, and I reckon you'll be joining him on the nut farm soon, Sidney.

old age ; stupidity
A FOOL may give a wise man counsel

a 1350 Ywain & Gawain (EETS) 1.1477 Bot yet a fole that litel kan [knows], May wele cowssail another man.
1641 Scottish Proverbs (STS) no. 84 A Fool may give a wyse man a counsell.
1721 Scottish Proverbs 25 A Fool may give a wise Man counsel by a time. An Apology of those who offer their Advice to them, who may be supposed to excel them in Parts and Sense.
1818 Heart of Midlothian IV. viii. If a fule may gie a wise man a counsel, I wad hae him think twice or [before] he mells [meddles] wi' Knockdunder.
1942 Man who changed Plea xvii. Aren't we all fools .. in one or two things?.. Even a fool, though, can sometimes give good advice.

advice ; fools
FOOL me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me

1980 Forbes 17 Mar. 69 The important thing in dealing with the Japanese is not to believe everything you hear. Or, as the saying goes: Fool me once shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.
1997 Washington Times 15 May A19 You know the saying ‘Fool me once shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me’?..You might even need to add a third part to the saying, one that goes something like, ‘Fool me thirteen times, shame on everybody.’
deception
fool
see also CHILDREN and fools tell the truth; FORTUNE favours fools; a man who is his own LAWYER has a fool for his client; MORE people know Tom Fool than Tom Fool knows; SIX hours' sleep for a man, seven for a woman, and eight for a fool; YOUNG folks think old folks to be fools, but old folks know young folks to be fools; also FOOLS.

foolish
see PENNY wise and pound foolish.

FOOLS and bairns should never see half-done work
They may mistakenly judge the quality of the finished article from its awkwardness while it is being produced.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 108 Fools should not see half done Work. Many fine Pieces of Work will look .. aukward when it is a doing.
1818 Letter Dec. (1933) V. 265 ‘Bairns and fools’. according to our old canny proverb should never see
half done work.

1902 Anna of Five Towns viii. No stage of the manufacture was incredible by itself, but the result was incredible .. authenticating the adage that fools and children should never see anything till it is done.

1913 Highways & Byways in Border ix. To the lay eye improvement is yet barely perceptible. ‘Fools and bairns’, however, they tell us, ‘should never see half-done work.’

1934 Death on Set ii. He has never really liked anybody seeing the roughs except the technical staff. Said it gave the players ideas they were better without. ‘Fools and children, and unfinished work,’ you know.

FOOLS ask questions that wise men cannot answer

1666 Italian Proverbs 249 One fool may ask more than seven wise men can answer.

1738 Polite Conversation II. 156 ‘Miss, can you tell which is the white Goose?’.. ‘They say, a Fool will ask more Questions than the wisest body can answer.’

1821 Pirate II. v. Bryce Snaelsfoot is a cautious man … He knows a fool may ask more questions than a wise man cares to answer.

1871 Life of J. S. Batkins liv. Bean appeared always to be fond of Amanda …I asked him one day …He looked at me, and said, ‘Batkins, fools ask questions that wise men cannot answer.’

FOOLS build houses and wise men live in them

The terser form of this saying—fools build and wise men buy—can be applied to property other than houses (see quot. 1997).

1670 English Proverbs 91 Fools build houses, and wise men buy them.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 110 Fools Big [build] Houses and wise Men buy them. I knew a Gentleman buy 2000 l. worth of Land, build a House upon it, and sell both House and Land to pay the Expences of his building.

1875 Proverbial Folk-Lore 43 Fools build houses, and wise men live in them is another proverb on this subject; it is partly true.

1911 Autobiography xix. The adage says that fools build houses for other men to live in. Certainly the men who build the big house of Empire for England usually get the attic .. for their own lodgment.

1933 Memories of a Victorian I. ii. He gave £3,500 for it in 1872 and spent £8,000 on it, and we sold it in 1909 for £3,100…‘Fools build houses and wise men live in them,’ my mother used to say.

1934 Murder at Eclipse III. ii. 86 On his retirement, the first baron did not build himself a palace such as he could well have afforded. Perhaps he remembered the old adage that ‘fools build and wise men buy.’

1997 Country Life 14 Aug. 28 Arthur Ransome, self-mocking, said of boating folk: ‘Fools build and wise men buy.’ There is a similar put-down of people who breed their own horses ...

FOOLS for luck

The construction is apparent from quot. 1834. FORTUNE favours fools expresses the same idea. Quot. 1981 appears to be a garbled version of this saying. Cf. 1631 JONSON Bartholomew Fair II.ii. Bring him a sixe penny bottle of Ale; they say, a foole handsell [gift] is lucky.

1834 Narrative of Life of David Crockett xiii. The old saying—‘A fool for luck, and a poor man for children.’

1854 Life of Country Merchant xix. They attribute your good fortune to the old hackneyed adage, ‘A fool for luck.’

1907 Phoenix II (1968) 6 ‘You'll make our fortunes.’ ‘What!’ he exclaimed, ‘by making a fool of myself? They say fools for luck. What fools wise folks must be.’
1927 Mosaic Earring xviii. I don't know how you fell on it that you were the spittin' image of this young millionaire, a fool for luck, maybe.
1981 Bikini Red North xi. All fools are lucky; isn't that the adage?

**fools ; luck**

**FOOLS rush in where angels fear to tread**

□1711 Essay on Criticism l. 625 No Place so Sacred from such Fops is barr'd, Nor is Paul's Church more safe than Paul's Church-yard: Nay, fly to Altars; there they'll talk you dead; For Fools rush in where Angels fear to tread.

1858 Iredell's Life & Correspondence II. 277 Rash presumption illustrates the line, ‘Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.’

1922 Ulysses 649 Prying into his private affairs on the fools step in where angels principle.

1943 Do not Disturb ii. The folly of the officious is proverbial: don't rush in where angels fear to tread.

1975 “ Slight Mourning xv. ‘The deceased was of—er—a forceful personality. Not over-sensitive, either, from all accounts.’ ‘Ah, I see. Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.’

**fools ; ignorance**

foot

see it is not SPRING until you can plant your foot upon twelve daisies; one WHITE foot, buy him; also FEET.

forbear

see BEAR and forbear.

foretold

see LONG foretold, long last.

FOREWARNED is forarmed

Cf. L. praemonitus, praemunitus, forewarned, forarmed.

□c 1425 Treatises of Fistula (EETS) 22 He that is warned afore is noght bygiled.

c 1530 Wit & Science l. 1093 Once warnd, half armd folk say.

1587 Card of Fancy IV. 23 I giue thee this Ring of golde, wherin is written .. Praemonitus, Premunitus.. inferring this sense, that hee which is forewarned by friendlie counsoule of imminent daungers, is forarmed against all future mishappe.

a 1661 Worthies (Devon) 272 Let all ships passing thereby be fore-armed because forewarned thereof.

1885 “ Shadowed to Europe xxv. ‘Forewarned is forarmed,’ he thought, as he complimented himself upon his success in baffling the attempt to ensnare him.

1978 Throwback vi. I have summoned Lockhart to be present next week. .. Forewarned is forarmed as the old saying is.

1996 Body in Bog ii. 39 He was reaching in his pocket—for his cellular phone, no doubt. Joey and Millicent were cut from the same cloth: Forewarned is forarmed.

**foresight and hindsight ; prudence**

forget

see a BELLOWING cow soon forgets her calf.

forgive

see to ERR is human (to forgive divine); to KNOW all is to forgive all.

fork

see FINGERS were made before forks.

FORTUNE favours fools
Cf. L. fortuna favet fatuis, fortune favours fools.

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs II. vi. 11 'They saie as ofte, god sendeth fortune to fooles.'
1563 Eclogues E5 But Fortune favours Fooles as old men saye And lets them lyue And take the wyse awaye.
1738 Fables 2nd Ser. II. xii. ‘Tis a gross error, held in schools, That Fortune always favours fools.’
1922 Red Redmaynes xviii. Thus he became exceedingly useful as time passed; yet fortune favours fools and his very stupidity served him well at the end.
1960 Great Fortune I. vi. Fortune favours fools ... We were forced to tarry while he slumbered.

FOOTNOTE favours the brave
Cf. ENNIUS Annals 257 (Vahlen) fortibus est fortuna viris data, fortune is given to the bold; VIRGIL Aeneid x. 284 audentes fortuna iuvat, fortune aids the bold.

1385 Troilus & Crisseyde IV. 600 Thenk ek Fortune, as wel thiselves woost, Helpeth hardy man to his enprise.
1390 Confessio Amantis VII. 4902 And seith, 'Fortune unto the bolde Is favorable forto helpe.'
1625 Prophetess IV. vi. He is the scorn of Fortune: but you'll say, That she forsook him for his want of courage, But never leaves the bold.
1724 Works (1953) II. 288 Fortune aye favours the active and bauld.
1752 in Papers (1939) IX. 86 Make no doubt but Fortune will favour the brave.
1885 Dr. Thorne II. vii. Fortune, who ever favours the brave, specially favoured Frank Gresham.
1970 Not here, not Now II.ii. 'May I see you home?' .. 'Fortune favours the brave, they say.'

FOUR eyes see more than two
Two people are more observant than one alone. TWO heads are better than one expresses a similar idea.
L. plus vident oculi, quam oculus, eyes see more than one eye.
1591 True Hist. Civil Wars France 37 Two eyes doo see more then one.
1592 French Alphabet II. 45 Four eyes can see more then two.
1642 Holy State IV. V. Matters of inferiour consequence he will communicate to a fast friend, and crave his advice; for two eyes see more than one.
1898 Auld Lang Syne 80 But who has ever examined any translation from any language, without finding signs of .. carelessness or ignorance? Four eyes see more than two.
1943 No Match for Murder v. It might be worth my while to string along ...Four eyes are better than two.
1962 Day She Died vii. What he wanted was a look at the cars the variegated crowd of people had arrived in. Four eyes were better than two.

FOOTNOTE observance; observation
four
see also there goes more to MARRIAGE than four bare legs in a bed.

www.EnglishPro.ir
There's no such thing as a FREE lunch
Originally a colloquial axiom in US economics, though now in general use. The proverb implies that you cannot get something for nothing.

1967 Moon is Harsh Mistress xi. ‘Oh, “tanstafl.” Means “There ain’t no such thing as a free lunch.” And isn’t,’ I added, pointing to a FREE LUNCH sign across the room, ‘or these drinks would cost half as much.’

1969 Newsweek 29 Dec. 52 I was taught .. the first and only law of economics: ‘There is no such thing as a free lunch.’

1971 New Yorker 25 Sept. 76 There is no such thing as a free lunch ...The idea has proved so illuminating for environmental problems that I am borrowing it from its original source, economics.

1979 New York Times Mag. 9 Sept. 16 A theory which became popular in the late 1970's .. held that big effects could be produced by small actions. For example, a tax cut of $1 billion would raise the national income by $5 billion, increase the Government revenue by $2 billion, reduce unemployment and restrain inflation. This theorem was discovered written on the back of a napkin in a Mac-Donald's restaurant. That gave rise to the axiom ‘There ain't no such thing as a free lunch, but there is a cheap one.’

1979 Obsessions xi. There's no such thing as a free lunch. So, in return for your help, what do you ask?

1996 Washington Times 14 Aug. A18 Europeans are now learning some hard facts of life about socialized medicine: There's no such thing as a free lunch.

bribery and corruption; reciprocity
free
see also the BEST things in life are free; THOUGHT is free.
frei (omen):
see he that FOLLOWS freits, freits will follow him.
Frenchman
see one ENGLISHMAN can beat three Frenchmen.
fresh
see don't THROW out your dirty water until you get in fresh.
Friday
see Monday's CHILD is fair of face.

A FRIEND in need is a friend indeed

A friend in need is one who helps when one is in need or difficulty. Cf. EURIPIDES Hecuba 1. 1226 Ἐν τοῖς σκακωτοῖς σφάταστοι θελατοί, for in adversity good friends are most clearly seen; ENNIUS Scaenica 210 (Vahlen) amicus certus in re incerta cernitur, a sure friend is known in unsure times.

c 1035 Durham Proverbs (1956) 10 Æt thearfe man sceal freonda cunnian [friend shall be known in time of need].
a 1400 Titus & Vespasian (1905) 98 I shal the save When tyme cometh thou art in nede; Than ogh men frenshep to shewe in dede.
a 1449 Minor Poems (EETS) II. 755 Fulf weele is him that fyndethe a freonde cumene.

1678 English Proverbs (ed. 2) 142 A friend in need is a friend indeed.

1773 Spiritual Quixote II. VIII. xx. (heading) A Friend in Need is a Friend indeed.

1866 Griffith Gaunt III. xv. You came to my side when I was in trouble ... A friend in need is a friend indeed.

1935 Fish on Steeple iv. If they's one thing I do it's never lay down on my friends. I say a friend in need is a friend indeed.
1985 Wedding Treasure viii. He never felt quite right about calling up scripture—at least not in private. ‘Friend in need is a friend indeed,’ he added. That was better.

friend

see also the BEST of friends must part; LEND your money and lose your friend; SAVE us from our friends; SHORT reckonings make long friends.

frost

see so many MISTS in March, so many frosts in May.

When all FRUIT fails, welcome haws

Often used specifically of a person who takes of necessity an older or otherwise unsuitable lover.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 350 When all Fruit fa's welcome ha's ... Spoken when we take up with what's coarse, when the good is spent.

1914 Folk of Furry Farm vii. ‘Lame of a leg, and grey in the head!.. That's a fancy man for a girl to take!’ ‘Marg was none too young herself .. and when all fruit fails, welcome haws! She wanted someone.’

1958 Borstal Boy III. 266 So even the excommunicated will do, when it's not easy to get anyone else. When all fruit fails, welcome haws.

fruit

see also he that would EAT the fruit must climb the tree; SEPTEMBER blow soft, till the fruit's in the loft; STOLEN fruit is sweet; the TREE is known by its fruit.

FULL cup, steady hand

Used especially to caution against spoiling a comfortable or otherwise enviable situation by careless action.

1025 Durham Proverbs (1956) 15 Swa fulre fæt swa hit mann sceal fægror beran [the more full the cup, the more carefully must one carry it].

1325 Proverbs of Hending in Anglia (1881) IV. 293 When the coppe is follest, thenne ber hire feyrest.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 346 When the Cup's full carry it even. When you have arrived at Power and Wealth, take a care of Insolence, Pride, and Oppression.

1732 Gnomologia no. 122 A full Cup must be carried steadily.

1889 in Monthly Packet Christmas 46 Poor things! They were so happy—so open-hearted. I did long to caution them. ‘Full cup, steady hand.’

1903 Master's Questions xxi I would listen .. to this question .. whenever .. I am eagerly reaching out my hands to grasp what may satisfy an unlikely ambition. All hands are not steady enough to carry a full cup.

good fortune; prudence

It's ill speaking between a FULL man and a fasting

A hungry man is never on good terms with a well-fed man; in quot. 1824, used as an incitation to eat.

1641 Scottish Proverbs (STS) no. 1349 Thair is nothing betuix a bursten body and a hungered.

1824 Redgauntlet I. xi. Ye maun eat and drink, Steenie .. for we do little else here, and it's ill speaking between a fou man and a fasting.

1934 Free Fishers ii. It's ill speaking between a full man and a fasting, but two fasting men are worse at a crack.

hunger; quarrelsomeness

Out of the FULLNESS of the heart the mouth speaks

With allusion to MATTHEW xii. 34 (AV) Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.
Parson's Tale I. 626 After the habundance of the herte speketh the mouth ful ofte.

Fruits of Divine Meditation in Works (1751) II. 26 Out of the Abundance of the Heart the Mouth speaketh.

Framley Parsonage II. x. As out of the full head the mouth speaks, so is the full heart more prone to speak at such periods of confidence as these.

" Hand-Print Mystery ii. The murder .. had been in the background of her mind all the time. ‘Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh.’

speech and silence

One FUNERAL makes many

A similar idea to one WEDDING brings another. The thinking behind this saying is illustrated in the quot.

Perlycross I. vii. It has been said, and is true too often .. that one funeral makes many. A strong east wind .. whistled through the crowd of mourners.

Shadow on Downs V. iv. 137 The funeral went off very well .. I am glad we had such a fine day for it. Standing about bareheaded in driving rain .. always makes such an occasion rather trying, and there is a good deal of truth in the saying that one funeral brings others.

Forked Lightning xx. 132 Poured cats and dogs for my poor father's funeral, it did ... My poor mother took a fever and it carried her off in a fortnight. They say one funeral makes another ...

death

funeral

see also DREAM of a funeral and you hear of a marriage.

further

see GO further and fare worse.

fury

see HELL hath no fury like a woman scorned.

When the FURZE is in bloom, my love's in tune

A corollary of when the GORSE is out of bloom, kissing's out of fashion. Cf. c 1225 in Englische Studien (1902) XXXI. 5 Whanne bloweth [flowers] the brom, thanne wogeth [woos] the grom; Whanne bloweth the furs, thanne wogeth he wurs.

Poor Robin's Almanack Aug. B3V Dog-days are in he'll say's the reason Why kissing now is out of season: but Joan says furze [gorse] in bloom still, and she'll be kiss'd if she's her will.

Spectator 9 May 740 At almost any season of the year gorse can be found in ... flower ... When the furze is in bloom, my love's in tune.

love, prosperous

G

gain

see (noun) one man's LOSS is another man's gain; there's no great LOSS without some gain; NO pain, no gain; (verb) what you LOSE on the swings you gain on the roundabouts; NOTHING venture, nothing gain.

gallows
GARbage in, garbage out

Garbage is a colloquial term in data processing for ‘incorrect input’ which will, according to the proverb, inevitably produce faulty output. The acronymic form GIGO is also found.

1964 CIS Glossary of Automated Typesetting & Related Computer Terms (Composition Information Services, L.A.) 15 The relationship between input and output is sometimes—when input is incorrect—tersely noted by the expression ‘garbage in, garbage out.’

1966 Integrated Data Processing Systems v. Many data processing departments put their best operators on verifiers because they wish to avoid the effect of the GIGO principle (Garbage In—Garbage Out).

1979 Management Services in Government Nov. 198 There are two ways to make the best of their [typists’] skills ... The second reflected the old computer adage, ‘garbage in, garbage out’. Typists can get through their work more quickly when they are working from good clear source documents.

1987 Washington Times 10 Sept. F4 The computer rule, ‘garbage in, garbage out’ applies to the human mind just as much as it does to the computer.

1996 Washington Times 26 Feb. A19 This brings into play the old computer-industry dictum: Garbage In, Garbage Out.

error, action and consequence

Garment

see SILENCE is a woman's best garment.

gate

see a CREAKING door hangs longest; one man may STEAL a horse, while another may not look over a hedge.

gather

see a ROLLING stone gathers no moss.

gathered

see where the CARCASE is, there shall the eagles be gathered together.

goose

see on SAINT Thomas the Divine kill all turkeys, geese, and swine.

generation

see from CLOGS to clogs is only three generations; from SHIRTSLEEVES to shirtsleeves in three generations.

It takes three GENERATIONS to make a gentleman

Although apparently not expressed in this form before quot. 1823, the three-generation concept was current in the Renaissance period: e.g. 1598 J. KEPERS tr. A. Romei's Courtier's Academy 187 He may bee called absolutely noble, who shall have lost the memory of his ignobilitie .. during the resolution of three generations; 1625 F. MARKHAM Five Decades of Honour ii. Three perfitt descents, do euer so conclude a perfitt Gentleman of Blood.

1823 Pioneers I. xviii. You will find it no easy matter to make a gentleman of him. The old proverb says, that ‘it takes three generations to make a gentleman.’
He remembered his uncle’s saying that it took three generations to make a gentleman: it was a companion proverb to the silk purse and the sow's ear.

'It has always been possible to make a gentleman in three generations; nowadays .. the thing is done in two.'

**family** ; **gentry**

**generous**

*see* be JUST before you're generous.

**GENIUS is an infinite capacity for taking pains**

Cf. 1858 CARLYLE Frederick the Great I. IV. iii. ‘Genius’. means transcendent capacity of taking trouble, first of all.

1870 Work amongst Working Men iv. Gift, like genius, I often think, only means an infinite capacity for taking pains.

1959 Eating People is Wrong iv. Genius is an infinite capacity for taking pains. But we should still foster it, however much of an embarrassment it may be to us.

1974 Porterhouse Blue xiv. The modern fashion [of research] comes, I suppose, from a literal acceptance of the ridiculous dictum that genius is an infinite capacity for taking pains.

**diligence**

**gentleman**

*see* when ADAM delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?; an **ENGLISHMAN'S word is his bond**; it takes three GENERATIONS to make a gentleman.

**gently**

*see* DRIVE gently over the stones; EASY does it; if you gently touch a NETTLE it'll sting you for your pains.

**get**

*see* you cannot get BLOOD from a stone; if you don't like the HEAT, get out of the kitchen; if you LIE down with dogs, you will get up with fleas; don't get MAD, get even; the MORE you get, the more you want; what a NEIGHBOUR gets is not lost; you cannot get a QUART into a pint pot; what you SEE is what you get; you don't get SOMETHING for nothing; also **GOT**.

**Never look a GIFT horse in the mouth**

A horse's age is commonly gauged by the state of its teeth. The proverb warns against questioning the quality or use of a lucky chance or gift. Cf. a 420 ST. JEROME Commentary on Epistle to Ephesians Preface noli .. ut vulgare proverbium est, equi dentes inspicere donati, do not, as the common proverb says, look at the teeth of a gift horse.

1510 Vulgaria (EETS) 27 A gyuen hors may not [be] loked in the tethe.

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs I. v. B2V Where gyfts be gyuen freely, est west north or south, No man ought to loke a geuen hors in the mouth.

1659 Proverbs 80 No man ought to look a guift Horse in the mouth.

1710 Proverbs 40 Never look a Gift Horse in the Mouth.

1892 Diary of a Nobody xviii. I told him it was a present from a dear friend, and one mustn't look a gift-horse in the mouth.

1971 Riotous Assembly ix. The whole thing was a .. mystery. ‘Oh well, never look a gift horse in the mouth,’ he thought.

1997 Taken to Cleaners xvii. 172 I couldn't believe he wasn't even going to scold me for not having the burglar alarm hooked up to my office window, but never look a gift horse in the mouth …

**giving and receiving : gratitude and ingratitude**

www.EnglishPro.ir
gift
see also FEAR the Greeks bearing gifts.
gill
see every HERRING must hang by its own gill.
girl
see BOYS will be boys.

GIVE and take is fair play

1778 Evelina I. xxv. This here may be a French fashion .. but Give and Take is fair in all nations.
1832 Newton Forster III. x. Give and take is fair play. All I say is, let it be a fair stand-up fight.
1873 ‘ Gilded Age xxxiii. She thought that ‘give and take was fair play’, and to parry an offensive thrust with a sarcasm was a neat and legitimate thing to do.

fair dealing; tolerance
GIVE a thing, and take a thing, to wear the Devil's gold ring
A rhyme used by schoolchildren when someone gives something and then asks for it back. Cf. PLATO Philebus 19E αὐτὸν ὁ παῖς ἀπέδωσεν οὐδὲν δὲν ἀπέδωσεν ἀφέναιναι ἐπίθετον μακρὰν. as with children, there is no taking away of what has been rightly given.
1571 Sermon at Paul's Cross 29 Shal we make God to say the worde, and eate his worde? to giue a thing, and take a thing, little children say, This is the diuells goldring, not Gods gift.
1611 Dict. French & English s.v. Retirer, To giue a thing and take a thing; to weare the diuells gold-ring.
1721 Scottish Proverbs 120 Give a Thing, and take a thing, Is the ill Man's Goud Ring. A Cant among Children, when they demand a Thing again, which they had bestowed.
1894 Notes & Queries 8th Ser. VI. 155 Another saying among boys is—Give a thing and take a thing, To wear the devil's gold ring.
1959 Lore & Language of Schoolchildren viii. It is a cardinal rule amongst the young that a thing which has been given must not be asked for again ... [Somerset] Give a thing, take a thing, Dirty man's plaything ... [Cheshire] Give a thing, take a thing, Never go to God again.

giving and receiving
GIVE the Devil his due
Also in the phrase to give the Devil his due.
1589 Pap with Hatchet III. 407 Giue them their due though they were diuwls .. and excuse them for taking anie money at interest.
1596 Saffron Walden III. 36 Giue the diuell his due. 1642 Prince Rupert's Declaration 2 The Cavaliers (to give the Divell his due) fought very valiantly.
1751 Peregrine Pickle I. xvii. You always used me in an officer-like manner, that I must own, to give the devil his due.
1936 Murder of Matriarch xxiii. To give the devil his due .. I don't think that Irvin planned to incriminate anyone else.
1978 Evil that Men Do vi. Giving the devil his due will always jostle the angels.

fair dealing
give
see also it is BETTER to give than to receive; give CREDIT where credit is due; give a DOG a bad name and hang him; give a man ROPE enough and he will hang himself; never give a SUCKER an even break.

He GIVES twice who gives quickly
Cf. PUBLILIUS SYRUS Sententia ccxxxv. inopi beneficium bis dat, qui dat celeriter, he gives twice
who gives quickly to the needy; mid-14th-cent. Fr. *qui tost donne*, *deus fois donne*. Also c 1385 CHAUCER *Legend of Good Women* Prologue l. 451 For whoso yeveth a yifte, or dooth a grace. Do it by tyme [in good time], his thanks ys wel the more. The Latin *bis dat qui cito dat* is perhaps better known than the Publilius Syrus version, and was quoted in this form by Francis Bacon in a speech on 17 May 1617, upon taking his seat as Keeper of the Great Seal.

1553 Art of Rhetoric 65\(^V\)He geueth twise, that geueth sone and chearefully.

1612 tr. Cervantes' *Don Quixote* I. iv. *It is an old proverbe, that hee that gives quickly, gives twice.*

1775 Life of Johnson I. 443 *I did really ask the favour twice; but you have been even with me by granting it so speedily. Bis dat qui cito dat.*

1907 Spectator 22 June 979 *The Union Jack Club .. needs £16,000 ... He gives twice who gives quickly.*

1980 Times 17 Oct. 13 ‘He gives twice who gives quickly.’.. *We have everything to gain by generous action at once.*

Those who live in GLASS houses shouldn't throw stones
Do not criticize or slander another if you are vulnerable to retaliation. Cf. c 1385 CHAUCER *Troilus & Criseyde* II. 867 *Who that hath an hed of verre [glass], Fro cast of stones war hym in the werre!*

1640 Outlandish Proverbs no. 196 *Whose house is of glasse, must not throw stones at another.*

1754 Marriage Act II. iv. *Thee shouldst not throw Stones, who hast a Head of Glass thyself ... Thee canst have no Title to Honesty who lendest the writings to deceive Neighbour Barter.*

1778 in Pennsylvania Packet 22 Oct. i *He who lives in a glass house, says a Spanish proverb, should never begin throwing stones.*

1861 Framley Parsonage I. vi. *Those who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones ... Mr. Robarts' sermon will be too near akin to your lecture to allow of his laughing.*

1979 Requiem at Rogano xv. *It was a favourite joke of my father .. that he was once mildly rebuked by the mayor for apparent hypocrisy. ‘Alderman Carew,’ the old mayor .. said, ‘men who live in glass houses —’.*

hypocrisy; self-preservation; slander

All that GLITTERS is not gold
‘Glisters’, despite its Shakespearean authority, is now less often found than ‘glitters’. The variant form illustrated in quots. 1773, 1943, and 1987 is also common. L. *non omne quod nitet aurum est*, not all that shines is gold.

1220 Hali Meidenhad (EETS) ii *Nis hit nower neh gold al that ter [there] schineth.*

1390 Canon's Yeoman's Tale 1. 962 *But al thyng which that shineth as the gold Nis nat gold, as that I have herd it told.*

1596 Merchant of Venice II. vii. 65 *All that glisters is not gold, Often have you heard that told.*

1628 Works (1711) 222 *All is not Gold which glittereth.*

1773 in Goldsmith *She stoops to Conquer* Prologue, *All is not gold that glitters. Pleasure seems sweet, but proves a glass of bitters [bitter-tasting medicine].*

1847 Jane Eyre II. ix. *I wished to put you on your guard. It is an old saying that ‘all is not gold that glitters.’*

1880 Dict. English Proverbs (Asprey Reference Library) 39 *All that glitters is not gold.*

1933 Ravenelle Riddle iv. *All that glitters is not gold ... Every bird who calls himself an American doesn't happen to be one.*

1943 Shake it Again ii. *They would not need to be informed that ‘all is not gold that glitters.*

1980 Times 19 Jan. 18 *A young woman, perhaps grasping the unseemly spectacle of it all, suggested that all that glitters was not gold.*
The old saw ‘all is not gold that glitters’ still holds true despite its standing as a platitudine.

In the volatile world of jewellery investment, all that glisters is not gold. 

appearance, deceptive

glove

see a CAT in gloves catches no mice.

GO abroad and you'll hear news of home

You must go into the country to hear what news at London. 

Well, what was the latest news at Shottsford … As the saying is, ‘Go abroad and you'll hear news of home.’

It seems one must leave home to learn the news of home.

GO further and fare worse

You rose on your right side here right. And might have gone further, and have fared worse.

Come, Sir John you may go further, and fare worse.

She's just as rich as most of the girls who came out of India. I might go farther and fare worse.

He would have said, perhaps, with his plainness and simplicity and the smirk of satisfaction you see on his portrait, that one can fare further and fare worse.

content and discontent

go

You cannot serve GOD and Mammon

Quoting MATTHEW vi. 24 (AV) Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Mammon is the Aramaic word for ‘riches’, taken by medieval writers as the proper name of the devil of covetousness. Now used generally of wealth regarded as an evil influence.

No person may serve god eternall and also the Mammonde of iniquite: whiche is golde and syluer and other richesse.

Lady Lufton .. would say of Miss Dunstable that it was impossible to serve both God and Mammon.

The city and the country repel each other like oil and water. And like God and Mammon, they can’t be served at the same time by the same person.

money

Where GOD builds a church, the Devil will build a chapel

For commonly, where so ever God buildeth a church, the Deuyll wyl builde a Chappell iuste by.

Wherever God erects a House of Prayer, The Devil always builds a Chapel there: And 'twill be found upon Examination, The latter has the largest Congregation.
Nowhere does the devil build his little chapels more cunningly than close under the shadow of the great temple of Christian liberty. A thing in itself completely right and good, may be, in its effects on others, completely evil.

**good and evil**

GOD helps them that help themselves

Cf. AESCHYLUS Fragments 395. Πέλαγες καὶ παραλόγια, God likes to assist the man who toils; early 15th-cent. Fr. aidez vous, Dieu uos aidera, help yourself, God will help you.

1545 tr. Erasmus' Adages (ed. 2) 57 Dii facients adiuuant. The goddes do helpe the doers.

1551 Rule of Reason S1 V. Shipmen cal to God for helpe, and God will them, but so not withstandying, if they helpe them selfes.

1668 Adagia Scotia 21 Help thy self, and God will help thee.

1736 Poor Richard's Almanack (June) God helps them that help themselves.

1892 Sermons on Some Words of Christ iii. God does not promise us each and all that .. the ravens shall come to feed us: as the proverb most truly says, He helps them that help themselves.

1946 All King's Men (1948) 123 Nobody ever helped a hick [an ignorant yokel] but the hick himself ... It is up to you and God, and God helps those who help themselves.

1990 Listening in Dusk xxvii. A widow of eighty-nine .. had hit an intruder over the head with the family Bible and sent him flying. ‘The Lord helps those who help themselves!’ she'd declared, cackling with triumph in front of the cameras.

1997 Oldie Aug. 44 The motto ‘God helps those who help themselves’ is unedifying and hardly Christian.

**providence ; self-help**

GOD made the country, and man made the town

Cf. VARRO De Re Rustica III. i. divina natura dedit agros, ars humana aedificavit urbes, divine nature gave us the fields, human art built the cities.

1667 in Poems 2 My father said .. God the first Garden made, & the first City, Cain.

1785 Task I. 40 God made the country, and man made the town.

1870 Memoir 25 Jan. (1897) II. 96 There is a saying that if God made the country, and man the town, the devil made the little country town.

1914 Above Suspicion x. God made the country, man made the town. Pity men couldn't learn better.

1977 Field & Beneath i. It has been said that ‘God made the country and man made the town’, but .. the town is simply disguised countryside.

**Nature**

GOD makes the back to the burden

1822 Weekly Register 12 Jan. 94 As ‘God has made the back to the burthen,’ so the clay and coppice people make the dress to the stubs and bushes.

1839 Nicholas Nickleby xviii. Heaven suits the back to the burden.

1939 Trouble for Lucia ii. ‘Spare yourself a bitty’ I've said, and always she's replied ‘Heaven fits the back to the burden.’

1979 Grave of Truth viii. So many questions and nobody to answer them; it was a true penance for her ... God made the back for the burden ... An Irish nun .. had taught them that saying from her native land.

**providence ; trouble**

GOD never sends mouths but He sends meat

1377 Piers Plowman B. xiv. 39 For lente neuere was lyf but lyflode [livelihood] were shapen.

1832 Swallow Barn I. xxviii. God never sends mouths .. but he sends meat, and any man who has sense enough to be honest, will never want wit to know how to live.

1905 Gospel according to St. Matthew I. 103 We are meant to be righteous, and shall not in vain desire to be so. God never sends mouths but He sends meat to fill them.

hunger : providence
GOD sends meat, but the Devil sends cooks

1542 Dietary of Health xi. It is a common proverbe, God may sende a man good meate, but the devyll may sende an euyll coke to dystrue it.

1607 Thomas of Reading B3 God sends meat, and the diuel sends cookes.

1738 Polite Conversation II. 155 This Goose is quite raw: Well, God sends Meat, but the Devil sends Cooks.

1822 Nigel III. iii. That homely proverb that men taunt my calling with,—‘God sends good meat, but the devil sends cooks.’

1922 Ulysses 169 Milly served me that cutlet with a sprig of parsley … God made food, the devil the cooks.

1979 Country Life 13 Sept. 807 Another old saying .. that God sends good meat but the devil sends the cooks.

food and drink
GOD's in his heaven; all's right with the world
The standard form is an expression of satisfaction (see quot. 1841), which has now largely replaced the consolatory God is where he was.

1530 L'éclaircissement de la Langue Française 213 Neuer dispayre man, god is there as he was.

1612 tr. Cervantes' Don Quixote I. IV. iii. God is in heaven.

1678 English Proverbs (ed. 2) 147 God is where he was. Spoken to encourage People in any distress.

1841 Works (1970) 327 The snail's on the thorn: God's in his heaven—All's right with the world.

1906 Puck of Pook's Hill 240 Cheer up, lad … God's where He was.

1928 Decline & Fall I. V. When you've been in the soup as often as I have, it gives you a sort of feeling that everything's for the best, really. You know, God's in His heaven; all's right with the world.

1983 Handyman xv. When she heard his car draw up, on the dot of seven, it was as though she had been injected with a great feeling of calm, a reassurance that God was in his heaven and all [was] right with her world.

content and discontent
GOD tempers the wind to the shorn lamb
God so arranges it that bad luck does not unduly plague the weak or unfortunate. The phrase to temper the wind (to the shorn lamb) is also common. Cf. 1594 H. ESTIENNE Premices 47 ces termes, Dieu mesure le froid à la brebis tondue, sont les propres termes du proverbe, these terms, God measures the cold to the shorn sheepe, are the correct terms of the proverb.

1640 Outlandish Proverbs no. 867 To a close shorne sheep, God gives wind by measure.

1768 Sentimental Journey II. 175 How she had borne it .. she could not tell—but God tempers the wind, said Maria, to the shorn lamb.

1933 Testament of Youth I. ii. There is an unduly optimistic proverb which declares that God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb. My subsequent history was hardly to justify such naive faith in the Deity.

1981 Times 2 May 4 The wind is tempered to the shorn lamb. Officials .. get full basic salary for the first three months of their ‘retirement.’
1996 American Spectator Mar. 56 But as Laurence Sterne was wont to remind us, the Lord tempers the wind for the shorn lamb. There were bars.

God

see also ALL things are possible with God; EVERY man for himself, and God for us all; MAN proposes, God disposes; MAN'S extremity is God's opportunity; the MILLS of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small; the NEARER the church, the farther from God; PROVIDENCE is always on the side of the big battalions; the ROBIN and the wren are God's cock and hen; TAKE the goods the gods provide; put your TRUST in God, and keep your powder dry; the VOICE of the people is the voice of God; a WHISTLING woman and a crowing hen are neither fit for God nor men; also GODS, HEAVEN.

godliness

see CLEANLINESS is next to godliness.

Whom the GODS love die young

Cf. MENANDER Dis Exapatôn fragment 4 (Sandbach) οὐδεὶς οἵ δραπετής οὐκ ἔσθιν ἐκεῖνος, he whom the gods love dies young; PLAUTUS Bacchides l. 817 quem di diligunt, Adolescens moritur, he whom the gods favour, dies young.

1546 Troubled Man's Medicine B8\Most happy be they and best belouid of god, that dye when they be young.

1553 Art of Rhetoric 40\Whom god loueth best, those he taketh sonest.

1651 Jacula Prudentum no. 1094 Those that God loves, do not live long.

1821 Don Juan IV. xii. ‘Whom the gods love die young,’ was said of yore, And many deaths do they escape by this.

1933 Testament of Youth II. vii. Oh, Geoffrey, I shall never know anyone quite like you again ... It's another case of 'whom the Gods love.'

1972 Colonel Butler's Wolf xx. ‘Whom the gods love die young,’ the war taught us that.

death : youth

The GODS send nuts to those who have no teeth

Said of opportunities or pleasures which come too late to be enjoyed. Cf. Fr. le pain vient à qui les dents faillent, bread comes to those who lack teeth.

1929 American Speech IV. 463 God gives us nuts to crack when we no longer have teeth.

1967 English Proverbs Explained 68 The gods send nuts to those who have no teeth. In this life we either have too little of what we do want, or too much of what we don't want or can't use.

1979 '‘ Some die Eloquent xii. ‘Have you any plans for using the money?’.. 'The nuts', said the doctor astringently, ‘come when the teeth have gone.’

old age : opportunity, missed

Whom the GODS would destroy, they first make mad

Cf. Trag. Graec. Fragm. Adesp. 296 (Nauck) οὐκ οὐκ ἔσθιν ἀποκατηγορημένος τῷ αὐτῷ προτεσταντίᾳ, when divine anger ruins a man, it first takes away his good sense; L. quos Deus vult perdere, prius dementat.

1611 Catiline V. 481 A madnesse, Wherewith heauen blinds 'hem, when it would confound 'hem.

1640 Outlandish Proverbs no. 688 When God will punish, hee will first take away the understanding.

1817 Letter 2 Apr. (1976) V. 204 God maddens him whom 'tis his will to lose, And gives the choice of death or phrenzy—Choose!
Hoosier Mosaics 180 Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad.

1981 Daily Telegraph 24 July 4 Already Commonwealth Finance Ministers have elected not to meet on New Zealand's defiled soil. If greater penalties follow, the Commonwealth will confirm that those whom the gods would destroy they first make mad.

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**fate and fatalism ; fools**

He that GOES a-borrowing, goes a-sorrowing

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*c 1470* in *Reliquiæ Antiquæ* (1841) I. 316 *He that fast spendyth must nede borowe; But when he schal paye ayen, then ys al the sorowe.*

1545 tr. Erasmus' *Adages* (ed. 2) 46*VHe that goeth a borrowynge goeth a sorowynge.*

1836 *Midshipman Easy* I. viii. *You had made your request for the loan .. fully anticipating a refusal, (from the feeling that he who goes a borrowing goes a sorrowing).*

1894 *Use of Life* iii. *Debt is slavery. ‘Who goes a-borrowing goes a-sorrowin.’*

1925 *Juno & Paycock* III. 84 *Ah, him that goes a borrowin' goes a sorrowin'!. An' there isn't hardly a neighbour in the whole street that hasn't lent him money on the strength of what he was going to get.*

1995 *American Spectator* Feb. 82 *Who goes a-borrowing goes a-sorrowing. Yes, the balanced-budget amendment is sort of a dumb idea, because it can so easily be evaded by cunning congressional accounting.*

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**borrowing and lending**

What GOES around comes around

A modern proverb of US origin.

1974 *Donald writes no More* xv. *No one can say why Donald Goines and Shirley Sailor were murdered. The ghetto philosophy, ‘what goes around comes around’, is the only answer most people can give. It is probably the answer Donald Goines himself would have provided.*

1982 *Ethics* 108 *At this juncture another, more recent, adage springs to mind: What goes around comes around. It is, all in all, a terrific statement, and I know a lot of people who would turn handsprings if only they could be assured it was ture.*


1989 *Washington Times* 19 Apr. F1 *No sooner had the royal accusers sent Louis XVI and his queen to the guillotine, than they themselves were being hoist onto the tumbrels by men whose own heads would later drop into the basket. What goes around comes around.*

1997 *Washington Times* 17 May D2 *Retired Army Col. David Hackworth is apparently learning a lesson about that old saw, ‘What goes around comes around.’*

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**fate and fatalism ; retribution**

goes

see also *there goes more to MARRIAGE than four bare legs in a bed; PRIDE goes before a fall; what goes UP must come down.*

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**When the GOING gets tough, the tough get going**

A favourite family saying of Joseph P. Kennedy, US politician, businessman, and father of the late President.

1962 *‘Honey Fitz’* xx. *Joe [Kennedy] made his children stay on their toes ... He would bear down on them and tell them, ‘When the going gets tough, the tough get going.’*

1970 *New Yorker* 3 Oct. 33 *Baron Marcel Bich, the millionaire French pen magnate probably spoke for them all last month when he said, ‘When the going gets tough, the tough get going!’ (‘Quand le chemin devient dur, les durs se cheminent!’)
‘When the going gets tough, the tough get going?’ she asked slyly. ‘Make fun if you want to, but that's what character is all about.’

**opportunity, taken ; politics ; stress**

**GOLD may be bought too dear**

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs II. vii. 14 Well (quoth she) a man maie bie golde to dere.

1642 Holy State II. xxi. Fearing to find the Proverb true, That Gold may be bought too dear, they returned to their ships.

1889 Pleasures of Life (ed. 2) II. ii. It is well worth having .. but it does not requite too great a sacrifice. A wise proverb tells us that gold may be bought too dear.

**money ; value**

**gold**

see also it is good to make a BRIDGE of gold to a flying enemy; GIVE a thing, and take a thing, to wear the Devil's gold ring; all that GLITTERS is not gold.

**A GOLDEN key can open any door**

1580 Euphues & his England II. 71 Who is so ignorant that knoweth not, gold be a key for every locke, chieflye with his Ladye.

1660 Nonsuch Professor II. ix. The gates of the new Jerusalem .. are not got open by golden keys.

1842 Poems (1969) 694 Every door is barr'd with gold, and opens but to golden keys.

1945 Lark Rise xix. Their better-educated neighbours .. did not call on the newly rich family. That was before the days when a golden key could open any door.

**bribery and corruption ; money**

**golden**

see SILENCE is golden; SPEECH is silver, but silence is golden.

**If you can't be GOOD, be careful**

Cf. mid-11th-cent. L. si non caste tamen caute; 1303 R. BRUNNE Handlyng Synne (EETS) l. 8316 The apostle seyth thy sauteryte [dictum], ‘Gyf thou be nat chaste, be thou pryue [secret],’ 1528 W. TYNDALE Obedience of Christian Man 73 As oure lawears saye, si non caste tamen caute, this is, if ye live not chaste, se ye cary clene [act properly], and playe the knave secretly.

1903 Pitcher in Paradise viii. Always bear in mind what the country mother said to her daughter who was coming up to town to be apprenticed to the Bond Street millinery, ‘For heaven's sake be good; but if you can't be good, be careful.’

1907 (song-title) If you can't be good—be careful.

1967 Beyond Belief I. iv. Ta ra Alan if you can't be good be careful see you later.

1982 Parting of Ways xvii. Tommy .. gave me a stern warning … ‘Never meet a German in Prague .. Be good, and if you can't, be very careful.’

**caution**

**A GOOD beginning makes a good ending**

1300 South-English Legendary (EETS) I. 216 This was atte uerste me thingth [it seems to me] a god bygynnynge. Ther after was the betere hope to come to god endyng.

1350 Douce MS 52 no. 122 Of a gode begynnynge comyth a gode endyng.

1710 Proverbs 1 A good Beginning makes a good End … 'Tis a great point of Wisdom .. to begin at the right end.

1850 ‘’ Odd Leaves from Life of Louisiana ‘Swamp Doctor’ 109 I hope my future lot will be verification
of the old adage, that a ‘bad beginning makes a good ending’, for mine is bad enough. 1934 His First Million Women xvi. I was brought up to believe that ‘Of a good beginning cometh a good ending’ … ‘You can’t do a good plastering job if your laths aren’t right to begin with.’

**beginnings and endings**

There's many a GOOD cock come out of a tattered bag
The proverb is derived from cockfighting. Similar in sentiment is: 1721 J. KELLY Scottish Proverbs 7 An ill Cow may have a good Calf. Bad People may have good Children.

1883 Shropshire Folklore xxxvi. There’ll come a good cock out of a ragged bag … A cockfighting simile, lately used by a farmer, whose buildings were out of repair, but his stock in good condition.

1953 Simon xiv. ‘There’s many a good cock come out of a tattered bag,’ said the dark shape, slowly. There was an instant of … silence, and then Simon said, ‘And a good tune played on an old fiddle.’

**appearance, deceptive**

No GOOD deed goes unpunished
Sometimes attributed to Oscar Wilde, but not traced in his writings.

1938 Ego 3 25 Jan. 275 Pavia was in great form to-day: ‘Every good deed brings its own punishment.’

1967 Diaries (1986) 13 June 209 Very good line George came out with at dinner: ‘No good deed ever goes unpunished.’

1995 Washington Times 10 Dec. B1 No good deed goes unpunished. Pepsi-Cola offered .. scholarships to children from low-income families .. to enable them to attend private schools. Soon .. Pepsi machines in the public schools began to get jammed and vandalized.

1998 Times 15 June 23 The story about Mr Weston and the vindictive seagull is surely a fine example of the adage that ‘a good deed, however small, never goes unpunished.’

**just deserts**

The GOOD die young

1697 Character of Dr. Annesley 3 The best of Men cannot suspend their Fate; The Good die early, and the Bad die late.

1814 Excursion I. 27 The good die first, And they whose hearts are dry as summer dust Burn to the socket.

1852 Clovernook 39 Sarah .. was dead .. aged nineteen years … The old truth was again reasserted .. in the often repeated verse which followed, that the good die young.

1879 Love & Land Beyond V. The good do die young. That's why people like you and me are left to grow old.

1887 Trouble of Fools v. ‘Live hard, die young,’ I said. .. ‘You got it wrong, Carlotta,’ Mooney said.‘I learned it in school. It's “Only the good die young.” Before they get a chance to fool around.’

**death ; youth**

He is a GOOD dog who goes to church

1826 Woodstock I. i Bevis .. fell under the proverb which avers, ‘He is a good dog which goes to church’; for .. he behaved himself .. decorously.

1895 My Confidences (1896) 44 Tis said, by men of deep research, He’s a good dog who goes to church.

**conduct**

GOOD fences make good neighbours

1640 Letter in Winthrop Papers (1944) IV. 282 A good fence helpeth to keepe peace between
neighbours; but let vs take heed that we make not a high stone wall, to keepe vs from meeting.

1815 Modern Chivalry (rev. ed.) IV. II. xiii. I was always with him [Jefferson] in his apprehensions of John Bull … Good fences restrain fencebreaking beasts, and .. preserve good neighbourhoods.

1914 North of Boston 12 My apple trees will never get across And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him. He only says, ‘Good fences make good neighbours.’

1978 Throwback x. ‘Hadin’t you better go and investigate?’.. Lockhart shook his head. ‘Strong fences make good neighbours.’


harmony : neighbours

A GOOD horse cannot be of a bad colour

□ a 1628 Proverbs in Scots no. 1621 There is gude horse of all hewis.
1653 Compleat Angler iv. It is observed by some, that there is no good horse of a bad colour.
1732 Gnomologia no. 1713 Good Horses can't be of a bad Colour.
1891 Beast & Man viii. ‘A good horse is never of a bad colour’.. is wildly irreverent from the Oriental Point of view.
1912 Spectator 28 Dec. 1094 Virgil .. did not hold that ‘a good horse cannot be of a bad colour’; he liked bays and grays.

appearance, significant ; horse lore

The only GOOD Indian is a dead Indian

Originally with reference to North American Indians; now also used deprecatorily of members of various nationalities, etc.

□ 1868 in Congressional Globe (US) 28 May 2638 I have never in my life seen a good Indian (and I have seen thousands) except when I have seen a dead Indian.
1886 Ramble through United States 29 The Government... is at length earnestly endeavouring to do tardy justice to the conquered race; but it was distressing to hear again and again from American lips the remark that ‘A good Indian is a dead Indian.’
1895 People's Standard History U.S. IV. lxxxiv. In January, 1869,,.. Old Toch-a-way ..., a chief of the Comanches,.. [said]: ‘Me, Tock-a-way; me good Injun.’.. General [Sheridan] .. set those standing by in a roar by saying: ‘The only good Indians I ever saw were dead.’
1915 Salute to Adventurers V. Never trust an Indian. The only good kind is the dead kind.
1934 On Rocks (Preface) 146 ‘The only good nigger is a dead nigger’ say the Americans of the Ku-Klux temperament.
1935 Little House on Prairie xvii. She did not know why the government made treaties with Indians. The only good Indian was a dead Indian.
1980 Blood-Red Sun at Noon II. vi. The only good Jap is a dead Jap.
1994 Washington Times 18 Jan. A15 Unfortunately, some liberals sound as if they believe that the only good gun owner is a dead gun owner.

national characteristics ; reputation

The GOOD is the enemy of the best

Also in reverse: the BEST is the enemy of the good.

□ 1912 Thoughts on Things Eternal 108 Every respectable Pharisee proves the truth of the saying that ‘the good is the enemy of the best.’.. Christ insists that we shall not be content with a second-best, though it be good.
1939 Morals for Moderns vii. ‘The good’, runs the old aphorism, ‘is the enemy of the best.’ Nowhere is
good things
A GOOD Jack makes a good Jill

1623 Palace of Pleasure C8 A good Iacke alwaies maketh a good Gyll.

1670 English Proverbs 108 A good Jack makes a good Gill ... Inferiours imitate the manners of superiours .. wives of their husbands.

1876 Manchester Man III. XV. In George Street he was refused admission, Mrs. Ashton justifying her daughter's fight with .. ‘A good Jack makes a good Jill.’

men and women
GOOD men are scarce

1609 Essays Moral & Theological 92 Good men are scarce, no age so many brings As Thebes hath gates.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 124 Good Folks are scarce, you'll take care of one. Spoken to those who carefully provide against ill Weather, or cowardly shun Dangers.

1836 Sketches by Boz I. 285 One of the women has agreed to stand a glass round, jocularly observing that ‘as good people's wery scarce, what I says is, make the most on 'em.’

1979 ‘’ Smiley's People xii. Time you had some shut-eye, isn't it? Good men are scarce, I always say.

good and evil
There's many a GOOD tune played on an old fiddle

1902 Way of All Flesh (1903) lxi. Beyond a haricot vein in one of my legs I'm as young as ever I was. Old indeed! There's many a good tune played on an old fiddle.

1953 Simon xiv. ‘There's many a good cock come out of a tattered bag,’ said the dark shape, slowly. There was an instant of .. silence, and then Simon said, ‘And a good tune played on an old fiddle.’

1979 Widow xxx. He looked at her casually ... ‘Not all that bad at that. Many a good tune played on an old fiddle.’

appearance, deceptive ; old age
One GOOD turn deserves another
Cf. early 14th-cent. Fr. lune bonté requiert lautre, one good deed deserves another.

1400 in Bulletin of John Rylands Library (1930) XIV. 92 O [one] good turne asket another.

1620 Contemplations V. XIV. 28 One good turne requires another ... Justly should they haue been set at the vpper end of the table.

1638 Amyntas V. vi. One good turne deserves another.

1824 St. Ronan's Well II. iv. But one good turn deserves another—in that case, you must .. dine with me.

1929 True Heart II. 151 You've given me the best laugh I've had for months, and one good turn deserves another.

1979 Wilt Alternative xiv. Noblesse oblige? You know, one good turn deserves another and whatnot.

reciprocity
GOOD wine needs no bush
A bunch of ivy was formerly the sign of a vintner's shop.

1430 Pilgrimage of Man (EETS) I. 20415 And at tavernys (withoute wene [doubt]) Thys tooknys [signs] nor thys bowys grene .. The wyn they mende nat.
Wyne that is saleable and good nedeth no bushe or garland of yuye [ivy] to be hanged before. The english proverbe is thus Good wyne neadeth no signe.

As you like it (Epilogue) 3 If it be true that good wine needs no bush, 'tis true that a good play needs no epilogue.

Spectator 13 Nov., I was never better pleased than with a plain man's compliment, who upon his friend's telling him that he would like the Spectator much better if he understood the motto, replied, that good wine needs no bush.

Handbook for Travellers in Spain I. ix. Good wine needs neither bush, herald, nor crier.

Monday Theory vi. ‘Doesn't advertise much, does she, Chief?’ said Reed. ‘Relies on the principle that good wine needs no bush, perhaps,’ replied Masters.

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Good

- as good be an ADDLED egg as an idle bird
- ALL good things must come to an end
- good AMERICANS when they die go to Paris
- BAD money drives out good
- the BEST is the enemy of the good
- BETTER a good cow than a cow of a good kind
- BRAG is a good dog, but Holdfast is better
- it is good to make a BRIDGE of gold to a flying enemy
- a CHANGE is as good as a rest
- CONFESSION is good for the soul
- why should the DEVIL have all the best tunes?
- DILIGENCE is the mother of good luck
- ENOUGH is as good as a feast
- EVIL communications corrupt good manners
- never do EVIL that good may come of it
- FAR-FETCHED and dear-bought is good for ladies
- FIRE is a good servant but a bad master
- there are as good FISH in the sea as ever came out of it
- HOPE is a good breakfast but a bad supper
- it's an ILL wind that blows nobody any good
- JACK is as good as his master
- a LIAR ought to have a good memory
- LISTENERS never hear any good of themselves
- a MISS is as good as a mile
- NO news is good news
- a NOD'S as good as a wink to a blind horse
- there is NOTHING so good for the inside of a man as the outside of a horse
- see a PIN and pick it up, all the day you'll have good luck
- any PUBLICITY is good publicity
- the ROAD to hell is paved with good intentions
- good SEED makes a good crop
- if something SOUNDS too good to be true, it probably is
- one STORY is good till another is told
- you can have TOO much of a good thing
- when the WIND is in the east, 'tis neither good for man nor beast

Goods

- ILL gotten goods never thrive
- TAKE the goods the gods provide

Goose

- what is SAUCE for the goose is sauce for the gander
- also GEESE

When the GORSE is out of bloom, kissing's out of fashion

Quot. 1846 explains the rationale behind this proverb and the parallel when the FURZE is in bloom, my love's in tune.

1846 Proverbs relating to Seasons, & c. 12 When whins [gorse] are out of bloom, Kissing's out of fashion... Whins are never out of bloom.

1860 Holmby House I. iii. ‘When the gorse is out of bloom, young ladies,’ quoth Sir Giles, ‘then is kissing out of fashion!’.. There is no day in the year when the blossom is off the gorse.

1974 Brass Islands 175 ‘What's that old jingle about the gorse?’.. ‘When the gorse is out of bloom, kissing is out of fashion.’

1987 Daily Telegraph 14 Mar. 10 It is this habit of prolonged flowering that must have given rise to the optimistic country saying that when gorse is out of bloom kissing is out of fashion.

Love, prosperous
What is GOT over the Devil's back is spent under his belly
What is improperly obtained is spent in foolhardy pleasures or debauchery.

1582 Plays Confuted G7 V That which is gotten over the devils backe, is spent vnder his belly.

1607 Michaelmas Term IV. i. What's got over the devil's back (that's by knavery), must be spent under his belly (that's by lechery).

1670 English Proverbs 80 What is gotten over the Devils back, is spent under his belly ... What is got by oppression or extortion is many times spent in riot and luxury.

1821 Pirate III. iv. You shall not prevail on me to go farther in the devil's road with you; for .. what is got over his back is spent—you wot how.

1938 1649 cviii. ‘What's got over the devil's back is soon sold under the belly’ said the bully to his girl; ‘let down the milk.’

1952 Mouse in Eternity 93 What I say is what goes over the devil's back is sure to come under his belly.

**getting and spending**

**got**
see also a PENNY saved is a penny earned.

**grain**
see if in FEBRUARY there be no rain, 'tis neither good for hay nor grain.

**grandmother**
see don't TEACH your grandmother to suck eggs.

**While the GRASS grows, the steed starves**

Dreams or expectations may be realized too late. Cf. medieval L. *dum gramen crescit, equus in moriendo quiescit*, while the grass grows, the horse lies dying.

1350 Douce MS 52 no. 20 While the grasse growes, the goode hors sterues.

1500 in Reliquiæ Antiquæ (1841) I. 208 While the grasse growes the steede starves.

1600–1 Hamlet III. ii. 333 You have the voice of the King himself for your succession.—Ay, sir, but ‘While the grass grows’—the proverb is something musty.

1821 Ayrshire Legatees x. Until ye get a kirk there can be no marriage. But the auld horse may die waiting for the new grass.

1911 Doctor's Dilemma III. 56 I shall sell them next year fast enough, after my one-man-show; but while the grass grows the steed starves.

1973 ‘’ Appleby's Answer ii. ‘The working capital?’ ‘Well .. while the grass grows the steed mustn't starve. Say five hundred down.’

**expectation**

**The GRASS is always greener on the other side of the fence**

Cf. OVID Ars Amatoria I. 349 *fertilior seges est alienis semper in agris*, the harvest is always more fruitful in another man's fields.

1959 in Plays of Year XIX. 13 (title) The grass is greener.

1965 Which? Mar. 91 ‘The grass always looks greener on the other side of the fence,’ said another informant, explaining that while stores who do practise the system are uneasy about it .. those outside constantly wonder whether results might not justify it.

1979 Homes & Gardens June 171 Everyone else in the world believes that the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence, but I have a wife who knows that her own patch is best.

**content and discontent**

**grease**

see the SQUEAKING wheel gets the grease.
A GREAT book is a great evil

Cf. CALLIMACHUS Fragments 465 (Pfeiffer) τὸ μῦσιν ἱερὸν ἔνατον ἐὐάλωκν, the great book is equal to a great evil.

1628 Anatomy of Melancholy (ed. 3) 7 Oftentimes it falls out .. a great Booke is a great mischiefe.

1711 Spectator 23 July We do not expect to meet with any thing in a bulky Volume ... A great Book is a great Evil.

1909 British Weekly 8 Apr. 13 It may be .. said in reference to this unhappy production that a great book is indeed a great evil.

1933 Oxford English Dictionary (Preface) p. vii. If there is any truth in the old Greek maxim that a large book is a great evil, English dictionaries have been steadily growing worse ever since their inception more than three centuries ago.

brevity and long-windedness

GREAT minds think alike

Used ironically. Both verb and noun have changed in the course of this proverb’s history, the earliest instance of the present form thus far discovered being quot. 1898. Jump used absolutely in the sense of ‘agree completely’ or ‘coincide’ is now somewhat archaic.

1618 Hans Beer-Pot D1 Though he made that verse, Those words were made before ... Good wits doe iumpe.

1761 Tristram Shandy III. IX. Great wits jump: for the moment Dr. Slop cast his eyes upon his bag .. the very same thought occurred.

1889 Journal 1 Dec. (1964) 61 As great minds jump this proves .. that my Mind is Great!

1898 Voces Academicae 24 Curious how great minds think alike. My pupil wrote me the same explanation about his non-appearance ...

1922 Punch 27 Dec. 601 Lord Riddell considers that Mr. H. G. Wells is one of the world's greatest minds. Great minds, as the saying is, think alike.

1984 Last Laugh xii. ‘Are you thinking the same thing I'm thinking?’ ‘You know what they say about great minds.’


coincidence; harmony

GREAT oaks from little acorns grow

c 1385 Troilus & Criseyde II. 1335 As an ook comth of a litel spir [shoot], So thorugh this letter .. Encreessen gan desir.

1579 School of Abuse 20V But Tall Cedars from little graynes shoote high: great Oakes, from slender rootes spread wide.

1584 Dict. (rev. ed.) D4 Of a nut springes an hasill, and of an Akorn an hie or tall oke.

1732 Gnomologia no. 4576 The greatest Oaks have been little Acorns.

1777 in Columbian Orator (1797) 58 Large streams from little fountains flow, Tall oaks from little acorns grow.

1923 Times 13 Oct. 7 Here in England, as nowhere else in the world, ‘great oaks from little acorns grow’. The oak, as the emblem of British strength, has been symbolic in many ways.

1979 Oxford Star 24 May 2 Who are these people to say that ‘a foetus is not a human being’? ‘Great oaks’, they say, ‘from little acorns grow.’

1995 Washington Times 11 July A16 A curfew, I admit, is not the end of civilization, nor even a steep
imposition. But mighty oaks, as they say, from little acorns grow.

**beginnings and endings ; great and small**

great

see also BIG fleas have little fleas upon their backs to bite them; DEATH is the great leveller; LITTLE strokes fell great oaks; LITTLE thieves are hanged, but great ones escape; there's no great LOSS without some gain; POVERTY is no disgrace, but it is a great inconvenience; THRIFT is a great revenue; TIME is a great healer.

The GREATER the sinner, the greater the saint

1773 Spiritual Quixote II. VII. xi. *It was a maxim with Mr. Whitfield, ‘The greater the Sinner, the greater the Saint.’*

1856 Barthomley vi. *How well is the old proverb illustrated in this foul seducer … ‘The greater the sinner, the greater the Saint.’*

1964 Stories I. 293 Ah, well, I always heard it's the biggest divils that make the best saints, and now I can believe it!

**good and evil ; wrongdoers**

The GREATER the truth, the greater the libel

The ‘old Mansfield’ referred to in quots. 1787 and 1882 was William Murray, first Earl of Mansfield (1705–93), statesman and judge.

1787 Poems (1968) I. 349 Dost not know that old Mansfield, who writes like the Bible, Says the more 'tis a truth, sir, the more 'tis a libel?

1828 Pelham I. xxiv. ‘You won't catch an old lawyer in such impudence.’ ‘The greater the truth the greater the libel,’ said Warburton, with a sneer.

1882 Short Sayings of Great Men 371 *The greater the truth, the greater the libel. A maxim of the law in vogue .. while Mansfield presided over the King's Bench … The maxim is said to have originated in the Star Chamber.*

1950 Frequent Hearses III. iii. *But this is absurd! An action would lie … The greater the truth, the greater the libel.*

1981 Times 9 Apr. 14 *Proof of the truth of the words complained of is an absolute defence to a libel action. The adage ‘The greater the truth the greater the libel’ is a myth.*

**slander ; truth**

When GREEK meets Greek, then comes the tug of war

1677 Rival Queens IV. 48 *When Greeks joyn'd Greeks, then was the tug of War.*

1804 Journals & Notebooks (1969) I. 69 *Two upright Postillions .. were disputing who was the greatest rogue … ‘When Greek meets Greek then comes the tug of war.’*

1926 Two or Three Graces 175 *When Greek meets Greek then comes, in this case, an exchange of anecdotes about the deposed sovereigns of eastern Europe—in a word, the tug of bores.*

1979 Rabelais iii. *One is reminded of an adage Erasmus used .. Magus cum mago: ‘magician meets magician’—Greek, as we say, meets Greek.*

**enemies ; similarity and dissimilarity**

Greek

see also FEAR the Greeks bearing gifts.

A GREEN Yule makes a fat churchyard

A proverb with many variations on the theme of the unhealthiness of a mild winter.
They also say, that a hot Christmas makes a fat Church-yard.

This Proverb was sufficiently confuted Anno 1667, in which the winter was very mild; and yet no mortality ensued the Summer or Autumn following.

A green winter makes a fat Church-yard. This Proverb was sufficiently confuted Anno 1667, in which the winter was very mild; and yet no mortality ensued the Summer or Autumn following.

A green Yule makes a fat Churchyard; but so does a white Yule too.

Every wife in the parish .. quoted dolefully the saw that ‘a green Yule makes a fat Kirkyard.’

Some proverbial Observations, upon the Seasons of the Year, are groundless.

This, and a great many proverbial Observations, upon the Seasons of the Year, are groundless.

I shouldn't wonder if it takes the old lady off. They say a green Yule makes a fat Churchyard; but so does a white Yule too.

So a green Christmas maketh a fat churchyard, as we say in SE10.

The GREY mare is the better horse

The wife rules, or is more competent than, the husband. Cf. MORE Dialogue of Images III. v. Here were we fallen in a grete questyon of the law, whyther the gray mare be the better horse .. or whither he have a wyse face or not that loketh as lyke a foole as an ewe loketh lyke a shepe.

The grey mare is the better horse.

A Riding [charivari], us'd of Course, When the Grey Mare's the better Horse. When o're the Breeches greedy Women Fight, to extend their vast Dominion.

You can see with half an eye that the ‘grey mare is the better horse here.’

D'you think he knows his own mind? I should say the gray mare was the better horse!

She did not wish it to seem, to quote an old fashioned expression, that the grey mare was the better horse ... She strove to avoid prejudicing her husband's position.

The grey mare was the better horse!

All is GRIST that comes to the mill

Grist is corn to be ground. The is freqently replaced by a possessive pronoun or phrase. Similar to the older all is FISH that comes to the net. The metaphorical expression grist to one's mill is also found.

All is FISH that comes to the net. The metaphorical expression grist to one's mill is also found.

Forien Casuists bring in a bundle of mortal sins, all grist for their own Mill.
to their honour, we shall never want business.

1896 Bible Characters I. xii. Your stumble, your fall, your misfortune .. all is grist to the mill of the mean-minded man.

1943 Moving Finger ix. You're failing to allow for the mentality of a Poison Pen—all is grist that comes to their mill.

1967 English Proverbs Explained 17 A similar proverb is all's grist that comes to the mill .. Use will be made of everything received.

1979 Mudflats of Dead iii. All was grist which came to a novelist's mill, and he was still hoping that something, somewhere, would bring him what he still thought of as inspiration.

- gains and losses ; opportunity

- ground

see BETWEEN two stools one falls to the ground.

- grow

see while the GRASS grows, the steed starves; GREAT oaks from little acorns grow; ONE for the mouse, one for the crow.

- grunt

see what can you EXPECT from a pig but a grunt?

- guest

see FISH and guests stink after three days.

A GUILTY conscience needs no accuser

Cf. Disticha Catonis I. xvii. conscius ipse sibi de se putat omnia dici, the man with something on his conscience thinks he is always the subject of talk.

- c 1390 Canon's Yeoman's Prologue 1. 688 For Catoun [Dionysius Cato] seith that he that gilty is Demeth alle thyng be spoke of him.

1597 Politeuphuia 10VA Guilty conscience is a worme that bites and neuer ceaseth ... A guiltie conscience is neuer without feare.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 9 A guilty Conscience self accuses. A Man that has done ill .. shews his Guilt.

1744 Life & Adventures Matthew Bishop viii. It is an old saying, a guilty conscience needs no accuser.

1881 Joseph's Coat I. viii. ‘Where are you off to?’ asked George with a great effort ... A guilty conscience needs no accuser.

1952 Ellery Queen’s Mystery Mag. Apr. 25 ‘Why should I think that?’ I said, groping for his identity. ‘Because you were thinking about me.’ Then I knew he was speaking of Hinckman’s murder and must be the murderer—‘a guilty conscience needs no accuser.’

- conscience ; wrong-doers

- gunner

see the COBBLER to his last and the gunner to his linstock.

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H

habit

see OLD habits die hard.

What you've never HAD you never miss

www.EnglishPro.ir
Daddy-Long-Legs (1913) 232 You mustn't get me used to too many luxuries. One doesn't miss what one has never had.

Living in Bloomsbury ii. It has been said that what you've never had you never miss, and from all one can gather, those people were not aware of suffering from lack of holiday.

Akenfield xiv. I castrate the male lambs .. about an hour after they have been born. They say what you've never had, you never miss.

content and discontent ; gains and losses

You mustn't get me used to too many luxuries. One doesn't miss what one has never had.

It has been said that what you've never had you never miss, and from all one can gather, those people were not aware of suffering from lack of holiday.

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content and discontent ; gains and losses

HALF a loaf is better than no bread

Similar to SOMETHING is better than nothing.

Dialogue of Proverbs I. xi. D4\[\]Throwe no gyft agayne at the giuers head, For better is halfe a lofe then no bread.

Remains concerning Britain (ed. 5) 297 Halfe a loaf is better than no bread at all.

Rover II. II. ii. You know the Proverb of the half Loaf, Ariadne, a Husband that will deal thee some Love is better than one who can give thee none.

Old Curiosity Shop I. xxxiii. ‘Mr. Swiveller,’ said Quilp, ‘being pretty well accustomed to the agricultural pursuits of sowing wild oats, Miss Sally, prudently considers that half a loaf is better than no bread.’

Half a loaf is better than no bread at all. The ending of half a war is immensely better than no truce at all.

content and discontent

The HALF is better than the whole

A proverb advising economy or restraint. Cf. HESIOD Works & Days πλὲν ἀντος, half is more than the whole.

Sermon before King’s Majesty G3 Ther is a proverbe .. Dimidium plus toto: The halfe somtymes more then the hole. The meane lyfe is the best lyfe and the most quyet lyfe of al.

Curiosities of Literature 2nd Ser. I. 419 The half is better than the whole.

From College Window v. It is true of conversation as of many other things, that the half is better than the whole. People who are fond of talking ought to beware of being lengthy.

moderation

One HALF of the world does not know how the other half lives

Cf. RABELAIS Pantagruel II. xxxii. la moytié du monde ne sçait comment l'autre vit, one half of the world knows not how the other lives.

Holy Observations xvii. One half of the world knowes not how the other liues: and therefore the better sort pitty not the disttressed .. because they knowe it not.

Outlandish Proverbs no. 907 Halfe the world knowes not how the other halfe lives.

Poor Richard's Almanack (Preface) It is a common saying, that One Half of the World does not know how the other Half lives.

King's Own I. x. It is an old proverb that ‘one half the world do not know how the other half live’. Add to it, nor where they live.

That Hideous Strength i. ‘I didn't even know this was Bracton property.’ ‘There you are!..One half of the world doesn't know how the other half lives.’

Murder in Outline vi. It just proved how true that saying is about one half knowing so little of the
other, even when both halves are living under the same roof.

ignorance; society

HALF the truth is often a whole lie

1758 Poor Richard's Almanack (July) Half the Truth is often a great Lie.
1859 Poems (1969) 1107 That a lie which is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies, That a lie which is all a lie may be met and fought with outright, But a lie which is part a truth is a harder matter to fight.
1875 Proverbial Folklore 166 Half the truth is often a whole lie .. is a proverb which Tennyson has most admirably versified.
1979 Sealed Envelope xiii. ‘You've been lying.’ .. ‘Half the truth can be worse than a straight lie ..’

lying
half
see also BELIEVE nothing of what you hear, and only half of what you see; two BOYS are half a boy, and three boys are no boy at all; a FAULT confessed is half redressed; he that has an ILL name is half hanged; WELL begun is half done.

half-done
see FOOLS and bairns should never see half-done work.

halfway
see a LIE is halfway round the world; do not MEET troubles halfway.

hall
see it is MERRY in hall when beards wag all.

Don't HALLOO till you are out of the wood
Do not exult until all danger or difficulty is past. Halloo literally means to shout in order to attract attention.
1770 Papers (1973) XVIII. 356 This is Hollowing before you are out of the Wood.
1800 Letter 13 Nov. (1848) 381 It is an old and a just proverb, ‘Never halloo until you are out of the woods.’
1866 Hereward the Wake I. iii. Don't holla till you are out of the wood. This is a night for praying rather than boasting.
1908 H.M.I. xxii. The Duke .. wrote Dont halloo till you are out of the wood.
1936 ‘’ Crime Counter Crime i. Don't halloo till you're out of the wood. I'll bet my head to a china orange we shall have trouble before to-morrow night.

peril; trouble
halved
see a TROUBLE shared is a trouble halved.

When all you have is a HAMMER, everything looks like a nail
Principally known in North America.
1981 New York Times 11 Nov. D13 ‘There is frequently a lack of understanding of what power is—I've got power, therefore I'm right,’ he said. ‘When you've got a hammer, everything looks like a nail.’
1989 PC Magazine 14 Mar. 78 That kind of crude misapplication of PCs and PC software—the computer world's equivalent of the old saw that ‘when all you have is a hammer, everything starts to look like a nail’—means death for productivity.
1991 Washington Post 18 Feb. A25 If the only tool you have is a hammer, some sage once said, then all problems look like nails. That witticism may shed some light on the racial anger that has become a commonplace on American college campuses—and in much of American society.
As the saying goes, when the only tool in your box is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail.

necessity; ways and means

hammer

see also the CHURCH is an anvil which has worn out many hammers.

One HAND for oneself and one for the ship

A nautical proverb, also used in variant forms in similar contexts: see the explanation in quot. 1902.

1799 Port Folio (Philadelphia, 1812) VII. 130 Did I not tell you never to fill both hands at once. Always keep one hand for the owners, and one for yourself.

1822 Pilot I. vii. The maxim, which says, ‘one hand for the owner, and t'other for yourself,’.. has saved many a hearty fellow from a fall that would have balanced the purser's books.

1902 Round Horn 58 The old rule on a yard is, ‘one hand for yourself and one for the ship,’ which means, hold on with one hand and work with the other.

1945 Diary 7 Apr. in Aircraft Carrier (1954) 132 Hold tight and brace yourself when you're changing positions .. One hand for the plane, and one for yourself.

1968 Long Wake i. I did not know then the old adage ‘one hand for oneself and one hand for the company.’

prudence; security

The HAND that rocks the cradle rules the world

1865 in Cyclopædia of Practical Quotations (1896) 402 A mightier power and stronger Man from his throne has hurled, For the hand that rocks the cradle Is the hand that rules the world.

a 1916 ‘’ Toys of Peace (1919) 158 You can't prevent it; it's the nature of the sex. The hand that rocks the cradle rocks the world, in a volcanic sense.

1979 Guardian 12 June 9 The hand that rocks the cradle may rule the world but .. the hand itself is controlled by the state.

1996 Washington Times 10 May A2 The habits of the home in one generation become the morals of society in the next. As the old adage says: ‘The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world ..’

women

One HAND washes the other

Cf. EPICHARMUS Apophthegm 273 (Kaibel) ιδήςερτανξειπανψει, one hand washes the other; SENEA Apocolocyntosis ix. manus manum lavat, hand washes hand.

1573 Garden of Pleasure 110 V One hand washeth an other, and both wash the face.

1611 Dict. French & English s.v. Main, One hand washes the other; applyable to such as giue vpon assurance, or hope, to be giuen vnto; or vnto such as any way serue one anothers turne.

1836 Diary 12 Mar. (1927) I. 203 Persons in business .. make, as the saying is, ‘one hand wash the other.’

1983 Gold Solution ix. And three years ago, Erik was on a design jury that picked the dean's firm's entry as a winner. One hand washes the other.

reciprocity

hand

see also a BIRD in the hand is worth two in the bush; COLD hands, warm heart; the DEVIL finds work for idle hands to do; the EYE of a master does more work than both his hands; FULL cup, steady hand; if IFS and ands were pots and pans, there'd be no work for tinkers' hands; MANY hands make light work.

HANDSOME is as handsome does
Handsome denotes chivalrous or genteel behaviour, though it is often popularly taken to refer to good looks. At its second occurrence in the proverb the word is properly an adverb.

1580 View of Sundry Examples in John A Kent (1851) 78 As the ancient adage is, goodly is he that goodly dooth.

1659 Proverbs 49 He is handsome that handsome doth.

1766 Vicar of Wakefield i. They are as heaven made them, handsome enough if they be good enough; for handsome is that handsome does.

1845 Spirit of Times 23 Aug. 297 Handsome is as handsome does.

1873 Pillars of House II. xvii. ‘Don't you think her much better looking than Alda?’ ‘If handsome is that handsome does.’

1979 Funeral March for Siegfried xxiv. ‘But he's such a handsome, chivalrous, man.’ Handsome is as handsome does, thought York grimly.

appearance; conduct

HANG a thief when he's young, and he'll no' steal when he's old

1832 Scottish Proverbs 115 Hang a thief when he's young, and he'll no [not] steal when he's auld.

1896 Proverbs of Scotland 126 Hang a thief when he's young, and he'll no steal when he's auld. This was a favourite saying of Lord Justice Clerk Braxfield [Robert MacQueen, Lord Braxfield (1722–99), Scottish judge], who invariably acted upon its teaching.

1979 Love & Land Beyond x. So much killing ... It reminds me of the Scots proverb, ‘Hang a thief when he's young, and he'll no' steal when he's old.’

wrong-doers

hang

see also a CREAKING door hangs longest; give a DOG a bad name and hang him; every HERRING must hang by its own gill; give a man ROPE enough and he will hang himself.

One might as well be HANGED for a sheep as a lamb

The proverb alludes to the former penalty for sheep-stealing. The idea is present in; 1662 N. ROGERS Rich Fool 253 As some desperate Wretches, Who dispairing of life still act the more villainy, giving this desperate Reason of it, As good be hanged for a great deal, as for a little.

1678 English Proverbs (ed. 2) 350 As good be hang'd for an old sheep as a young lamb. Somerset.

1732 Gnomologia no. 683 As good be hang'd for a Sheep as a Lamb.

1836 Midshipman Easy II. ii. We may as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb ... I vote that we do not go on board.

1841 Barnaby Rudge liii. Others .. comforted themselves with the homely proverb, that, being hung at all, they might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb.

1915 Rainbow vi. One might as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb. If he had lost this day of his life, he had lost it.

1977 Quartet in Autumn xv. Letty .. decided that she might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb and make the most of her meal.

conduct; risk

hanged

see also if you're BORN to be hanged then you'll never be drowned; CONFESS and be hanged; he that has an ILL name is half hanged; LITTLE thieves are hanged, but great ones escape; never mention ROPE in the house of a man who has been hanged.

HANGING and wiving go by destiny
Weddyng is desteny, And hangyng lykewise.
The ancient saying is no heresy: Hanging and wiving goes by destiny.
If Matrimony and Hanging go By Dest'ny, why not Whipping too?
Twas her Fate; they say, Marriage and Hanging go by destiny.
King Alfred said that wiving and hanging go by destiny.

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fate and fatalism ; marriage
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hanging
see also CATCHING'S before hanging; there are more WAYS of killing a dog than hanging it.

ha'porth
see do not spoil the SHIP for a ha'porth of tar.

happen
see ACCIDENTS will happen (in the best-regulated families); the UNEXPECTED always happens.

If you would be HAPPY for a week take a wife; if you would be happy for a month kill a pig; but if you would be happy all your life plant a garden

There are almost endless possibilities for variation on this theme, but marriage is generally included as one of the more ephemeral sources of content.

Worthies Wales 6 I say the Italian-humor, who have a merry Proverb, Let him that would be happy for a Day, go to the Barber; for a Week, marry a Wife; for a Month, buy him a New-horse; for a Year, build him a New-house; for all his Life-time, be an Honest man.

If you would live well for a week, kill a hog; if you would live well for a month, marry; if you would live well all your life, turn priest … Turning priest … alludes to the celibacy of the Romish Clergy, and has a pungent sense, as much as to say, do not marry at all.

If you would be happy for a week take a wife; If you would be happy for a month kill a pig; But if you would be happy all your life plant a garden.

For those of a philosophical turn of mind, I pass on something that the distinguished economist Peter Bauer said last week; ‘If you want to be happy for a day, get drunk; for a month, get married; for a lifetime, take up gardening.’

Call no man HAPPY till he dies

The story alluded to in quot. 1545 is narrated in Herodotus' Histories I. xxxii: when the great Athenian lawgiver Solon visited Croesus, the fabulously wealthy king of Lydia, the latter asked Solon who was the happiest man he had ever seen—expecting the answer to be himself. Cf. SOPHOCLES Oedipus Rex 1.

deem no man happy, until he has happily and prosperously passed the course of his lyfe.

Call no man happy till he dies is the motto .. suggested by the career of Dom Pedro [emperor of Brazil].

‘Call no man happy until he is dead.’ .. He was seventy-two, and yet there was still time for this dream .. to change to a nightmare.
good fortune; happiness

happy
see also happy is the BRIDE that the sun shines on; happy is the COUNTRY which has no history; a DEAF husband and a blind wife are always a happy couple; happy's the WOOING that is not long a-doing.

HARD cases make bad law
Difficult cases cause the clarity of the law to be obscured by exceptions and strained interpretations.

1854 in Hist. English Law (1926) IX. 423 A hard case. But hard cases make bad law.

1945 in Hansard (Commons) 12 June 1478 Well, of course, hard cases do not make good laws.

1991 Times 17 Sept. 29 Hard cases not only make bad law. They also create bad feeling between judges.

1997 Times 1 Sept. 25 To say that hard cases make bad law is to demean the anger of grief with the sanctity of cliché.

law and lawyers; rules, general

HARD words break no bones
A terser statement of the sentiment in STICKS and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me. Cf. c 1450 Towneley Play of Noah (EETS) l. 380 Thise grete wordis shall not flay me.

1697 Yorkshire Ale (ed. 3) 84 Foul words break neay Banes.

1806 Gazette Publications 250 Hard words, and language break nae bane.

1814 Letter 18 Oct. (1889) II. xlii. These .. are mere words—hard words, if you please, but they break no bones.

1822 Christowell III. xvi. ‘Scoundrel, after all that I have done—.’ ‘Hard words break no bones, my friend.’

1880 Charity's Child i. Soft words! They butter no parsnips … Would you prefer hard ones? .. Hard words break no bones.

malice

hard
see also OLD habits die hard.

harder
see the BIGGER they are, the harder they fall.

hare
see FIRST catch your hare; if you RUN after two hares you will catch neither; you cannot RUN with the hare and hunt with the hounds.

HASTE is from the Devil

1633 Familiar Letters 5 Sept. (1903) II. 140 As it is a principle in chemistry that Omnis festinatio est a Diabolo, All haste comes from Hell, so in .. any business of State, all rashness and precipitation comes from an ill spirit.

1835 Doctor III. lxxxiii. If any of my readers should .. think that I ought to have proceeded to the marriage without delay .. I must admonish them in the words of a Turkish saying, that ‘hurry comes from the Devil, and slow advancing from Allah.’

1929 Times 12 Sept. 14 Listening patiently to the views .. [f]or he understood the East; he knew that for an Intelligence officer ‘haste is from the devil.’

haste; patience and impatience

More HASTE, less speed
The original meaning of speed in this proverb is ‘quickness in the performance of some action or
operation’.

- **1350** Douce MS 52 no. 86 *The more hast, the worse sped.*
- **1546** Dialogue of Proverbs I. ii. A3
  - Moste tymes he seeth, the more haste the lesse speede.
- **1595** Locrine (1908) I. ii. My penne is naught; gentlemen, lend me a knife. I thinke the more haste the worst speed.
- **1705** Hudibras Redivivus I. i. A mod'rate pace is best indeed. The greater hurry, the worse speed.
- **1887** Springhaven III. xi. Some days had been spent by the leisurely Dutchman in providing fresh supplies, and the stout bark's favourite maxim seemed to be—‘the more haste the less speed.’
- **1919** Great House xxvii. Tell me the story from the beginning. And take time. More haste, less speed, you know.
- **1979** Member of Club xvi. If they’d taken a bit more time with the terrorist he’d have told them everything … More haste, less speed.

- **haste ; patience and impatience**

**HASTE makes waste**

Waste properly means the squandering of time, money, etc., though it is also used with reference to material waste.

- **c 1386** Tale of Melibe I. 1053 *The proverbe seith .. in wikked haste is no profit.*
- **1546** Dialogue of Proverbs I. ii. A3
  - Som thyngs .. show after weddyng, that haste maketh waste.
- **1663** Hudibras I. iii. *Festina lente, not too fast; For haste (the Proverb says) makes waste.*
- **1853** On Lessons in Proverbs i. Many Proverbs, such as *Haste makes waste .. have nothing figurative about them.*
- **1940** Body, Boots & Britches xix. *Haste makes waste, Waste, makes want, Want makes a poor boy a beggar.*
- **1977** Mark of Merlin xi. I .. slammed some logs on the grate .. Then I had to sweep up the scattered coals .. ‘Haste makes waste,’ he chanted from the door.
- **1985** Ratings are Murder V. ‘Haste makes waste,’ Kraut reminded his prop crew. ‘Let's not work ourselves out of a job.’
- **1997** Washington Post: Washington Business 29 Dec. 15 *But I've let myself be an impulsive Internet shopper, too, and I usually regret it. In '98, my motto is ‘haste makes waste.’*

- **haste ; patience and impatience ; waste**

**Make HASTE slowly**

Cf. L. *festina lente,* make haste slowly; after Suetonius Augustus xxv. 4. *nihil autem minus perfecto duci quam festinationem temeritatemque convenire arbitratur.* crebro itaque illa iactabat: he [Augustus] thought that haste and rashness were alike unsuited to a well-trained leader. So he often came out with sayings like ‘make haste slowly’ [etc.]; c 1385 CHAUCER *Troilus & Criseyde* I. 956 He hasteth wel that wisly kan [knows how to] abyde.

- **1683** Poems (1958) I. 336 *Gently make haste ... A hundred times consider what you've said.*
- **1744** Poor Richard’s Almanack (Apr.) *Make haste slowly.*
- **1938** Murders in Silk iii. *Easy, son. Let's make haste slowly. Does Conner know where the knife came from?*
- **1989** Little Class on Murder xii. ‘Festina lente,’ Miss Dora suggested slyly. ‘Not bad advice,’ Max said cheerfully. At Annie's glare, he added quickly, ‘Make haste slowly.’

- **haste ; patience and impatience**

see also MARRY in haste and repent at leisure; NOTHING should be done in haste but gripping a flea.
hasty
see hasty CLIMBERS have sudden falls.
hatched
see don't COUNT your chickens before they are hatched.
hate
see BETTER a dinner of herbs than a stalled ox where hate is.

What you HAVE, hold

□ c 1450 Towneley Play of Killing of Abel (EETS) l. 142 It is better hold that I haue then go from doore to doore and craue.
1546 Dialogue of Proverbs I. x. D1 Hold fast whan ye haue it (quoth she) by my lyfe.
1876 Manchester Man I. x. Then .. rang, clear and distinct, Humphrey Chetham's motto—‘Quod tuum, tene!’ (What you have, hold!)
1979 Times 23 Nov. 5 There had been a simple ‘what we have we hold’ approach by the established parties.

property
you cannot HAVE your cake and eat it
You cannot ‘have it both ways’: once the cake is eaten, it can no longer be ‘had’ or retained in one’s possession. The positions of have and eat are often reversed.
□ 1546 Dialogue of Proverbs II. ix. L2 I trowe ye raue, Wolde ye bothe eate your cake, and haue your cake?
1611 Scourge of Folly no. 271 A man cannot eat his cake and haue it stil.
1738 Polite Conversation I. 90 She was handsome in her Time; but she cannot eat her Cake, and have her Cake.
1812 in Document Transcriptions of War of 1812 (1959) VI. 204 We cannot have our cake and eat it too.
1878 Is he Popenjoy? I. viii. You can’t eat your cake and have it too.
1938 Funeral in Eden ii. Not that the savages were especially savage. They have always been a sensitive people, and when they ate a man they probably felt genuinely sorry that they could not have their cake and eat it, so to speak.
1980 Middle Ground 159 Judith cannot eat her cake and have it. Judith liked Hugo for his style .. and she can bloody well suffer for its inconveniences.

have
see also the MORE you get, the more you want; NOTHING venture, nothing have; what you SPEND, you have; you can have TOO much of a good thing.

haw
see when all FRUIT fails, welcome haws.

HAWKS will not pick out hawks' eyes

□ 1573 Garden of Pleasure 104 One crowe neuer pulleth out an others eyes.
1817 Rob Roy III. iii. I wadna .. rest my main dependence on the Hielandmen—hawks winna pike out hawks' een.—They quarrel amang themsells .. but they are sure to join .. against a’ civilized folk.
1883 Thicker than Water III. xli. Members of his profession .. while warning others of the dangers of the table, seem to pluck from them the flower Safety. (Is it that, since hawks do not peck out hawks' een, they know they can be cured for nothing?)
1915 Salute to Adventurers vi. I have heard that hawks should not pick out hawks' eyes. What do you propose to gain?
The crow doesn't pluck out the crow's eye but poor folk bear the brunt.

see if in FEBRUARY there be no rain, 'tis neither good for hay nor grain; MAKE hay while the sun shines; a SWARM in May is worth a load of hay.

the FISH always stinks from the head downwards; where MACGREGOR sits is the head of the table; you cannot put an OLD head on young shoulders; a STILL tongue makes a wise head; SWEEP the house with broom in May, you sweep the head of the house away; TWO heads are better than one; YORKSHIRE born and Yorkshire bred, strong in the arm and weak in the head.

PHYSICIAN, heal thyself.

a SWARM in May is worth a load of hay.

the FISH always stinks from the head downwards; where MACGREGOR sits is the head of the table; you cannot put an OLD head on young shoulders; a STILL tongue makes a wise head; SWEEP the house with broom in May, you sweep the head of the house away; TWO heads are better than one; YORKSHIRE born and Yorkshire bred, strong in the arm and weak in the head.

PHYSICIAN, heal thyself.

TIME is a great healer.

EARLY to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.

Hear all, see all, say nowt, tak' all, keep all, gie nowt, and if tha ever does owt for nowt do it for thysen

A proverb now traditionally associated with Yorkshire, with numerous variant forms. The precepts make up the caricature of the Yorkshireman as seen by detractors: canny, dour (say nowt = say nothing), grasping (gie nowt = give nothing), and selfish (if tha ever does owt for nowt do it for thysen = if you ever do anything for nothing do it for yourself).

□a 1400 Proverbs of Wisdom in Archiv (1893) XC. 246 Hyre and se, and say nowght. Be ware and wyse, and lye nought .. and haue thy will.

1623 Spared Hours of Soldier 276 Heare all, see all, and hold thee still If peace desirest with thy will.

1913 Letter 1 Feb. (1962) I. 183 It seems queer, that you do it and get no profit. I should think you've forgotten the Yorkshire proverb, ‘An' if tha does owt for nowt, do it for thysen.’

1925 Notes & Queries 412 The famous Yorkshire motto .. is invariably recited with an air of superior bravado, and will be found upon mugs, post cards, etc. The authentic version, I believe, is, ‘Hear all, see all, say now't, tak all, keep all, gie now't, and if tha ever does ow't for now't do it for thysen.’

1984 English Companion 265 ‘Hear all, see all, say nowt; sup all, eat all, pay nowt’, is said by detractors to be the Yorkshireman's motto.

ASK no questions and hear no lies; BELIEVE nothing of what you hear, and only half of what you see; there's none so DEAF as those who will not hear; DREAM of a funeral and you hear of a marriage; GO abroad and you'll hear news of home; LISTENERS never hear any good of themselves; SEE no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil.

CHILDREN should be seen and not heard.

ABSENCE makes the heart grow fonder; COLD hands, warm heart; what the EYE doesn't see, the heart doesn't grieve over; FAINT heart never won fair lady; out of the FULLNESS of the heart the mouth speaks; HOME is where the heart is; HOPE deferred makes the heart sick; if it were not for HOPE, the
heart would break; PLEASE your eye and plague your heart; it is a POOR heart that never rejoices; put a STOUT heart to a stey brae; the WAY to a man's heart is through his stomach.

If you don't like the HEAT, get out of the kitchen

1952 Time 28 Apr. 19 President [Truman] gave a .. down-to-earth reason for his retirement, quoting a favorite expression of his military jester, Major General Harry Vaughan: ‘If you don't like the heat, get out of the kitchen.’

1970 Financial Times 13 Apr. 25 Property people argue that hoteliers are not facing the facts of economic life, and that if they cannot stand the heat they should get out of the kitchen.

1975 History Man xiii. He got in the way of justice ... You know what they say, if you don't like the heat, get out of the kitchen.

1990 Washington Post 27 Aug. D5 If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen. That's what tough-talking politicians say, making it sound as though only a wimp would head for the exit.

1997 Spectator 15 Nov. 15 Some of these women show a lack of sensitivity about these things. That old saying was cruel but right, ‘If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.’

politics; stress

HEAVEN protects children, sailors, and drunken men

The proverb is found in various forms.

1861 Tom Brown at Oxford I. xii. Heaven, they say, protects children, sailors, and drunken men; and whatever answers to Heaven in the academical system protects freshmen.

1865 Alec Forbes III. xi. I canna think hoo he cam' to fa' sae sair; for they say there's a special Providence watches over drunk men and bairns.

1980 Firestarter 57 She didn’t even have a bruise—God watches over drunks and small children.

1997 Washington Times 18 Nov. A15 As we become once more the fool, we can only pray the old epigram is still true: ‘God protects fools, drunkards and the United States.’

providence

heaven

see also CROSSES are ladders that lead to heaven; GOD'S in his heaven, all's right with the world; MARRIAGES are made in heaven; also GOD.

hedge

see one man may STEAL a horse, while another may not look over a hedge.

heir

see WALNUTS and pears you plant for your heirs.

HELL hath no fury like a woman scorned

In classical mythology the Furies were avenging deities, fearful goddesses from Tartarus who avenged wrong and punished crime. Fury in the sense of ‘frenzied rage’ may also be intended, esp. in more modern quot. Cf. EURIPIDES Medea l. 263 ἔν τόν ἄκακον ἀτὰ δικαίαν, and other circumstances a woman is full of fear and shuns to confront force and iron; but when she has been wronged in a matter of sex, there is no other heart more bloodthirsty. The idea was a commonplace in the Renaissance; e.g. a 1625 BEAUMONT & FLETCHER Knight of Malta I. i. The wages of scorn'd Love is baneful hate.

1696 Love's Last Shift IV. 71 No Fiend in Hell can match the fury of a disappointed Woman!—Scorned! slighted; dismissed without a parting Pang!

www.EnglishPro.ir
"Heav'n has no Rage, like Love to Hatred turn'd, Nor Hell a Fury, like a Woman scorn'd."

"You know 'Hell hath no fury,' etc. If your wife should ever wake up to the true state of the case .. I'm afraid she'd be an ugly customer.

"You've heard that one about hell having no fury like a woman scorned."

"In a way I might have been flattered.

"love, blighted ; malice ; women"

"see also ENGLAND is the paradise of women; the ROAD to hell is paved with good intentions; he that would go to SEA for pleasure, would go to hell for a pastime."

"EVERY little helps; GOD helps them that help themselves; a MOUSE may help a lion; help you to SALT, help you to sorrow."

"see the ROBIN and the wren are God's cock and hen; a WHISTLING woman and a crowing hen are neither fit for God nor men."

"BETTER a dinner of herbs than a stalled ox where hate is."

"TURKEY, heresy, hops, and beer came into England all in one year."

"NO man is a hero to his valet."

"Every HERRING must hang by its own gill

Everyone is accountable for his own actions.

"Lett every herring hang by his owne tayle.

"Every herring must hang by th'owne gill.

"Every herring must hang by its own gill … Every man must give an account for himself.

"One man is no more a criterion for another man than one horse is a criterion for another … Every herring must hang by its own head.

"Adam, thinking as little of pride, said No, that every herring should hang by its own gills

"You belive, like Bill Tilman who sailed leaky pilot cutters up Greenland fjords until he was 80, that ‘every herring should hang by its own tail.’

"He who HESITATES is lost

Early uses of the proverb refer specifically to women.

"The woman that deliberates is lost.

"It has often been said of woman that she who doubts is lost .. never thinking whether or no there be any truth in the proverb.

"that he who hesitates is lost—to Mormonism.

"Dolly hesitated, and with the proverbial result.

"Don't ask me to decide for you.

"against Martin Hoffman, one of the fastest
analysts and players in the game [of chess].

**decision and indecision**

hid

see **LOVE** and a cough cannot be hid.

**Those who HIDE can find**

*Hide* means ‘hide something’: the verb is used absolutely.

- **c 1400 Seven Sages of Rome** (1845) 68 *He may wel fynde that hyde him selven.*
- **1639 Paremiologia Anglo-Latina** 111 *They that hide can find.*
- **1842 Percival Keene** I. iii. ‘I could have told you where it was.’ ‘Yes, yes, those who hide can find.’
- **1922 Ulysses** 542 (She .. unrolls the potato from the top of her stocking.) *Those that hides knows where to find.*
- **1979 “ One Corpse too Many** ix. Only those who had hidden here were likely ever to find. The full leafage covered all.

**concealment**

The HIGHER the monkey climbs the more he shows his tail

The further an unsuitable person is advanced, the more his inadequacies are apparent. Also found in less polite forms.

- **c 1395 Bible** (1850) Proverbs iii. 35 (gloss) *The filthe of her foli aperith more, as the filthe of the hynd partis of an ape aperith more, whanne he stieth [climbs] on high.*
- **c 1594 Promus** 102 *He doth like the ape that the higher he clymbes the more he shows his ars.*
- **1670 English Proverbs** 57 *The higher the Ape goes, the more he shews his tail ... The higher beggars or base bred persons are advanced, the more they discover the lowness and baseness of their spirits and tempers.
- **1743 Dunciad** IV. 157 (note) *The higher you climb, the more you shew your A—.*
- **1873 Phineas Redux** I. xxxiv. *He's to be pitchforked up to the Exchequer ... The higher a monkey climbs —; you know the proverb.
- **1985 Washington Post** 3 Nov. C3 *Let me tell you something Cookie and try to remember it the rest of your life, will you? The higher a monkey climbs the more he shows his ass.*
- **1995 Washington Times** 6 Oct. A19 ‘The higher you shiney up the flagpole,.. the more your rear end hangs out.’ Proof of that adage is the potshots now being taken at Gen. Colin Powell as he becomes a potential presidential candidate.

**ambition ; human nature**

hill

see **BLUE** are the hills that are far away.

hindered

see **MEAT** and mass never hindered man.

hindmost

see **DEVIL** take the hindmost; EVERY man for himself, and the Devil take the hindmost.

hire

see the **LABOURER** is worthy of his hire.

HISTORY repeats itself

- **1858 Janet's Repentance** in *Scenes of Clerical Life* II. x. *History, we know, is apt to repeat itself.*
- **1865 Marian Rooke** III. v. i. *History, it is said, repeats itself .. Few but are reminded almost every day .. of something that has gone before.*
- **1957 Testament of Experience** 11 *History tends to defy the familiar aphorism; whether national or
personal, it seldom repeats itself.

1971 Alamut Ambush xiii. Maybe history repeats itself—but I have to have facts.

history

see also happy is the COUNTRY which has no history.

hog

see the CAT, the rat, and Lovell the dog, rule all England under the hog.

hold

see what you HAVE, hold.

Holdfast

see BRAG is a good dog, but Holdfast is better.

When you are in a HOLE, stop digging

[1988] Observer in J. Care (ed.) Sayings of the Eighties It is a good thing to follow the first law of holes; if you are in one, stop digging.


[1993] Houston Chronicle 9 Oct. 32 Until now, the president has ignored the first law of politics: When you get yourself in a hole, stop digging.

[1997] Times 15 Sept. 1 William Hague seems to have forgotten the first rule of politics: when you are in a hole, stop digging.

prudence; trouble

HOME is home, as the Devil said when he found himself in the Court of Session

The Court of Session is the supreme civil tribunal of Scotland, established in 1532.

[1832] in Scottish Proverbs lxix. Nothing more bitter was ever uttered .. against our Supreme Court of Judicature, than the saying .. Hame is hamely, quo' the Deil, when he fand himself in the Court of Session.

[1895] Salute to Adventurers iv. I saw nothing now to draw me to .. law ..’Hame's hame,’ runs the proverb, ‘as the devil said when he found himself in the Court of Session,’ and I had lost any desire for that sinister company.

law and lawyers

HOME is home though it's never so homely

The archaic phrase never so means ‘ever so’.


[1569–70] Stationers' Register (1875) I. 192 A ballet intituled home ys homelye be yt neuer so ill.

[1670] English Proverbs 103 Home is home though it be never so homely.

[1857] Little Dorrit II. ix. ‘Just as Home is Home though it's never so Homely, why you see,’ said Mr. Meagles, adding a new version to the proverb, ‘Rome is Rome though it's never so Romely.’

[1915] Dear Enemy 46 Hame is hame, be’t ever sae hamely. Don’t you marvel at the Scotch?

content and discontent; home

HOME is where the heart is

[1870] in & Davy Crockett & Other Plays (1940) 79 ‘As I am to become an inmate of your home, give me a sort of a panoramic view.’..‘Well, home, they say, is where the heart is.’

[1950] Pacific Spectator IV. 91 ‘Home is where the heart is,’ she said, ‘if you'll excuse the bromide [trite remark].’

[1979] After You with Pistol xxii. ‘Where is “home”, please,’ I asked ... ‘Home’s where the heart is,’ he said.
content and discontent; home
see also CHARITY begins at home; CURSES, like chickens, come home to roost; EAST, west, home's best; an ENGLISHMAN's house is his castle; GO abroad and you'll hear news of home; the LONGEST way round is the shortest way home; there's no PLACE like home; a WOMAN'S place is in the home; many go out for WOOL and come home shorn.

HOMER sometimes nods
Nobody, even a poet as great as the Greek epic writer Homer, can be at his best or most alert all the time. Nods here means ‘becomes drowsy, falls asleep’; hence, ‘errs due to momentary lack of attention’. The source is HORACE Ars Poetica 359 indignor quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus, I am indignant when worthy Homer nods.

1387 tr. Higden's Polychronicon (1874) V. 57 He may take hede that the grete Homerus slepeth somtyme, for in a long work it is lawefull to slepe som time.
1677 in State of Innocence B1\Horace acknowledges that honest Homer nods sometimes: he is not equally awake in every line.
1887 in Nineteenth Century Feb. 196 Scientific reason, like Homer, sometimes nods.
1979 Heberden's Seat vi. ‘We're half asleep, not to have asked where they are before this.’ ‘Homer nods ... You can't ask every question.’

honest
see when THIEVES fall out, honest men come by their own.

HONESTY is the best policy

1605 Europæ Speculum K3 This over-politick .. order may reach a note higher than our grosse conceipts, who think honestie the best policie.
a 1763 Poems (1773) I. 75 I'll filch no filching;—and I'll tell no lye; Honesty's the best policy,—say I.
1854 Detached Thoughts II. xviii. ‘Honesty is the best policy’; but he who acts on that principle is not an honest man.
1928 Swan Song vi. It had been in their systems just as the proverb ‘Honesty is the best policy’ was in that of the private banking which then obtained.
1980 ‘’ Spend Game ix. When a crisis comes to the crunch I'm full of this alert feeling. I think it’s a sort of realization that honesty's the best policy.

HONEY catches more flies than vinegar
Soft or ingratiating words achieve more than sharpness.

1666 Italian Proverbs 149 Honey gets more flyes to it, than doth viniger.
1744 Poor Richard's Almanack (Mar.) Tart Words make no Friends: spoonful of honey will catch more flies than Gallon of Vinegar.
1955 Destination Danger X. i .. Know the old saying relative to honey catching more flies than vinegar ... if this is an act, you might as well save your breath.
1979 Sunflower xviii. Honey might attract more flies than vinegar, but nothing beat [sic] blackmail at securing the absolute allegiance.
1996 Washington Post 25 Oct. B4 Ask his advice frequently, and thank him profusely for his wisdom and guidance. Remember that old adage ‘You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.’
Honey
see also where BEES are, there is honey.
There is HONOUR among thieves
The concept is found in c 1622–3 Soddered Citizen (1936) I. 305 Theeues haue betweene themselues, a truth, And faith, which they keepe firme, by which They doe subsist; 1703 P. A. MOTTEUX Don Quixote II. IX. The old proverb still holds good, Thieves are never rogues among themselves.
1802 Works (1843) IV. 225 A sort of honour may be found (according to a proverbial saying) even among thieves.
1823 Dict. Turf 98 ‘There is honour among thieves, but none among gamblers,’ is very well antithetically spoken, but not true in fact.
1984 Murder before Matins vi. Honour among thieves was an empty phrase to all three of them: every professional criminal they’d known would sell his sidekick unhesitatingly if the price were right.
1996 Washington Post Book World 15 Sept. 3 This remarkable aspect of pirate life—proof positive that there can be honour among thieves—is reason enough to mythologize the buccaneers.

honour; wrongdoers
The post of HONOUR is the post of danger

1533 Huon (EETS) xx. Where is lyeth grete parelles there lyeth grete grete honour.
1613 Brazen Age III. 211 The greater dangers threaten The greater is his honour that breaks through.
1625 Rule Wife (1640) IV. i. I remembered your old Roman axiom, The more the danger, still the more the honour.
1711 Spectator 1 Dec. 1 We consider Human Life as a State of Probation, and Adversity as the Post of Honour in it.
1832 Scottish Proverbs 33 The post of honour is the post of danger.
1905 British Weekly 14 Dec. 1 The Chancellorship of the Exchequer .. is preeminently the post of danger, and therefore the post of honour in the new Government.

honour; peril
Honour
see also give CREDIT where credit is due; a PROPHET is not without honour save in his own country.

Hop
see TURKEY, heresy, hops, and beer came into England all in one year.

HOPE deferred makes the heart sick
With allusion to PROVERBS xiii, 12 (AV) Hope deferred maketh the heart sick; cf. c 1395 WYCLIF Bible (1850) Proverbs xiii. 13 Hope that is deferred, tormenteth the soule; c 1527 J. RASTELL Calisto & Melebea A5 V For long hope to the hart mych troble wyll do.
1557 Sermons 130 V The hope that is deferred, prolonged, and put off, vexeth the minde.
1733 in Collections of Connecticut Hist. Society (1892) IV. 285 As hope deferred makes the heart sick: so I am in long expectation of your answers.
1889 Nether World II. vii. There was a heaviness at his heart. Perhaps it came only of hope deferred.
1981 Observer 26 Apr. 14 If hope deferred makes the heart sick, despair is a poor counsellor also.

hope and despair
HOPE for the best and prepare for the worst

1565 & Gorboduc I. ii. Good is I graunt of all to hope the best, But not to liue still dreadles of the worst.
1581 Charles & Julia D7 To hope the best, and feare the worst, (loe, such is Loouers gaines).
This Maxim ought to be carest, Provide against the worst, and hope the best.

To hope for the best and prepare for the worst, is a trite but a good maxim.

The youngest of us cannot always escape—hoping, trusting, relying on the best, we should be prepared for the worst.

You have the ultimate safeguard. You need not fear the worst. ‘I hope for the best,’ she said.

Hoping for the best, preparing for the worst.

HOPE is good breakfast but a bad supper

Hope springs eternal in the human breast. Man never Is, but always To be blest.

Night after night his disappointment is acute, but hope springs eternal in the scholastic breast.

It was understood, wasn't it, that we could not dine together? ‘Oh yes—but you know how it is. Hope springs eternal and so forth.’

I prepared a delicious salad and .. dry martini, his favourite drink. They say hope springs eternal.

Hope springs eternal—she smiled wryly—even in Tunbridge Wells.

If it were not for HOPE, the heart would break

As one says, if there were not hope, the heart would break.

If it were not for hope, the heart would breake.

If it were not for hope, the heart would break.

There is an old proverb that if it were not for Hope the heart would break. Everything may be retrieved except despair.

hope

see also while there's LIFE, there's hope; he that LIVES in hope dances to an ill tune.
Hopefully
see it is BETTER to travel hopefully than to arrive.

You can take a HORSE to the water, but you can't make him drink
The word the is frequently omitted from the proverb and lead substituted for take.

□ c 1175 Old English Homilies (EETS) 1st Ser. 9 Hwa is thet mei thet hors wettrien the him self nule drunken [who can give water to the horse that will not drink of its own accord]

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs I. xi. D3 A man may well bryng a horse to the water, But he can not make hym dyrnke without he will.

1658 Mysteries of Love & Eloquence 160 A man may lead his Horse to water, but he cannot make him drink unless he list.

1857 Barchester Towers III. i. ‘Well,’ said she ..‘one man can take a horse to water but a thousand can't make him drink.’

1930 Cakes & Ale V. ‘He thinks he’d be mayor himself,’ said the people of Blackstable …My uncle remarked that you could take a horse to the water but your couldn't make him drink.

1970 in Atlantic (1979) July 50 The dropout rate [for the course] must be close to 90 percent. I guess you can take a horse to the water, but you can't make him drink.

1997 Washington Post 7 Dec. (Momma comic strip) We could send you out to a firm and convince them to hire you, but we’re not sure you'd be willing to learn the job. In other words, you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink.

free will and compulsion

horse
see also don't CHANGE horses in midstream; ENGLAND is the paradise of women; never look a GIFT horse in the mouth; a GOOD horse cannot be of a bad colour; while the GRASS grows, the steed starves; the GREY mare is the better horse; because a MAN is born in a stable that does not make him a horse; a NOD'S as good as a wink to a blind horse; there is NOTHING so good for the inside of a man as the outside of a horse; if you can't RIDE two horses at once, you shouldn't be in the circus; a SHORT horse is soon curried; it is too late to shut the STABLE-door after the horse has bolted; one man may STEAL a horse, while another may not look over a hedge; THREE things are not to be trusted; if TWO ride on a horse, one must ride behind; for WANT of a nail the shoe was lost; if WISHES were horses, beggars would ride.

horseback
see set a BEGGAR on horseback, and he'll ride to the Devil.

HORSES for courses
Originally an expression in horse-racing: different horses are suited to different race-courses. Now widely used in other contexts.

□ 1891 Turf vii. A familiar phrase on the turf is ‘horses for courses’… The Brighton Course is very like Epsom, and horses that win at one meeting often win at the other.

1929 Daily Express 7 Nov.18 Followers of the ‘horses for courses’ theory will be interested in the acceptance of Saracen, Norwest and Sir Joshua.

1967 Governance of Britain ii. He must concentrate on the doctrine of horses for courses .. in using the specialist knowledge of individual ministers.

1985 ‘“Pearlhanger xxiii. It seemed to me I'd need a massacre, and immediately thought of Big John Sheehan. Horses for courses.

1996 Washington Post 7 July D6 In thoroughbred racing, it's called ‘horses for courses.’ In Hollywood, it's known as smart casting.

www.EnglishPro.ir
efficiency and inefficiency

hot
see a LITTLE pot is soon hot; STRIKE while the iron is hot.

hound
see you cannot RUN with the hare and hunt with the hounds.

One HOUR's sleep before midnight is worth two after

1640 Outlandish Proverbs no. 882 One houres sleepe before midnight is worth three after.
1670 English Proverbs 37 One hours sleep before midnight's worth two hours after.
1829 Advice to Young Men I. xxxviii. It is said by the country-people that one hour's sleep before midnight is worth more than two are worth after midnight; and this I believe to be a fact.
1937 Summer Half iii. Now, Mr. Winter, remember my boys when you come up! Every hour's sleep before twelve is worth two afterwards, you know.

health

hour
see also the DARKEST hour is just before the dawn; SIX hours' sleep for a man, seven for a woman, and eight for a fool.

When HOUSE and land are gone and spent, then learning is most excellent

Of similar vintage is LEARNING is better than house and land.

1752 Taste I. i. It has always been my Maxum .. to give my Children Learning enough; for, as the old Saying is, When house and Land are gone and spent, then Learning is most excellent.
1896 Broom-Squire xxvi. I have .. got Simon to write for me, on the fly-leaf .. When land is gone, and money is spent, Then learning is most excellent.

learning ; property

A HOUSE divided cannot stand

With allusion to MATTHEW xii. 25 (AV) Every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.
a 1050 Liber Scintillarum (EETS) 133 Drihten segth .. ælc ceaster oththe hus todæled ongean hit sylf, hit na stynt.
c 1704 in Journal in Works (1751) 42 My Mother would often say, A House divided could not stand.
1858 Speech 16 June in Works (1953) II. 461 ‘A house divided against itself cannot stand.’ I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free.
1963 12th of Never xxv. You had to have your own approval ..A house divided cannot stand.

quarrelsomeness ; unity and division

house
see also BETTER one house spoiled than two; an ENGLISHMAN'S house is his castle; FOOLS build houses and wise men live in them; those who live in GLASS houses shouldn't throw stones; LEARNING is better than house and land; never mention ROPE in the house of a man who has been hanged; SWEEP the house with broom in May, you sweep the head of the house away.

human
see to ERR is human (to forgive divine).

hundred
see the BUYER has need of a hundred eyes, the seller of but one.

HUNGER drives the wolf out of the wood
Cf. early 14th-cent. Fr. la fains enchace le louf dou bois, hunger chases the wolf from the wood.
1483 Cato B6V As hunger chaceth the wolfe out of the wode thus sobrete [sobriety] chaseth the deuel
Hunger driues the wolfe out of the wood, if I had not great neede of monie, you
should never haue them so dog cheape.

*Gil Blas* (1749) IV. XII. vii. *This one .. I own is the child of necessity. Hunger, thou knowest, brings
the wolf out of the wood.*

*Works* (1897) III. 323 *Hunger, proverbs say, allures the wolf from the wood.*

*Line of Love* iv. *Hunger .. causes the wolf to sally from the wood.*

**hunger : necessity**

**HUNGER is the best sauce**

Cf. CICERO *De Finibus* II. xxviii. *cibi condimentum esse famem,* hunger is the spice of food; early 15th-
cent. Fr. *n'est sauce qui vaille fain,* there is no sauce worth so much as hunger.

Eclogues (EETS) II. 743 *Make hunger thy sause be thou neuer so nice, For there shalt thou finde
none other kind of spice.*

*Garden of Wisdom* I. B1 *He [Socrates] sayd, the beste sawce is hungre.*

tr. P. Martyr's *Decades of New World* II. iii. (margin) *Hunger is the best sauce.*

Alton Locke i. ix. *If hunger is, as they say, a better sauce than any Ude invents, you should spend ..
months shut out from every glimpse of Nature, if you would taste her beauties.*

*Scots Kitchen* iii. *Mere hunger, which is the best sauce, will not produce cookery, which is the art of
sauces.*

*By Shores of Silver Lake* xxi. *‘The gravy is extra good too.’ ‘Hunger is the best sauce,’ Ma replied
modestly.*

*Consuming Passions* ix. *The best of all sauces is hunger engendered by exercise in the open air,
and, equally, the best of digestives is pleasant company.*

*Washington Post* 7 Aug. A10 *However, just as hunger is the best sauce for unappetizing food,
political peril is the best argument for Dole to swallow his skepticism ...*

**food and drink : hunger**

**A HUNGRY man is an angry man**

1641 *Scottish Proverbs* (STS) no. 553 *Hungry men ar angry.*

1659 *Proverbs* (English) 13 *A hungry man, an angry man.*

1738 *Polite Conversation* II. 119 *‘I'm hungry.’..‘And I'm angry, so let us both go fight.’*

1909 *Spectator* 22 May 824 *The Acharnians [in a play of that name by Aristophanes] .. made fun of the
Athenians ... ‘A hungry man is an angry man’.. and the Athenians were certainly hungry.*

1922 *Ulysses* 161 *Hungry man is an angry man.*

1981 *in Times* 17 Oct. 7 *A hungry mob is an angry mob, a pot a cook but the food not enough.*

**hunger**

hunt

see *you cannot RUN with the hare and hunt with the hounds.*

**HURRY no man's cattle**

1822 *Pirate* I. ix. *‘A' in gude time,’ replied the jagger [pedlar]; ‘hurry no man's cattle.’

1907 *English Proverbs & Proverbial Phrases* 236 *Hurry no man's cattle; you may come to have a donkey
of your own. Sometimes said to an impatient child.*

1932 *Murder of Ninth Baronet* xxi. *I knew that in due time he would tell me the result of these mental
exercises; in the meantime I stood by the old adage—hurry no man's cattle.*

**patience and impatience**
hurt
see don't CRY before you're hurt; what you don't KNOW can't hurt you; STICKS and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me.
The HUSBAND is always the last to know
Wife is also used as well as husband.

1604 What you Will I. i. A cuckold .. a thing that's hoodwinked with kindness … He must be the last must know it.

1659 Proverbs 95 The good man is the last that knows whats amisse at home.

1756 Tristram Shandy VIII. iv. ‘It is with love as with cuckoldom’—the suffering party is at least the third, but generally the last who knows anything about the matter.

1893 Many Inventions 250 The most disconnected witness knew .. the causes of offence; and the prisoner [i.e. the cuckolded husband], who naturally was the last of all to know, groaned in the dock while he listened.

1936 Gone with Wind liv. I thought surely the whole town knew by now. Perhaps they all do, except you. You know the old adage: ‘The wife is always the last one to find out.’

1959 Small Wilderness i. That over-worked truism about the wife being the last to know, wasn't in my case strictly accurate.

1979 Family Vault iii. ‘Do you mean he hasn't heard?’ Leila whooped. ‘They say the husband's always the last to know,’ Harry chimed in.

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a DEAF husband and a blind wife are always a happy couple.

ice
see the RICH man has his ice in the summer and the poor man gets his in the winter.

An IDLE brain is the Devil's workshop
Quot. 1995 appears to conflate this proverb with the DEVIL finds work for idle hands to do.

1602 Works (1603) 906 The idle bodie and the idle braine is the shoppe [workshop] of the deuill.
1732 Gnomologia no. 3053 Idle Brains are the Devil's Workhouses.
1855 Hand-Book of Proverbs 311 An idle brain is the devil's workshop.
1859 Self-Help viii. Steady employment .. keeps one out of mischief, for truly an idle brain is the devil's workshop.
1930 Charlie Chan carries On xxii. Tell him to be [a] good boy and study hard. An idle brain is the devil's workshop.
1988 Design for Murder ix. ‘Idle minds are the devil's workshop’. She lifted the watch and stared at it accusingly. ‘Five minutes after eight. Is no one else here?’

1995 Washington Times 18 May A20 ‘Idle hands are the devil's workshop.’ That seems to be the attitude among President Clinton's Pentagon appointees who recently drafted plans to involve the military in domestic social programs …
The corollary of the BUSIEST men have the most leisure.

1678 English Proverbs (ed. 2) 161 Idle folks have the most labour.

1853 Sponge's Sporting Tour lvii. ‘Got a great deal to do’, retorted Jog, who, like all thoroughly idle men, was always dreadfully busy.

1855 Hand-Book of Proverbs 414 Idle folks have the least leisure.

1908 Spectator 10 Oct. 535 The difference between leisureliness and laziness runs parallel with that between quickness and haste. ‘Idle people’, says the proverb, ‘have the least leisure.’

efficiency and inefficiency; idleness

idle

see also as good be an ADDLED egg as an idle bird; the DEVIL finds work for idle hands to do; it is idle to SWALLOW the cow and choke on the tail.

IDLENESS is the root of all evil

The idea is attributed to St. Bernard of Clairvaux. Cf. early 14th-cent. Fr. oiseuseté atrait viches, idleness attracts vices; c 1390 CHAUCER Second Nun's Prologue l. 1 The ministre and the norice [nurse] unto vices, which that men clepe [call] in Englishsh ydlenes.

1422 in Secreta Secretorum (1898) 158 Idlynysse is the rote of vicis.

1538 Governance of Virtue B8 Idleness .. is the well-spring and root of all vice.

1707 Beaux' Stratagem I. i. Idleness is the Root of all Evil; the World's wide enough, let'em bustle.

1850 David Copperfield x. ‘The boy will be idle there’, said Miss Murdstone, looking into a pickle-jar, ‘and idleness is the root of all evil’.

1874 Phineas Redux II. xxxvi. I much prefer downright honest figures. Two and two make four; idleness is the root of all evil .. and the rest of it.

good and evil; idleness

If IFS and ands were pots and pans, there'd be no work for tinkers' hands

Used as a humorous retort to an over-optimistic conditional expression. ands: the conjunction and ‘if’, of which an is a weakened form, is employed irregularly here as a noun to denote ‘an expression of condition or doubt’.

1850 Alton Locke I. x. ‘If a poor man's prayer can bring God's curse down’. ‘If ifs and ans were pots and pans’.

1886 Notes & Queries 7th Ser. I. 71 There is also the old doggerel—If ifs and ands Were pots and pans Where would be the work for Tinkers' hands?

1924 Times 30 May 9 If he might vary an old saw he would say, ‘If “ifs and ands” could create employment, then there would be little use for the Minister of Labour to tinker at it’.

1981 Loss of Culion xvi. As my old aunt used to say, ‘If ifs and ands were pots and pans, there'd be no work for tinkers' hands’

wanting and having

Where IGNORANCE is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise

Now frequently abbreviated to ignorance is bliss.

1742 Poems (1966) 10 Thought would destroy their paradise. No more; where ignorance is bliss, 'Tis folly to be wise.

1865 Facey Romford's Hounds lxxi. Of course Facey knew nothing about Lucy, and, upon the principle that where ignorance is bliss 'twere folly to be wise, Soapey was not extra-inquisitive about her.

1900 Mr. Thomas Atkins xxiv. Never did soldiers set out for a war in better spirits than did ours .. against the Boers. They .. afforded a pathetic illustration of the proverb: ‘Where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise’.

1925 Juno & Paycock II. 49 ‘You ought to be ashamed o'yourself .. not to know the History o' your
country’ .. ‘Where ignorance’s bliss ‘tis folly to be wise’.
1983 Sleepers of Erin i. Antique dealers haven’t a clue. Pathetic. God knows why, but dealers always want to prove that ignorance really is bliss.
1997 Washington Times 5 Aug. A13 [European] individuals rarely think about taxes. For them, a few minutes every year and it’s over. The basic principle, I suppose, is that ignorance is bliss.

Ignorance
IGNORANCE of the law is no excuse for breaking it
There is a hoary legal maxim: ignorantia iuris neminem excusat, ignorance of the law excuses nobody.
□ c 1412 De Regimene Principum (EETS) 92 Excuse schal hym naght his ignorance.
1530 Dialogues in English II. xlvi. Ignorance of the law though it be inuincible doth not excuse.
1616 Adages 100 The ignorance of the law excuseth no man.
1654 Table-Talk (1689) 30 Ignorance of the Law excuses no man; not that all Men know the Law, but because 'tis an excuse every man will plead, and no man can tell how to confute him.
1830 Mariner's Sketches xxviii. Ignorance of the law excuses nobody … The gates of mercy are forever shut against them.
1979 Private Eye 17 Aug. 6 [He] was fined £5 at Marylebone Court when he learned that ignorance of the law is no excuse for breaking it.

Excuses; Law and Lawyers
It's an ILL bird that fouls its own nest
A condemnation of a person who vilifies his own family, country, etc. Cf. medieval L. nidos commaculans inmundus habebitur ales, the bird is unclean that soils its nest.
□a 1250 Owl & Nightingale (1960) l. 99 Dahet habbe [a curse on] that ilke best that fuleth his owe nest.
c 1400 Moral Tales (1889) 205 Hytys a fowle brydde that fylyth hys owne neste.
1591 Preparative to Marriage 82 It becommeth not any woman to set light by her husband, nor to publish his infirmities for they say, it is an euill bird that defileth his owne nest.
1670 English Proverbs 62 It's an ill bird that beraies its own nest.
1817 Rob Roy II. xiii. Where's the use o' vilifying ane's country … It's an ill bird that files its ain nest.
1926 Times 7 Sept. 17 Nothing .. can excuse the bad taste of Samuel Butler's virulent attack upon his defenceless family … It's an ill bird that fouls its own nest.
1981 Death-Cap Dancers xiv. It's a dirty bird that fouls its own nest. Your loyalty does you credit.

Malice
ILL gotten goods never thrive
Cf. CICERO Philippica II. xxvii. 65 male parta, male dilabuntur, things ill gotten slip away in evil ways.
□1519 Vulgaria 77 Euyll gotten ryches wyll neuer prowe longe.
c 1577 Treatise .. Dicing 95 Euill gotten goods shall neuer prosper.
1609 Case is Altered V. xii. Ill gotten goods ne'er thrive, I plaid the thiefe, and now am rob'd my selfe.
1670 English Proverbs 98 Ill gotten goods, seldom prosper.
1826 Elia's Last Essays (1833) ii. That ill-gotten gain never prospers .. is the trite consolation administered to the easy dupe, when he has been tricked out of his money or estate.
1937 Busman's Honeymoon x. Ill gotten goods never thrive … Because he hath oppressed and forsaken the poor.

Action and Consequence; Retribution
He that has an ILL name is half hanged
□a 1400 in Religious Lyrics of XIVth Century (1957) 193 Ho-so hath a wicked name Me semeth for sothe half hongid he is.
Dialogue of Proverbs II. vi. 12 He that hath an ill name, is halfe hangd.

Devil's Banquet IV. 156 It is a very ominous and suspitious thing to haue an ill name. The Prouerbe saith, he is halfe hanged.

Raleigh xii. Were not an ill name half hanged he would have been acquitted.

It's ILL waiting for dead men's shoes
The earlier form of the proverb, exemplified in quots. c 1549 and 1721, is no longer found. The metaphorical phrase to wait for dead men's shoes is also illustrated below.


Scottish Proverbs 148 He goes long bare Foot that wears dead Mens Shoon. Spoken to them who expect to be some Man's Heir, to get his Place, or Wife, if he should dye.

Upholsterer I. ii. You have very good pretensions; but then its waiting for dead Men's Shoes.

Guy Mannering II. xvi. That's but sma' gear, puir thing; she had a sair time o't with the auld leddy. But it's ill waiting for dead folk's shoon.

London Lavender iv. I pointed out that I was executor to no fewer than three persons ‘It's ill waiting for dead men's shoes’, Naomi quoted.

Case of Heavenly Twin xvi. Perhaps I was right when I suggested he told Staffer he was waiting for a dead man's shoes.

ILL weeds grow apace
Cf. 14th-cent. Fr. male herbe croist, bad grass thrives.

Dialogue of Proverbs I. x. C4 Ill weede growth fast Ales [Alice], wherby the corne is lorne [lost].

First Fruits 31V An yl weede groweth apace.

Richard III II. iv. 13 ‘Ay’, quoth my uncle Gloucester, ‘Small herbs have grace: great weeds do grow apace.’ .. I would not grow so fast, Because sweet flow'rs are slow and weeds make haste.

Polite Conversation I. 23 ‘Don't you think Miss is grown?’ ‘Ay; ill Weeds grow a-pace’.

Gospel according to St. Matthew II. 208 The roots of the old lay hid, and, in due time, showed again above ground. ‘Ill weeds grow apace.’

It's an ILL wind that blows nobody any good
A sailing metaphor frequently invoked to explain good luck arising from the source of others' misfortune.

Dialogue of Proverbs II. ix. L1 An yll wynde that blowth no man to good, men saie.

Henry VI, Pt. 3 II. v.55 Ill blows the wind that profits nobody.

Church Hist. Britain II. ii. It is an ill wind which bloweth no man Profit. He is cast on the Shoar of Freezland where the Inhabitants were by his Preaching converted to Christianity.

Rump II. i. 'Tis an ill Wind they say bloughs no body good.

Diary of Late Physician I. i. My good fortune (truly it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good) was almost too much for me.

Angels in your Beer xxviii. It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good, but then John Quinlan .. was about as close to being a nobody as anyone could get.

Times Magazine 23 Aug. 4 I am refusing to believe that it's an ill wind which blows absolutely no good whatsoever. There are those who already are telling me this is all good for me. It isn't though.
ill
see also BAD news travels fast; EVIL doers are evil dreaders; it's ill speaking between a FULL man and a fasting; he that LIVES in hope dances to an ill tune; it is ill SITTING at Rome and striving with the Pope; a SOW may whistle, though it has an ill mouth for it; never SPEAK ill of the dead; also BAD.

IMITATION is the sincerest form of flattery

1820 Lacon I. 113 Imitation is the sincerest of flattery.
1843 Handley Cross I. xv. Imitation is the sincerest of flattery.
1940 Malice Domestic 13 Penny's [clothes] all seemed to be homemade copies of the expensive models her sister wore … Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery but .. I wondered whether there might not be more to it.
1998 New York Times 2 Jan. E46 If it's true that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then James Cagney must have been the most adulated movie star in the history of Hollywood.

imitation impossible
see the DIFFICULT is done at once.
impression
see FIRST impressions are the most lasting.
IN for a penny, in for a pound

1695 Canterbury Guests v. i. It concerns you to .. prove what you speak … In for a Penny, in for a Pound.
1815 Guy Mannering III. vii. Sampson .. thought to himself, in for a penny in for a pound, and he fairly drank the witch’s health in a cupfull of brandy.
1841 Old Curiosity Shop II. lxvi. Now, gentlemen, I am not a man who does things by halves. Being in for a penny, I am ready as the saying is to be in for a pound.
1979 Member of Club viii. ‘Do you want to go and have a look, sir?’ ‘Why not? .. In for a penny, in for a pound.’
1997 Old Gang of Mine v. 55 ‘Who told you this?’ In for a penny, in for a pound. ‘One of the potential customers mentioned it.’

action and consequence; perseverance; risk
inclined
see as the TWIG is bent, so is the tree inclined.
inconvenience
see POVERTY is no disgrace, but it is a great inconvenience.
index
see the EYES are the window of the soul.
indian
see the only GOOD Indian is a dead Indian.
infinite
see GENIUS is an infinite capacity for taking pains.
inside
see there is NOTHING so good for the inside of a man as the outside of a horse.
intention

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Every JACK has his Jill

J

JACK is as good as his master

Jack is variously used as a familiar name for a sailor, a member of the common people, a serving man, and one who does odd jobs.

JAM tomorrow and jam yesterday, but never jam today

JAM tomorrow and jam yesterday, but never jam today.
The manageress of the launderette calls me darling … ‘Jam yesterday, jam tomorrow, but never jam today.’

**disappointment**

**jaw** (rush of water):

see **JOUK and let the jaw go by**.

**jest**

see **many a TRUE word is spoken in jest**.

**jewel**

see **FAIR play's a jewel**.

**Jill**

see **a GOOD Jack makes a good Jill; every JACK has his Jill**.

**job**

see **never send a BOY to do a man's job; if a THING'S worth doing, it's worth doing well**.

**join**

see **if you can't BEAT them, join them**.

**JOUK and let the jaw go by**

A Scottish proverb counselling prudent or evasive action when trouble threatens. The phrase to **jouk and let the jaw go by** is also found.

- 1721 *Scottish Proverbs* 189 Juck [stoop], and let the jaw [rush of water] go o'er you. That is, prudently yield to a present Torrent.

- 1817 *Rob Roy* II. xii. Gang your ways hame, like a gude bairn—jouk and let the jaw gae by.

- 1927 *Witch Wood* xv. A man must either jouk and let the jaw go bye, as the overcome [common expression] says, or he must ride the whirlwind.

**prudence ; self-preservation**

**journey**

see **the LONGEST journey begins with a single step**.

**JOVE but laughs at lovers' perjury**

Cf. HESIOD frag. 124 (M-W), οὖν δὲ θείον Κόρες ἀνθρώπου ἥρισεν ἀντὶ τῶν ἐγκαταλείπων διὸ ναυσίδος, since that time he [sc. Zeus] attached no penalty for men to an oath taken in the secret works of Aphrodite; TIBULLUS *Elegies* III. vi. 49 periuria ridet amantium **Iuppiter**, Jupiter laughs at lovers' perjuries; a 1500 in W. W. Skeat *Chaucerian & Other Pieces* (1897) 311 Your [lovers’] othes laste No lenger than the wordes ben ago! And god, and eke his sayntes, laughe also.

- c 1550 tr. A.S. Piccolomini's *Lady Lucre* EA^4 Πακορου .. confesseth the faut asketh forgeuene and .. ryghte well knewe he that Jupyter rather laughethe, then taketh angerlye the periuringe of louers.

- c 1595 *Romeo & Juliet* II. ii. 92 At lovers' perjuries, They say Jove laughs.

- 1700 *Poems* (1958) IV. 1487 Love endures no Tie, And Jove but laughs at Lovers Perjury!

- 1922 *Evening Standard* 17 Oct. 5 Perjury in the Divorce Court has been openly permitted to the upper classes for many years, following the maxim .. that ‘Jove but laughs at lovers' perjury’.

- 1973 *Black Prince* III. 299 Zeus, they say, mocks lovers' oaths.

**love**

No one should be **JUDGE in his own cause**

Cf. the Latin legal maxim: *nemo debet esse iudex in propria causa*, no one should be judge in his own cause; also 1604 SHAKESPEARE *Measure for Measure* v.i. 166 In this I'll be impartial; be you judge Of
your own cause.

Repressor of Blaming of Clergy (1860) II. 381 Noman oughte be iuge in his owne cause which he hath anentis [against] his neighbour.

Letter 3 Nov. (1931) VI. 186 No man is a good judge in his own cause. I believe I am tolerably impartial.

Times 22 Aug. 9. The principle that no judge could be a judge in his own case was generally accepted. The chairman of a meeting was in a quasi-judicial capacity.

Daily Telegraph 16 May 18 The maxim that no one should be judge in his own cause.

law and lawyers

JUDGE not, that ye be not judged

With allusion to MATTHEW vii. 1 (AV) Judge not, that ye be not judged.

Reynard (1880) xxix. Deme [judge] ye noman, and ye shal not be demed. Ship of Fools H1 Judge not but yf that ye wyl be judged. Essays on Life x. The saying, ‘Judge not, that ye be not judged,’ is … a statement of fact. Nothing makes us dislike a man so much as the knowledge that he is always judging us and all men. Service of all Dead i. ‘Judge not that ye be not judged.’ Judge not—at least until the evidence is unequivocal.

reciprocity ; tolerance

June

see a DRIPPING June sets all in tune.

Be JUST before you're generous

Female Spectator II. vii. 35 There is, I think, an old saying, that we ‘ought to be just before we are generous’. SHERIDAN School for Scandal IV. i. Be just before you are generous. Peter Simple I. xi. I owe every farthing of my money … There’s an old proverb — be just before you’re generous. Spectator 4 Apr. 529 A likeable man is tempted to be generous before he is just. Ulysses 521 Bloom—You had better hand over that cash to me to take care of. Why pay more? Stephen—Be just before you are generous.

fair dealing

justify

see the END justifies the means.

Why KEEP a dog and bark yourself?

Philotimus 119 It is smal reason you should kepe a dog, and barke your selfe.

English Proverbs 81 What? keep a dog and bark my self. That is, must I keep servants, and do my work my self.

Polite Conversation I. 17 ‘Good Miss, stir the Fire’… ‘Indeed your Ladyship could have stirr’d it much better’… ‘I won't keep a Dog and bark myself’.

Thirteen at Dinner xviii. Why keep a dog and bark yourself?

Big enough Wreath ix. If money talks louder than words, no wonder Lowell hardly ever speaks. Why keep a dog and bark?
employers and employees; work

KEEP a thing seven years and you'll always find a use for it

1623 Palace of Pleasure C5 Things of small value the old proverb say, Wise men seuen yeares will carefully vp lay.

1663 Parson's Wedding in Comedies & Tragedies (1664) 100 According to the Proverb; Keep a thing seven years, and then if thou hast no use on't throw't away.

1816 Antiquary II. vi. They say, keep a thing seven year, an' ye'll aye find a use for't.

1945 Lark Rise xx. 'I don't know that I've any use for it'. 'Use! Use!.. Keep a thing seven years and you'll always find a use for it!'

thrift

KEEP no more cats than will catch mice

1673 Counsellor Manners lxii. If thou hast a regard to Thrift, keep no more Cats than will kill Mice.

1678 English Proverbs (ed. 2) 350 I will keep no more cats then will catch mice (i.e. no more in family then will earn their living). Somerset.

1710 Proverbs 358 Keep no more Cats than will Catch Mice. Ecquipage and Attendance .. must be agreeable to Character, Dignity and Fortune.

1910 Rewards & Fairies 73 The King keeps no cats that don't catch mice. She must sail the seas, Master Dawe.

efficiency and inefficiency; work

KEEP your own fish-guts for your own sea-maws

1721 Scottish Proverbs 118 Give your own Sea Maws [gulls] your own Fish Guts. If you have any Superfluities give them to your poor Relations, Friends, or Countrymen, rather than to others.

1816 Antiquary I. xv. Ye ken my gudeman likes to ride the expresses himsel—we maun gie our ain fish-guts to our ain sea-maws.

1895 James Inwick xix. Na, na, we'll keep oor ain fish guts for oor ain sea maws!

1952 Death in Canongate (1954) viii. ‘Oh! it makes me a bit sick when you can be so liberal with anyone —’ ‘And not with you. That's what you are trying to say, isn't it?’ ‘I suppose so,’ he said, and quoted lugubriously, ‘“Keep your ain fish guts for your ain sea maws.”'

charity; family

KEEP your shop and your shop will keep you

Parodied by the American actress Mae West (1892–1980) in the 1937 movie Every Day's a Holiday: I always say, keep a diary and some day it'll keep you.

1605 et al. Eastward Ho A2\|I .. garnished my shop .. with good wholsome thriftie sentences; As, 'Touchstone, keepe thy shopp, and thy shoppe will keepe thee'.

1712 Spectator 14 Oct. Sir William Turner .. would say, Keep your Shop and your Shop will keep you.

1759 in Bee 17 Nov. 214 I would earnestly recommend this adage to every mechanic in London, ‘Keep your shop, and your shop will keep you’.

1905 Kipps III. iii. A little bell jangled. ‘Shop!’ said Kipps. ‘That's right. Keep a shop and the shop'll keep you’.

1943 Western Star I. 20 I keep my shop but my shop doth not keep me. Shall I give such chances [of making a fortune] the go-by and walk the roads?

1976 Wednesday Rabbi got Wet vii. ‘When I was home, Dad cared a lot more about the store than he did about me,’ he said bitterly. She nodded … ‘That's because a store, if you take care of it, it takes care of
you. Your father lives from that store, and your grandfather before him.’

- **efficiency and inefficiency:**

- **keep**

  see also a man is known by the company he keeps; experience keeps a dear school; three may keep a secret, if two of them are dead; put your trust in God, and keep your powder dry.

- **keeper**

  see finders keepers (losers weepers).

- **keeping**

  see finding's keepings.

- **key**

  see a golden key can open any door.

- **kick**

  see corporations have neither bodies to be punished nor souls to be damned.

- **kill**

  see it is the pace that kills; it is not work that kills, but worry.

- **killed**

  see care killed the cat; curiosity killed the cat.

### KILLING no murder

Quot. 1657 is the title of a pamphlet asserting that the assassination of Cromwell, the Protector, would be lawful and laudable.

- 1657 (title) Killing noe murder.

- 1800 Castle Rackrent p. xlv. In Ireland, not only cowards, but the brave 'die many times before their death'. There killing is no murder.

- 1831 Adventures of Younger Son II. xxix. Arabs, with whom, if precedents and time can make a thing lawful, killing is no murder.

- 1908 Times Literary Supplement 4 June 179 The exception is the share which he took in the conspiracy of Orsini against Napoleon III ... It was probably a case to which holyoake would have applied the doctrine of 'killing no murder'.

- 1961 View from West vi. The British .. made, in England, propaganda out of the phrase—attributed to the Irish—'killing no murder', they were not foolish enough to take their own propaganda seriously.

### violence

- **killing**

  see also there are more ways of killing a cat than choking it with cream; there are more ways of killing a dog than choking it with butter; there are more ways of killing a dog than hanging it.

- **kind**

  see better a good cow than a cow of a good kind.

### The King can do no wrong

Altered to Queen when appropriate. Cf. the legal maxim: rex non potest peccare, the king can do no wrong; also c 1538 T. Starkey England in Reign of King Henry VIII (EETS) I. iv. Wyl you make a kyng to have no more powar then one of hys lordys? Hyt ys commynly sayd .. a kyng ys aboue hys lawys.

- a 1654 Table-talk (1689) 27 The King can do no wrong, that is no Process [action at law] can be granted against him.

- 1765 Commentaries on Laws of England I. vii. The King can do no wrong ... The prerogative of the crown extends not to do any injury: it is created for the benefit of the people, and therefore cannot be
exerted to their prejudice.

1888 Beechcroft at Rockstone II. xxii. ‘So, Aunt Jane is your Pope’. ‘No; she's the King that can do no wrong,’ said Gillian, laughing.

1952 Hour Awaits 191 It was very different with Augustus … We had always expected that … In his case, was it not rather a matter of the king can do no wrong.

1981 Times 28 July 14 The Queen [of Holland] has no power but some influence … ‘The Queen can do no wrong. The ministers are responsible.’

■ rulers and ruled

A KING'S chaff is worth more than other men's corn
The sense is explained in quot. 1738. For a similar sentiment, see 1612 T. SHELTON tr. Cervantes' Don Quixote I. IV. xii. A Kings crumme is more worth then a Lords loafe. The proverb seems to be Scottish in origin.

1628 Proverbs in Scots (1957) 101 The kings calf [chaff] is worth other mennis corne.

1668 Adagia Scotica 33 Kings caff is worth other mens corn.

1738 Gentleman's Mag. VIII. 474 The King's chaff is worth more than other men's corn. This .. signifies that even the little perquisites, which attend the King's service, are more considerable than standing wages of private persons.

1788 Letter 16 Aug. (1931) I. 245 The old Scots Proverb says well—‘King's caff is better than ither folks' corn’.

1817 Rob Roy III. vii. They say .. kings' chaff is better than other folk's corn, but I think that canna be said o' kings' soldiers, if they let themselves be beaten wi' a wheen [few] auld carles.

1957 Times Literary Supplement 13 Sept. 552 A king's chaff is proverbially better than other men's corn.

■ employers and employees ; value

king
see also a CAT may look at a king; in the COUNTRY of the blind, the one-eyed man is king; a PECK of March dust is worth a king's ransom.

kingdom
see in the COUNTRY of the blind, the one-eyed man is king.

KINGS have long arms
Cf. Gr. αὐτὰ τὰ μακρὰ τῶν βασιλέων, rulers' hands reach a long way; OVID Heroides xvii. an nescis longas regibus esse manus? know you not that kings have far-reaching hands?

1539 tr. Erasmus' Adages A4 V Kynges haue longe handes. They can brynge in men, they can pluck in thinges, though they be a great weye of.

1578 Euphues I. 221 Knowest thou not Euphues that kinges haue long armes, and rulers large reches?

1752 Poor Richard's Almanack (Jan.) Kings haue long Armes, but misfortune longer.

1927 Pallid Giant iii. ‘How will you insure Markham's safety if he takes refuge here?’ .. ‘Governments, proverbially, have long arms.’

justice and injustice ; power

kirtle
see NEAR is my kirtle, but nearer is my smock.

kiss
see an APPLE-PIE without some cheese is like a kiss without a squeeze.

KISSING goes by favour

1616 Adages 62 Kissing commeth by fauour.
Anatomy of Melancholy II. iii. Offices are not alwaies given ... for worth. [note] Kissing goes by Favour.
Scottish Proverbs 225 Kissing goes by Favour. Men shew Regard, or do Service, to People as they affect.
Mary Anerley ii. iii. ‘I should like .. to give you one kiss, Insie’... Before he could give reason in favour of a privilege which goes proverbially by favour, the young maid was gone.
Dead Man's Shoes i. Kissing goes by favour all along the line.
Something Nasty in Woodshed xii. Tell you what, Jock; you forget to mention hot buttered crumpets to Mrs Mortdecai and I'll forget to mention about you pinching her caviare. Kissing goes by favour, you know.

- bribery and corruption
- kissing
- see also when the GORSE is out of bloom, kissing's out of fashion.
- kitchen
- see if you don't like the HEAT, get out of the kitchen.
- kitten
- see WANTON kittens make sober cats.
- knock
- see OPPORTUNITY never knocks twice at any man's door.

To KNOW all is to forgive all

Cf. 1807 MME DE STAËL Corinne III. XVIII. V. tout comprendre rend trés-indulgent; also 1908 E. TERRY Story of my Life 116 I had taken a course for which all blamed me, perhaps because they did not know enough to pardon enough—savoir tout c'est tout pardonner.
1952 Silken Cord xv. After all, to know all is to forgive all, as my poor dear father used to say.
1974 Most Deadly Hate xviii. ‘They say to know all is to forgive all,’ Piper said. ‘Except the killing of Arthur Harlow.’

- forgiveness; tolerance
- You should KNOW a man seven years before you stir his fire

1803 Professional Life I. p. xi. It is a well-meant saying, that you should know a man seven years before you stir his fire; or, in other words, before you venture at too much familiarity.
1904 Collectanea IV. 204 You may poke a man's fire after you've known him seven years, but not before.
1942 Marling Hall iii. ‘Let me get you another drink,’ said David, taking the glass. ‘I know one ought to know people seven years to poke their fires, but I believe it's less for cocktails’.
1945 Green December Fills Graveyard iv. 35 ‘I haven't known you ten years, or whatever the period is, but I'm going to poke your fire.’

What you don't KNOW can't hurt you

1576 Petit Palace 168 Why should I seeke to take him in it? .. So long as I know it not, it hurteth mee not.
1908 Easiest Way III. 66 What a fellow doesn't know doesn't hurt him, and he'll love you just the same.
1979 This Fatal Writ 54 ‘No, this is interesting ... I didn't know—’ ‘What you don't know can't hurt you,’ said Maitland.
1984 Man in Gray Flannel Shroud xiii. If she weren't already aware of her dead lover's perfidy, then it was a genuine case of what you don't know can't hurt you.
1992 Rather English Marriage (1993) vi. 115 Everyone's entitled to their privacy and what you don't
KNOW thyself

Cf. Gr. Ἐγνώςθης (οὐ γὰρ θεὸν οἶδεν), the motto inscribed on the 6th-cent. BC temple of Apollo at Delphi and quoted by several ancient writers (some attributing it to Solon): see esp. Pausanias x. 24 and Juvenal Satires xi; L. nosce teipsum.

1387 tr. Higden's Polychronicon (1865) I. 241 While the cherle smoot the victor, he schulde ofte seie to hym in this manere:... Knowe thyself.

1545 Toxophilus II. 36 Knowe thy selfe: that is to saye, learne to knowe what thou arte able, fitte and apt vnlo, and folowe that.

1732 Essay on Man II. 1 Know then thyself, presume not God to scan; The proper study of Mankind is Man.

1849 Caxtons III. XVI. X. ‘Know thyself,’ said the old philosophy. ‘Improve thyself,’ saith the new.

1890 Leaves of Life I. xiii. On hearing the verdict he .. shouted out: ‘I told you so! You never know what you can do till you try’.

1971 Confessions i. Know thyself is a wise Socratic exhortation, but how is it possible?

human nature ; wisdom

You never KNOW what you can do till you try

1818 Year's Residence in USA II. vi. A man knows not what he can do 'till he tries.

1968 Mrs Beer's House xi. ‘Ty, you aren't fit to drive’. ‘Never know what you can do till you try.’

boldness

know

see also BETTER the devil you know than the devil you don't know; one HALF of the world does not know how the other half lives; the HUSBAND is always the last to know; come LIVE with me and you'll know me; MORE people know Tom Fool than Tom Fool knows; NECESSITY knows no law; it TAKES one to know one; it is a WISE child that knows its own father; also KNOWN.

KNOWLEDGE is power

Similar in form to MONEY is power and similar in sentiment to PROVERBS xxiv. 5 (AV) A man of knowledge increaseth strength. Cf. 1597 BACON De Haeresibus x. nam et ipsa scientia potestas est, for knowledge itself is power.

1598 in Bacon Essays 27 Knowledge it selfe is a power whereby he [God] knoweth.

1806 Letter 25 Nov. (1951) II. 935 The well-known aphorism that ‘knowledge is power!’

1853 My Novel I. II. iii. He .. said half aloud,—‘Well, knowledge is power!’

1968 Mrs Beer's House xi. ‘In a few years' time they'll only be getting married,’ to which Father replied darkly and to his own complete satisfaction, ‘Knowledge is power.’

power ; wisdom

knowledge

see also a LITTLE knowledge is a dangerous thing.

known

see a CARPENTER is known by his chips; a man is known by the COMPANY he keeps; the TREE is known by its fruit.

Who KNOWS most, speaks least
The LABOURER is worthy of his hire
With allusion to LUKE X.7 (AV) The labourer is worthy of his hire.

The hye God, that al this world hath wroght, Seith that the werkman worthy is his hyre.

Digna canis pabulo … A Prouerbe declaring that the laborer is worthie of his hire: it is taken as well as the labour of the mind, as of the bodie.

Your service will not be altogether gratuitous, my old friend—the labourer is worthy of his hire.

I shall certainly spend a great deal of it, keeping some for myself—the labourer is worthy of his hire.

The president’s lawyers are certainly right to be concerned about whether they'll get paid—a workman is worthy of his hire, as we all know.

employers and employees; money; work

ladder

see CROSSES are ladders that lead to heaven.

lady

see FAINT heart never won fair lady; FAR-FETCHED and dear-bought is good for ladies; the OPERA isn't over till the fat lady sings.

lamb

see GOD tempers the wind to the shorn lamb; one might as well be HANGED for a sheep as a lamb; MARCH comes in like a lion, and goes out like a lamb.

Lancashire

see what MANCHESTER says today, the rest of England says tomorrow.

Every LAND has its own law

Everie land hes the laich.

Every land hath its own Laugh, and every Corn its own Caff [chaff]. Every Country hath its own Laws, Customs, and Usages.

‘Every land’, says the old Scottish proverb, ‘has its ain lauch.’ And every class has its own mode of thought and expression.

idiosyncrasy; national characteristics

land

see also you BUY land, you buy stones; when HOUSE and land are gone and spent, then learning is most excellent; LEARNING is better than house and land.
lane
see it is a LONG lane that has no turning.

large
see a GREAT book is a great evil; LITTLE pitchers have large ears.

lark
see if the SKY falls we shall catch larks.
The LAST drop makes the cup run over
See also the next proverb.

1655 Church Hist. Britain XI. ii. When the Cup is brim full before, the last (though least) superadded drop is charged alone to be the cause of all the running over. 1855 Hand-Book of Proverbs 509 The last drop makes the cup run over. 1876 Halves I. x. An application of her brother-in-law for a five-pound note .. was the last drop that caused Mrs. Reaburn's cup of bitterness to overflow. 1888 Beechcroft at Rockstone I. i. Valetta burst out crying at this last drop that made the bucket overflow.

excess
It is the LAST straw that breaks the camel's back
The metaphor is also used allusively, especially in the phrase the last straw.

1655 Defence of True Liberty of Human Actions 54 It is the last feather may be said to break an Horses back. 1793 in Publications of Colonial Society of Massachusetts (1954) XXXVI. 298 It is certainly true that the last feather will sink the camel. 1848 Dombey & Son ii. As the last straw breaks the laden camel's back, this piece of underground information crushed the sinking spirits of Mr. Dombey. 1876 Manchester Man III. xv. The last straw breaks the camel's back. 1940 Four Defence xiii. ‘This final droplet turns the scale’... ‘The last straw that breaks the camel's back?’ condensed the Counsellor. 1983 Case of Missing Bronte iii. ‘This is the picture, as far as we have it,’ he said, .. a sigh in his voice that suggested that the visit of the Prime Minister was the final straw that might break the camel's back of his professional equilibrium.

excess

last
see (noun) let the COBBLER stick to his last; the COBBLER to his last and the gunner to his linstock.

last
see also (adjective) there are no BIRDS in last year's nest; the HUSBAND is always the last to know; the THIRD time pays for all; (adverb) he LAUGHS best who laughs last; he who LAUGHS last, laughs longest.

lasting
see FIRST impressions are the most lasting.

late
see (adjective) the EARLY man never borrows from the late man; it is NEVER too late to learn; it is NEVER too late to mend; it is too late to shut the STABLE-door after the horse has bolted; (adverb) BETTER late than never.

LAUGH and the world laughs with you; weep and you weep alone
An alteration of the sentiment expressed by HORACE Ars Poetica 101 ut ridentibus arrident, ita
flentibus adsunt humani voltus, men's faces laugh on those who laugh, and correspondingly weep on those who weep; cf. ROMANS xii. 15 (AV) Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

1883 in Sun (New York) 25 Feb. 3 Laugh, and the world laughs with you; Weep, and you weep alone. For the old sad earth must borrow its mirth, But has trouble enough of its own.

1907 Trimmed Lamp 211 Laugh, and the world laughs with you; weep, and they give you the laugh.

1912 Chronicle of Clovis 127 The proverb ‘Weep and you weep alone,’ broke down as badly on application as most of its kind.

1985 Living on Ragged Edge ii. ‘Laugh and the world laughs with you. Cry and you cry alone.’ I've found quite the opposite is true. ‘Laugh and you laugh alone. Cry and you get a crowd’.

1997 Oldie Aug. 27 Laugh, said the little clown, and the world laughs with you. Cry but don't let anyone catch you at it!

*merriment*

Let them LAUGH that win

An older version of the next two proverbs.

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs I. V. B2 He laught that wynth.

1596 Clyomon & Clamides F1 But I zay to you my nabor [neighbour]..wel let them laugh that win.

1777 Bonner & Middleton’s Bristol Journal 5 July 3 The old Proverb says, let them laugh that wins.—They glory over us, by saying that our Fund is almost exhausted—that is our look out not theirs.

1873 Phineas Redux I. xxxvii. ‘You are laughing at me, I know.’ ‘Let them laugh that win.’

*success; winners and losers*

laugh

see also JOVE but laughs at lovers' perjury; LOVE laughs at locksmiths.

He LAUGHS best who laughs last

See also the two adjacent proverbs. The ‘French proverb’ referred to in quot. 1822 is rira bien qui rira le dernier.

c 1607 Christmas Prince (1923) 109 Hee laugheth best that laugheth to the end.

1715 Country House II. V. Does she play her jests upon me too!—but mum, he laughs best that laughs last.

1822 Peveril IV. iii. Your Grace knows the French proverb, ‘He laughs best who laughs last’.

1873 Phineas Redux I. xxxvii. ‘You are laughing at me, I know.’ ‘Let them laugh that win.’

*revenge; winners and losers*

He who LAUGHS last, laughs longest

A modern development of the preceding proverb.

1912 Widow in Bye Street IV. 66 In this life he laughs longest who laughs last.

1943 Running to Paradise xxx. He who laughs last laughs longest, and in another four days I was able to look at my mug in the mirror without wincing.

1951 Renny's Daughter ix. ‘We'll see. He who laughs last, laughs …’ So worked up was Eugene Clapperton that he could not recall the last word of the proverb.

*revenge; winners and losers*

One LAW for the rich and another for the poor

1830 King's Own I. xi. Is there nothing smuggled besides gin? Now, if the husbands and fathers of
these ladies,—those who have themselves enacted the laws,—wink at their infringement, why should not others do so? .. There cannot be one law for the rich and another for the poor.

1913 Spectator 8 Nov. 757 The idea prevails abroad that there is one law for the ‘rich’ Englishman and another for the ‘poor’ foreigner.

1944 Headmistress iv. ‘You want one law for the people you think are rich and another law for the people you think are poor,’ I said. ‘Let me advise you to find out which are which before you make a fool of yourself’.

1979 Guardian 10 Oct. 10 The strong sense that there was one law for the rich and another for the poor [at the trial].

Justice and Injustice; Law and Lawyers

Law

See also Hard cases make bad law; Ignorance of the law is no excuse for breaking it; Every land has its own law; Necessity knows no law; New lords, new laws; Possession is nine points of the law; Self-preservation is the first law of nature.

A man who is his own lawyer has a fool for his client

1809 Port Folio (Philadelphia) Aug. 132 He who is always his own counsellor will often have a fool for his client.

1850 Autobiography II. xi. The proprietor of the Morning Chronicle pleaded his own cause, an occasion in which a man is said to have ‘a fool for his client’.

1911 British Weekly 21 Dec. 386 There is a popular impression, for which there is a good deal to be said, that a man who is his own lawyer has a fool for his client.

1975 Snow Tiger xiii. You must have heard the saying that the man who argues his own case has a fool for a lawyer.

1991 Washington Times 22 May A3 The lawyer who acts as his own attorney has a fool for a client, they say, but this hasn't stopped the American Bar Association.


Law and Lawyers

Lawyer

See also The devil makes his Christmas pies of lawyers' tongues and clerks' fingers.

Lay

See It is easier to raise the devil than to lay him.

Lay-overs for meddlers

An answer to an impertinent or inquisitive child and others. The expression is found chiefly in the north of England, and in the US. Lay-overs, also contracted to layers or layors, are light blows or smacks given to the meddlesome (but see also quot. 1854). Cf. 1699 B. E. New Dict. Canting Crew s.v. Lare-over, said when the true name of the thing must (in decency) be concealed.

1785 Classical Dict. Vulgar Tongue s.v. Lareovers, Lareovers for medlers, an answer frequently given to children .. as a rebuke for their impertinent curiosity.

1854 Glossary of Northamptonshire Words & Phrases I. 389 Lay-o'ers-for-meddlers, .. a contraction of lay-overs, i.e. things laid over, covered up, or protected from meddlers.

1882 & Glossary of Lancashire Dialect 179 ‘What have yo' getten i'that bag? ’ ‘Layers-for-meddlers—does ta want to know?’

1936 Gone with Wind xxxii. When they asked who was going to lend the money she said: ‘Layovers catch meddlers,’ so archly they all laughed.
'Know his address?' ‘I certainly do. Ninety-seven Gramercy Park North, New York.’ She closed the door firmly. ‘Layovers for meddlers,’ she muttered.

busbodies; curiosity

lazy

see LONG and lazy, little and loud.

lead

see when the BLIND lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch; CROSSES are ladders that lead to heaven; all ROADS lead to Rome.

leak

see LITTLE leaks sink the ship.

leap

see LOOK before you leap.

learn

see LIVE and learn; it is NEVER too late to learn; NEVER too old to learn; we must learn to WALK before we can run; don't go near the WATER until you learn how to swim.

LEARNING is better than house and land

Similar in sentiment to when HOUSE and land are gone and spent, then learning is most excellent.

1773 in Goldsmith She stoops to Conquer A3VWhen ign'rance enters, folly is at hand; Learning is better far than house and land.

1800 Castle Rackrent 19 I. thanked my stars I was not born a gentleman to so much toil and trouble—but Sir Murtagh took me up short with his old proverb, ‘learning is better than house or land’.

1859 Love & Fortune 8 ‘Learning is better than house and land.’ A fact that I never could understand.

LEAST said, soonest mended

c 1460 in Remains of Early Popular Poetry (1864) III. 169 Who sayth lytell he is wyse .. And fewe wordes are soone amend.

1555 Two Hundred Epigrams no. 169 Lyttle sayde, soone amended.

1641 Scottish Proverbs (STS) no. 946 Littl said is soon mended.

1776 John Buncle, Junior I. vi. Mum's the word; least said is soonest mended.

1818 Heart of Midlothian I. vi. A fine preaching has he been at the night .. but maybe least said is sunest mended.

1960 Fresh from Country xii. A quiet word .. should .. stop any further tale-bearing, and I really think it's a case of ‘least said, soonest mended’.

1992 Rather English Marriage (1993) xvii. 289 He was tempted to go down and confront her, .. but he knew he was in the wrong. Least said, soonest mended: no good creating a fuss now.

discretion; speech and silence; tact

least

see also IDLE people have the least leisure; who KNOWS most, speaks least.

There is nothing like LEATHER

Also used literally.

1692 Fables of Aesop cccxlvi. There was a council of mechanics called to advise about the fortifying
of a city... Up starts a currier [a person who dressed and coloured leather]; Gentlemen, says he, when y'ave said all that can be said, there's nothing in the world like leather.

1837 Merchant & Friar iv. King Log [the birch] was.. forgotten.. ‘Depend upon it, Sir, there is nothing like leather’.

1892 Big Bow Mystery vi. Besides, meat might have reminded him too much of his work. There is nothing like leather, but Bow beefsteaks occasionally come very near it.

1909 Votes for Women 22 Oct. 63 Nothing like leather for Suffragettes' wear.—Miss M. Roberta Mills makes Ties, Bags, Belts, [etc.].

1935 (title) Nothing like leather.

1937 C. Six Queer Things v. 115 Morgan had a leathery mind. There was no subtlety or sharpness about it, but it was tough... No amount of discouragement or error wore it out. There is nothing like leather.

strength and weakness

leave
see LET well alone.

leg
see there goes more to MARRIAGE than four bare legs in a bed; everyone STRETCHES his legs according to the length of his coverlet.

leisure
see the BUSIEST men have the most leisure; IDLE people have the least leisure; there is LUCK in leisure; MARRY in haste and repent at leisure.

LEND your money and lose your friend

1474 Game of Chess (1883) III. iv. 112 And herof speketh Domas the philosopher and sayth that my frende borrowed money of me And I haue lost my frende and my money attones [simultaneously].

1600–1 Hamlet I.iii. 75 Neither a borrower nor a lender be; For loan oft loses both itself and friend.

1721 Scottish Proverbs Lend your Money, and lose your Friend. It is not the lending of our Money that loses our Friend; but the demanding it again.

1960 Enter Murderers xiii. You know what they say about lending money, it's a sure way to lose friends.

borrowing and lending; friends.

lend
see also DISTANCE lends enchantment to the view.

LENGTH begets loathing

1742 Don Quixote II. ii. ix. The rest I omit, because length begets loathing.

1895 My Confidences (1896) 43 ‘Length begets loathing.’ I well remember the sultry Sunday evenings when .. we simmered through Mr. Shepherd's long-winded pastorals.

brevity and long-windedness

length
see also everyone STRETCHES his legs according to the length of his coverlet.

lengthen
see as the DAY lengthens, so the cold strengthens.

The LEOPARD does not change his spots
With allusion to JEREMIAH xiii. 23 (AV) Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?

1546 First Examination of Anne Askewe 38 Their olde condycyons wyll they change, when the blackemoreæne change hys skynne, and the catte of the mountayne [leopard] her spottes.

www.EnglishPro.ir
Richard II. I. i. 174 Rage must be withstood ... Lions make leopards tame.—Yea, but not change his spots.

Latin Proverbs 317 Pardus maculas non deponit, a leopard does not change his spots.

He always was a dirty old man .. and the leopard doesn't change his spots.

Although he swears he has changed, leopards don't usually change their spots, especially those who don't cooperate in counseling.

LESS is more

Andrea del Sarto l. 78 in Poems (1981) I. 645 Well, less is more, Lucrezia: I am judged.

[Mies] has always been guided by his personal motto, ‘less is more’.

Caravaggio Obsession III. iii. Anyway, he spent years furnishing it with precious, ornamental works of art. This was in the twenties and thirties, when ‘less is more’ was the golden rule.

Tidewater Tales (1988) 55 Steadfastly we have resisted this clear association, reminding ourselves that Less is More antedates our pregnancy.

What Chiat and his associates seem to be betting on is that there is a mass market of low-income, style-conscious people who have grasped the hip message that less is more.

Sometimes, less is indeed more. However, when it comes to national defense, that argument is hard to accept.

LESS is more

see also of two EVILS choose the less; more HASTE, less speed.

LET well alone

Well is normally considered here as a noun (‘what is well’), rather than an adverb. The proverb is also frequently found in the form leave well alone.

The shomaker thought to make his house greater ... They pulled downe foure or fiue postes of the house ... Why said Scoggin, when it was well you could not let it alone.

When a Person is tolerably well, and is subject to no painful or dangerous Distemper, I think it his Duty .. to let Well alone.

Joanna quoted to me the other day an excellent proverb applied to health: ‘Let well alone’.

This immortal work .. will stand for centuries ... It is well: it works well: let well alone.

Poor Dad wouldn't let well alone. He kept saying, ‘Philadelphia, what does all this mean?’

I thought of the vanity of not letting well alone, of not being content with my life.

I don't think it's ever a good idea to tamper with tradition. Leave well enough alone, I say.

see also let the COBBLER stick to his last; let the DEAD bury the dead; let them LAUGH that win; LIVE and let live; let SLEEPING dogs lie; SPARE at the spigot, and let out at the bung-hole; never let the SUN go down on your anger.

let
DEATH is the great leveller.

A LIAR ought to have a good memory

Cf. QUINTILIAN Institutio Oratoria IV. ii. mendacem memorem esse oportet, a liar ought to have a good memory.

\[ a \ 1542 \] in Poetical Works (1858) p. xxxvii. They say, ‘He that will lie well must have a good remembrance, that he agree in all points with himself, lest he be spied.’

\[ c \ 1690 \] Twelve Sermons (1722) IV. 167 Indeed, a very rational Saying, That a lyar ought to have a good Memory.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 50 A Lyar should have a good Memory. Lest he tell the same Lye different ways.

1945 Lark Rise xiii. ‘A liar ought to have a good memory,’ they would say.

1990 Washington Times 7 Mar. F1 They say a liar has to have a good memory. In that case, Mr. Reagan's testimony is proof of his honesty.

lying

libel

see the GREATER the truth, the greater the libel.

lick

see if you can't BEAT them, join them.

A LIE is halfway round the world before the truth has got its boots on

The speed with which falsehood travels was a classical commonplace; e.g. VIRGIL Aeneid iv. 174 Fama, malum qua non aliud velocius alium, Rumour, than whom no other evil thing is faster. This whole passage was imitated by Shakespeare in the Induction to Henry IV, Pt.2 (1597–8).

\[ 1859 \] Gems from Spurgeon 74 It is well said in the old proverb, ‘a lie will go round the world while truth is pulling its boots on’.

1996 National Review 6 May 6 ‘A lie is halfway round the world before the truth has got its boots on.’ But, eventually, truth gets booted and spurred, and the lie gets a good licking.

1997 Washington Post 15 May C23 One of the sad inequities of life is that a lie can travel halfway around the world before the truth can tie its shoelaces.

rumour ; truth

If you LIE down with dogs, you will get up with fleas

An assertion that human failings, such as dishonesty and foolishness, are contagious. Cf. L. qui cum canibus concumbunt cum pulicibus surgent, they who lie with dogs will rise with fleas.

\[ 1573 \] Garden of Pleasure 103^VChi va dormir con i cani, si leua con i pulici. He that goeth to bed wyth Dogges, aryseth with fleas.

1640 Outlandish Proverbs no. 343 Hee that lies with the dogs, riseth with fleas.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 129 He that sleeps with Dogs, must rise with Fleas. If you keep Company with base and unworthy Fellows, you will get some Ill by them.

1791 Rights of Kings 32 To this great truth, a Universe agrees, ‘He who lies down with dogs, will rise with fleas’.

1842 Jack Hinton xxii. If you lie down with dogs, you’ll get up with fleas, and that’s the fruits of travelling with a fool.

1931 tr. Kober's Circus Nights & Circus Days ix. It's like this; if you go to bed with your dogs, you're bound to get up with fleas. If you once work for a small salary, the news gets round.

1991 Spectator 9 Nov. 8 I have few genial feelings towards the Sunday Times, and it is possible that I was thinking of its editor when I wrote .. of the danger that those who lie with dogs will rise with fleas.

1996 Washington Post 26 Feb. B2 [W]e do well to bear in mind three axioms so hoary that their essential truth may no longer be adequately grasped. The first is, ‘He who lies down with dogs rises with fleas.’
associates

lie
see (noun) ASK no questions and hear no lies; HALF the truth is often a whole lie.
lie
see also (verb) as you MAKE your bed, so you must lie upon it; as a TREE falls, so shall it lie; TRUTH lies at the bottom of a well.

LIFE begins at forty

1932 Life begins at Forty i. Life begins at forty. This is the revolutionary outcome of our New Era ... Today it is half a truth. Tomorrow it will be an axiom.
1945 Zionist Review 14 Dec. 6 Among Palestine pioneers, life does not ‘begin at forty’.
1952 Hour Awaits 142 Life begins at forty ... I know you're only in your thirties, but it leaves a nice margin.
1990 Grave Undertaking v. Life begins at forty, she reminded herself—give or take a couple of years.

life ; middle age
LIFE isn't all beer and skittles
Life is not unalloyed pleasure or relaxation.
1855 Nature & Human Nature I. ii. ‘This life ain't all beer and skittles.’ Many a time .. when I am disappointed sadly I say that saw over.
1857 Tom Brown's Schooldays I. ii. Life isn't all beer and skittles.
1931 Sittaforod Mystery xxvi. ‘It's an experience, isn't it?’ ‘Teach him life can't be all beer and skittles,’ said Robert Gardner maliciously.
1953 Detection Unlimited xv. I've got a lot of sympathy for that chap. I should say life isn't all beer and skittles for him.
1985 Beer & Skittles iii. “Life,” as the saying goes,’ he solemnly informed Persis, “is not all beer and skittles.”'

life
While there's LIFE there's hope
Cf. THEOCRITUS Idyll iv. 42 έπεσε δε τοι ὁ αίμω, there's hope among the living; CICERO Ad Atticum IX. x. dum anima est, spes esse dicitur, as the saying is, while there's life there's hope; also ECCLESIASTES ix. 4 (see a LIVE dog is better than a dead lion).
1539 tr. Erasmus' Adages 36VThe sycke person whyle he hath lyfe, hath hope.
1670 English Proverbs 113 While there's life, there's hope, he cry'd; Then why such haste? so groan'd and dy'd.
1868 & Foul Play I. xi. They lost, for a few moments, all idea of escaping. But .. ‘while there's life there's hope.’
1939 Death of his Uncle V. But so far it's only the poor gentleman's clothes that have been found, isn't it? I mean, while there's life there's hope.
1979 Hooky & Villainous Chauffeur viii. ‘I don't want to go on to ninety-five.’ ‘Not now you don't; but you wait till you're ninety-four. While there's life there's hope, as they say.’
1996 Washington Times 29 Jan. C14 I will be pleasantly surprised if corporate America acts on your ‘wake-up call’— but where there's life there's hope.

life ; optimism
life
see also ART is long and life is short; the BEST things in life are free; if you would be HAPPY for a
week take a wife; my SON is my son till he gets him a wife, but my daughter's my daughter all the days of her life; VARIETY is the spice of life.

LIGHT come, light go

Less often heard than EASY come, easy go. Cf. late 14th-cent. Fr. [argent] legierement vous sont venu et legierement sont perdu, [money] comes to you lightly and is lightly lost.

☐ 1390 Pardoner's Tale l. 781 And lightly as it comth, so wol we spende.
☐ a 1475 Works (1869) l. 489 For thyng that lightly cometh, lightly goeth.

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs II. ix. L1 Lyght come lyght go.

1712 John Bull still in his Senses iv. A thriftless Wretch, spending the Goods and Gear that his Fore-Fathers won with the Sweet of their Brows; light come, light go.

1861 Cloister & Hearth II. X. Our honest customers are the thieves ... With them and with their purses 'tis lightly come, and lightly go.

1937 They found Him Dead iv. He was a bad husband to her. Light come light go.

getting and spending

light

see also (adjective) MANY hands make light work.

LIGHTING never strikes the same place twice

☐ 1857 Prisoner of Border xii. They did not hit me at all ... Lightning never strikes twice in the same place, nor cannon balls either, I presume.

1942 Tinsley's Bones x. The Witness: They say that lightning never strikes twice in the same place. Mr Blodgett: It don't because the second time the place ain't there.

1979 Death in Account x. His bank had been raided the moment his back had been turned. ‘Well, lighting never strikes the same place twice ... I expect we'll be safe enough now.’

misfortune

LIKE breeds like

☐ 1557 Sermons 178Wyth a frowarde [evilly disposed] synner, a man shall be naughtye [wicked].. for lyke maketh like.

☐ 1577 Misogonus 2VThe like bredes the like (eche man sayd).

1842 Poems (1969) 703 Like men, like manners: Like breeds like, they say.

1931 Strange Death of Martin Green xiv. Murder is an awfully bad thing for anybody to get away with, even once. Like breeds like.

1969 Look back with Love xxv. The Richard saga seemed .. summed up in her grandfather's words .. ‘Like begets like in spite of the Devil.’

similarity and dissimilarity

LIKE will to like

Cf. HOMER Odyssey xvii. 218...the god always brings like to like; CICERO De Senectute III. vii. pares autem vetere proverbio cum paribus facillime congreganture, according to the old proverb equals most easily mix together; early 14th-cent. Fr. lung semblable quiert laubre, one like thing seeks another.

☐ a 1400 Legends of Saints (STS) 1. 226 In proverbe I haf hard say That lyk to lyk drawis ay.

☐ c 1450 Proverbs of Good Counsel in Book of Precedence (EETS) 70 This proverbe dothe specify, ‘Lyke
wyll to lyke in eche company'.
1648 Hesperides 378 Like will to like, each Creature loves his kinde.
1822 Peveril II. ii. How could I help it? like will to like—the boy would come—the girl would see him.
1855 Nature & Human Nature I. xi. Jessie had a repugnance to the union ... ‘Jessie .. nature, instead of forbiddin' it approves of it; for like takes to like’.
1922 Ovington's Bank xxxi. He's learned this at your d—d counter, sir! That's where it is. It's like to like.
1981 Mother's Boys xiv. Mrs. Hodsden's connection with his house will be quite plain to you when you meet my husband. Like clings to like, they say. .. And those two certainly cling.

• similarity and dissimilarity

like
see also (adjective) like FATHER, like son; like MASTER, like man; like MOTHER, like daughter; like PEOPLE, like priest.

like
see also (verb) if you don't like the HEAT, get out of the kitchen.

linen
see never CHOOSE your women or your linen by candlelight; one does not WASH one's dirty linen in public.

lining
see every CLOUD has a silver lining.

link
see a CHAIN is no stronger than its weakest link.

linstock
(a forked staff to hold a lighted match): see the COBBLER to his last and the gunner to his linstock.

lion
see a LIVE dog is better than a dead lion; MARCH comes in like a lion, and goes out like a lamb; a MOUSE may help a lion.

lip
see there's MANY a slip between cup and lip.

LISTENERS never hear any good of themselves.

Eavesdroppers is now very usual for listeners.

1647 Mercurius Elencticus 26 Jan.–2 Feb. 76 The old Proverb is, Hearkners never heare good of themselves.

1678 English Proverbs (ed. 2) 75 Listners ne'er hear good of themselves.

1839 Nicholas Nickleby xlii. ‘If it is fated that listeners are never to hear any good of themselves,’ said Mrs. Browdie, ‘I can't help it, and I am very sorry for it’.

1881 Uncle Remus X. Brer Fox wuz stamin' at de back do' wid one year at de cat-hole lissenin'. Eavesdroppers don't hear no good er deyse'f, en de way Brer Fox was 'bused dat day wuz a caution.

1907 Enchanted Castle v. He .. opened the door suddenly, and there .. was Eliza.. ‘You know what listeners never hear,’ said Jimmy severely.

1977 Evil Streak IV. 178 They say listeners never hear any good of themselves but there is no excuse for .. ingratitude.

1992 Rather English Marriage (1993) xvii. 289 ‘Eavesdroppers never hear good of themselves,’ Grace would have said, and she'd have been right.

• eavesdroppers

There is no LITTLE enemy
Cf. c 1386 CHAUCER *Tale of Melibee* l. 1322 *Ne be nat negligent to kepe thy persone, nat oonly fro thy gretteste enemys, but fro thy leeste enemy.* Senek seith: ‘A man that is well avysed, he dredeth his leste enemy.’

□1659 *Proverbs 8* There’s no enemy little, viz. we must not undervalue any foe.

1733 *Poor Richard’s Almanack* (Sept.) There is no little enemy.

1887 *Pleasures of Life* I. V. To be friendly with every one is another matter; we must remember that there is no little enemy.

**enemies ; malice**

**LITTLE fish are sweet**

□1830 *Vocabulary of East Anglia* 434 ‘Little fish are sweet.’—It means small gifts are always acceptable.

1914 *Folk of Furry Farm* vii. ‘They’ll sell at a loss,’ he went on, with a sigh, ‘but sure, little fish is sweet! and the rent has to be made up’.

1981 *Brock* 92 Wealthy proprietor of the Melford Echo and three or four small newspapers in the country. (‘Little fish are sweet, old boy.’)

**great and small**

**A LITTLE knowledge is a dangerous thing**

The *Pierian spring* in quot. 1711 refers to the classical tradition that the Muses were born in the Pieria region of northern Greece. The original *learning* is also used instead of *knowledge*.

□1711 *Essay on Criticism* l. 215 A little Learning is a dang’rous Thing; Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian Spring.

1829 *Boxiana* 2nd Ser. II. 4 The sensible idea, that ‘A little learning is a dangerous thing!’

1881 *Science & Culture* iv. If a little knowledge is dangerous, where is the man who has so much as to be out of danger?

1974 *Porterhouse Blue* xviii. His had been an intellectual decision founded on his conviction that if a little knowledge was a dangerous thing, a lot was lethal.

1997 *Times* 21 July 21 A little knowledge may or may not be a dangerous thing. It will certainly soon be more expensive.

**ignorance ; learning**

**LITTLE leaks sink the ship**

□1616 *Taming of Tongue* 28 in *Sacrifice of Thankfulnesse* It is a little leake that drowneth a shippe.

1642 *Holy State* I. viii. If servants presume to dispose small things without their masters allowance (besides that many little leaks may sink a ship) this will widen their consciences to give away greater.

1745 *Poor Richard’s Almanack* (Jan.) Beware of little Expences; a small leak will sink a great ship.

1809 *Chain of Lorenzo* 60 Methinks none will make that reply, but those who love and plead for a little sin; one leak will sink a ship.

1851 *London at Table* iv. Beware of little expenses—a small leak will sink a great ship.

1927 *How Old Woman got Home* II. xiii. ‘Don’t mind spending a few pounds for me: you won’t miss it’ .. ‘Won’t miss it .. I don’t know so much about that: it’s the little leaks sink the ship.’

**great and small**

**LITTLE pitchers have large ears**

Children overhear much that is not meant for them. A pitcher's *ears* are its handles.

□1546 *Dialogue of Proverbs* II. V. G4 *Auoyd your children, small pitchers haue wide eares.*

1594 *Richard III* ii. iv. 37 Good madam, be not angry with the child.—Pitchers have ears.
1699  New Dict. Canting Crew s.v. Pitcher-bawd, Little Pitchers have large ears.
1840  Ingoldsby Legends 1st Ser. 226 A truth Insisted on much in my earlier years, To wit, ‘Little pitchers have very long ears!’
1972  Colonel Butler's Wolf i. He watched her shoo her sisters safely away … He had been lamentably careless in forgetting that little pitchers had large ears.
1996  Body in Bog ii. 39 Any question of whether Miss Lora had heard about the latest attack on her family was answered by the teacher's first words to Faith, whispered furiously after the precaution ‘Little pitchers have big ears.’

**eavesdroppers**

A LITTLE pot is soon hot
A small person is easily roused to anger or passion.

1546  Dialogue of Proverbs I. xi. D2 It is wood [mad] at a woorde, little pot soone whot.
1593  Taming of Shrew IV. i. 6 Now were not I a little pot and soon hot, my very lips might freeze to my teeth.
1670  English Proverbs 115 A little pot's soon hot … Little persons are commonly cholerick.
1884  Perilous Secret II. xv. Cheeky little beggar, But .. ‘a little pot is soon hot’.
1930  Mignonette xxiii. ‘Oh well,’ she quite obviously swallowed down her grievance, still simmering, ‘I suppose you'll say little pots are soon hot.’

**anger ; great and small**

LITTLE strokes fell great oaks
Cf. ERASMUS Adages I. viii. multis ictibus deicitur quercus, the oak is felled by many blows.
1400  Romaunt of Rose l. 3688 For no man at the firste strok Ne may nat felle down an ok.
1539  tr. Erasmus' Adages 26VWyth many strokes is an oke ouerthrowen. Nothyng is so stronge but that lyttell and lyttell maye be brought downe.
1591  Henry VI, Pt. 3 II. i. 54 And many strokes, though with a little axe, Hews down and fells the hardest-timber'd oak. By many hands your father was subdu'd.
1757  Poor Richard Improved: 1758 (Mar.) Stick to it steadily and you will see great Effect; for .. Little Strokes fell great Oaks.
1869  John Ploughman's Talk xxiii. ‘By little strokes Men fell great oaks.’ By a spadeful at a time the navvies digged .. the embankment.
1981  Family Circle Feb. 57 From the cradle to the grave we are reminded that .. great oaks are only felled by a repetition of little strokes.

**great and small**

LITTLE thieves are hanged, but great ones escape
Cf. late 14th-cent. Fr. les petits larrons sont penduez, non pas les grands, little thieves are hanged, not big ones.
1639  Paræmiologia Anglo-Latina 172 Little theives are hang'd, but great ones escape.
1797  Daily Telegraph 22 Nov. 18 In view of the Blunt affair, I am reminded of the proverb, ‘Little thieves are hanged but great ones escape.’

**great and small ; justice and injustice ; wrong-doers**

LITTLE things please little minds
Cf. OVID Ars Amatoria I. 159 parva leves capiunt animos, small things enthral light minds.
1576  Petit Palace 139 A little thyng pleaseth a foole.
1584  Sappho & Phao II. iv. Litle things catch light mindes.
1845  Sybil II. ii. Little things affect little minds. Lord Marney .. was kept at the station which aggravated his spleen.
1880 John Ploughman's Pictures 81 Precious little is enough to make a man famous in certain companies .. for .. little things please little minds.
1963 Man & Two Women 74 Small things amuse small minds.
1973 Galt Toy Catalogue 35 As the saying goes—Little things please little minds.

**great and small**

little

see also (adjective) BIG fish eat little fish; BIG fleas have little fleas upon their backs to bite them; BIRDS in their little nests agree; little BIRDS that can sing and won't sing must be made to sing; EVERY little helps; GREAT oaks from little acorns grow; LONG and lazy, little and loud; MANY a little makes a mickle; MUCH cry and little wool; (adverb) LOVE me little, love me long.

**LIVE and learn**

c 1620 in Roxburghe Ballads (1871) I. 60 A man may liue and learne.
1771 Humphry Clinker III. 168 'Tis a true saying, live and learn—O woman, what chuckling and changing have I seen!
1894 Use of Life vi. No doubt we go on learning as long as we live: 'Live and learn,' says the old proverb.
1984 Great Diamond Robbery xi. 'Y' want steins, gov, go to Germany; 'ere we only got pints.' Live and learn.

**experience**

LIVE and let live

c 1622 Ancient Law-Merchant I. xlv. According to the Dutche prouerbe .. Leuen ende laeten leuen, To liue and to let others liue.
1641 Scottish Proverbs (STS) no. 582 Live and let live.
1678 English Proverbs (ed.2) 170 Live and let live, i.e. Do as you would be done by. Let such pennyworths as your Tenants may live under you.
1762 Sir Launcelot Greaves II. xvi. He deals very little in physic stuff, .. whereby he can't expect the pothecary to be his friend. You knows, master, one must live and let live, as the saying is.
1843 Handley Cross II. vii. Live and let live, as the criminal said to the hangman.
1979 Rose in Darkness iv. Not that Sari cared two hoots how other people conducted their private lives. Live and let live.
1993 Bachelor Brothers' Bed & Breakfast (1997) 57 The ‘live and let live’ mentality by which we have so long abided in our little valley prevailed.

**tolerance**

If you want to LIVE and thrive, let the spider run alive

c 1867 Notes & Queries 3rd Ser. XI. 32 The proverb so often used in Kent: 'He who would wish to thrive Must let spiders run alive'.
1903 Collectanea II. 204 He that would thrive Must let spiders live.
1957 Folklore of Maine iv. If you want to live and thrive let the spider run alive.

**superstition**

A LIVE dog is better than a dead lion

With allusion to ECCLESIASTES ix. 4 (AV) To him that is joined to all the living, there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion.
c 1390 in Minor Poems of Vernon MS (EETS) 534 Better is a quick [living] and an hol hounde Then a
And better is pouert with godnes Then richesse with wikkedness.

1566 Pedigree of Heretics 2V A lyuing Dogge, is better than a dead Lion.

1798 Tales of Hoy 41 It was a devil of a trick .. but, 'A living Dog is better than a dead Lion,’ as the saying is.

1864 Can You forgive Her? II. vii. He had so often told the widow that care killed the cat, and that a live dog was better than a dead lion.

1928 Woman who rode Away 132 When the lion is shot, the dog gets the spoil. So he had come in for Katherine, Alan's lioness. A live dog is better than a dead lion.

1953 Post Mortem iv. I take my walks without following a ball about like a dog. Which reminds me of the old proverb that a live dog is better than a dead lion.

They that LIVE longest, see most

Cf. early 14th-cent. Fr. qui vit trop voit, he who lives [long] sees much; 1605–6 SHAKESPEARE King Lear v. iii. 325 We that are young Shall never see so much nor live so long.

1620 tr. Cervantes' Don Quixote II. liii. My Mother was vsed to say, That 'twas needfull to liue full, to liue long, to see much.

1837 Jack Brag III. ii. Them as lives longest sees the most.

1841 House at Old Vine VI. vi. Them that live longest see most. You remember that, young man, if ever you're down on your luck.

1871 Brood of Folly V. Mrs Parslowe gave her a glance that was both sly and knowing. 'Those that live longest will see most,' she answered cryptically.

Come LIVE with me and you'll know me

1925 Juno & Paycock II. 49 I only seen him twiced; if you want to know me, come an' live with me.

1960 Four Loves iii. You must really give no kind of preference to yourself; at a party it is enough to conceal the preference. Hence the old proverb 'come live with me and you'll know me.'

He who LIVES by the sword dies by the sword

Other weapons may be substituted for the sword, as in quot. 1997. With allusion to MATTHEW xxvi. 52 (AV) All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword; cf. 1601 A. MUNDAY et al. Death of Robert, Earl of Huntington L1 Alas for woe: but this is just heauens doome On those that liue by bloode: in bloode they die.

1652 Complete Writings (1963) IV. 352 All that take the Sword .. shall perish by it.

1804 Diary & Letters (1889) II. xlv. To quote the text, 'Those who live by the sword shall perish by the sword'.

1916 Greenmantle vi. I did not seek the war ... It was forced on me ...He that takes the sword will perish by the sword.
1978 *Were He Stranger* xiii. *Mark me, Sydney, he who lives by the sword dies by the sword.*

1997 *Washington Post* 12 Mar. B1 *Wallace's friends, with whom he had sold dope out of a garbage can... had pretty much summed up the situation in a sentence: ‘When you live by the gun, you die by the gun.’

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retribution

He that LIVES in hope dances to an ill tune

- **1591** Second Fruits 149 *This argument of yours is lame and halting, but doo not you knowe that. He that dooth liueth in hope, dooth dance in narrowe scope.*
- **1640** Outlandish Proverbs no. 1006 *Hee that lives in hope danceth without musick.*
- **1732** Gnomologia no. 2224 *He that liveth in Hope, danceth without a Fiddle.*
- **1977** Five Minute Marriage ii. ‘He that lives in hope danceth to an ill tune,’ remarked Mrs. Andrews, who was full of proverbs.

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disappointment; hope and despair

He LIVES long who lives well

- **1533** Art of Rhetoric 45v *They lyued long enough, that have liued well enough.*
- **1619** Midnight's Trance (1951) 29 *Who liueth well, liueth long.*
- **1642** Holy State I. vi. *If he chance to die young, yet he lives long that lives well.*
- **1861** in *Hymns of Faith & Hope* 2nd Ser. 129 *He liveth long who liveth well! All other life is short and vain.*

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life

load

see *a SWARM in May is worth a load of hay.*

loaf

see *HALF a loaf is better than no bread; a SLICE off a cut loaf isn't missed.*

loathing

see *LENGTH begets loathing*

lock

see *it is too late to shut the STABLE-door after the horse has bolted.*

locksmith

see *LOVE laughs at locksmiths.*

loft

see *SEPTEMBER blow soft, till the fruit's in the loft.*

London

see *what MANCHESTER says today, the rest of England says tomorrow.*

LONG and lazy, little and loud; fat and fulsome, pretty and proud

- **c 1576** Autobiography (1961) 23 *Hy women be layzy and low be lowd, fair be sluttish, and fowll be proud.*
- **1591** Second Fruits 189 *If long, she is lazy, if little, she is lowde.*
- **1648** Hesperides 166 *Long and lazie. That was the Proverb. Let my mistress be Lasie to others, but be long to me—* Ibid. 248 *Little and loud. Little you are; for Womans sake be proud; For my sake next, (though little) be not loud.*
- **1659** Proverbs (English) 10 *Long and lazy, little and loud, Fatt and fulsome, pretty and proud; in point of women.*
- **1872** Maid of Sker I. xiii. *You are long enough, and lazy enough; put your hand to the bridle.*
LONG foretold, long last; short notice, soon past
Cf. 1863 R. FITZROY Weather Book 15 The longer the time between the signs and the change foretold by them, the longer such altered weather will last; and, on the contrary, the less the time between a warning and a change, the shorter will be the continuance of such predicted weather.


1889 Three Men in Boat v. The barometer is .. misleading ... Boots .. read out a poem which was printed over the top of the oracle, about ‘Long foretold, long last; Short notice, soon past.’ The fine weather never came that summer.

It is a LONG lane that has no turning
Commonly used as an assertion that an unfavourable situation will eventually change for the better.

1633 Stationers' Register (1877) IV. 273 (ballad) Long runns that neere turnes.
1670 English Proverbs 117 It's a long run that never turns.
1732 Gnomologia no. 2863 It is a long Lane that never turns.
1745 River Road viii. xxxvii. ‘You 're through in politics, Gervais. You might just as well face it.’ .. ‘It's a long lane that has no turning.’

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The LONGEST journey begins with a single step
Attributed to Lao-tsu (c 604–c 531 BC), founder of Taoism; see 1904 Sayings of Lao Tzu tr. L. Giles 51 A journey of a thousand miles began with a single step.

1980 U.S. News & World Report 8 Sept. 19 A Chinese proverb says that a journey of 1, 000 miles begins with a single step.
1983 National Review 29 April 485 Of the 15,000 people treated there..., nearly all smoked marijuana. Which proves nothing. Except that the longest journey begins with a single step.
1997 Spectator 13 Dec. 27 Politicians of all sides .. should remember the old adage that even that longest journey begins with a single step. Before placing another foot forward they should decide whether this actually is a journey they wish to make.

The LONGEST way round is the shortest way home
The idea is found earlier: 1580 LYL Ypuehes & his England II. 96 Thou goest about (but yet the neerest way) to hang me vp for holy-dayes. (Go about is used equivocatingly to mean ‘endeavour’ and ‘go around or roundabout’. The context is of a person metaphorically described as a hat which can be taken up and put down at will.)

1635 Emblems IV. ii. The road to resolution lies by doubt: The next way home's the farthest way about.
1776 Spleen II. 24 The longest way about is the shortest way home.
The Potatoes arrived via New York in pursuance of the Old Proverb, that 'the longest way round is the shortest way home'.

'And let Coffin Pass.' 'The longest way round is the shortest way home.' 'We'll make the best time by skirting the pines'.

Croaking of Raven. 'If in doubt take the long road round. It'll prove to be the shortest in the end.'

The longest

see also (adjective) BARNABY bright, Barnaby bright, the longest day and the shortest night; (adverb) a CREAKING door hangs longest; he who LAUGHS last, laughs longest; they that LIVE longest, see most.

Look before you leap

Obedience of Christian Man 130 We say .. Loke yer thou lepe, whose literall sence is, doo nothinge sodenly or without avisement.

Palace of Pleasure II. xxiv. He that looketh not before he leapeth, may chaunce to stumble before he sleapeth.

We say .. Loke yer thou lepe, whose literall sence is, doo nothinge sodenly or without avisement.

Looke before you leape.

Look before you leap is an old proverb .. Jack .. had pitched into a small apiary, and had upset two hives of bees.

Do you remember the rousing slogan which the Prime Minister gave the voters .. on the eve of the last General Election? .. Look Before You Leap.

Changing horses, love? I should look before you leap.

a CAT may look at a king; the DEVIL looks after his own; never look a GIFT horse in the mouth; when all you have is a HAMMER, everything looks like a nail; a MAN is as old as he feels, and a woman as old as she looks; take care of the PENCE and the pounds will take care of themselves; those who PLAY at bowls must look out for rubbers; one man may STEAL a horse, while another may not look over a hedge.

LOOKERS-ON see most of the game

It fareth between thee and me as it doth between a player at the chess and a looker on, for he that looketh on seeth many draughts that the player considereth nothing at all.

To take advise of friends is euer honorable: For lookers on on many times see more then gamesters.

As the English say, The stander by sees more than he who plays.

Remembering the old adage, that 'lookers-on see most of the game,' I determined .. to accompany him.

If it is true that the looker-on knows most of the game, Mr. Satterthwaite knew a good deal.

They say that the onlooker sees most of the game. It's not a very happy game that's being played here at the moment.
EVERYBODY loves a lord; NEW lords, new laws.

What you LOSE on the swings you gain on the roundabouts

A fairground metaphor used in a variety of forms.

1912 Green Days & Blue Days 19 What's lost upon the roundabouts we pulls up on the swings.
1927 Times 24 Mar. 15 By screwing more money out of taxpayers he diminishes their savings, and the market for trustee securities loses on the swings what it gains on the roundabouts.
1978 Farewell Recital 129 There are compensations: what you lose on the swings you gain on the roundabouts. And let's face it, a cup of tea or a cup of coffee are all very well but they are not so much fun as polygamy.

winners and losers

You cannot LOSE what you never had

The sentiment is expressed in a number of ways: quot. 1974 represents a local equivalent. Similar to what you've never HAD you never miss.

1593 Hero & Leander I. 276 Of that which hath no being do not boast, Things that are not at all are never lost.
1676 Compleat Angler (ed. 5) I. v. ‘He has broke all; there's half a line and a good hook lost.’ ‘I [Aye] and a good Trout too.’ ‘Nay, the Trout is not lost, for .. no man can lose what he never had’.
1788 Works (1872) VII. 41 He only seemeth to have this .. No man can lose what he never had.
1974 Vet in Harness viii. ‘Only them as has them can lose them,’ she said firmly, her head tilted as always. I had heard that said many times and they were brave Yorkshire words.

winners and losers

lose

see also a BLEATING sheep loses a bite; LEND your money and lose your friend; the SUN loses nothing by shining into a puddle; a TALE never loses in the telling; you WIN a few, you lose a few.

loser

see FINDERS keepers (losers weepers).

One man's LOSS is another man's gain

c 1527 tr. Erasmus' Sayings of Wise Men D1\³Lyghtly whan one wynneth, an other loseth.
1733 in Correspondence of Swift (1965) IV. 189 Your loss will be our gain, as the proverb says.
1821 Pirate I. vi. Doubtless one man's loss is another man's gain.
1918 Letter 21 Feb. (1962) I. 544 I am glad to have the money from your hand. But .. one man's gain is another man's loss.
1979 Debriefing vi. Well, their loss is my gain!

gains and losses

There's no great LOSS without some gain

1641 Scottish Proverbs (STS) no. 1408 Thair was never a grit loss without som small vantag.
1868 Tim Bunker Papers 134 However, ‘there is no great loss but what there is some small gain,’ and Jake Frink claims that he has got his money's worth in experience.
1937 On Banks of Plum Creek xxv. The hens .. were eating grasshoppers .. ‘Well, we won't have to buy feed for the hens .. There's no great loss without some gain’.
1957 In Dark Night viii. I didn't think there'd be enough business on the wharf for him to need me this afternoon .. No loss without some small gain.
gains and losses

lost
see BETTER to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all; he who HESITATES is lost; what a NEIGHBOUR gets is not lost; for WANT of a nail the shoe was lost.

lottery
see MARRIAGE is a lottery.

loud
see LONG and lazy, little and loud.

louder
see ACTIONS speak louder than words.

louse
see SUE a beggar and catch a louse.

LOVE and a cough cannot be hid
Cf. L. amor tussisque non celantur, love and a cough cannot be concealed.

1325 Cursor Mundi (EETS) I. 4276 Luken luue at the end wil kith [concealed love will show itself in the end].

1573 Garden of Pleasure 98VFour things cannot be kept close, Loue, the cough, fyre, and sorrowe.

1611 Dict. French & English s.v. Amour, We say, Loue, and the Cough cannot be hidden.

1640 Outlandish Proverbs no. 49 Love and a Cough cannot be hid.

1863 Romola I. vi. If there are two things not to be hidden—love and a cough—I say there is a third, and that is ignorance.

1943 Chinese Shawl xxvi. He is in love with Laura Fane ... Love and a cold cannot be hid.

LOVE and wisdom

One cannot LOVE and be wise
Cf. PUBLILIUS SYRUS Sententiae xxii. amare et sapere vix deo conceditur, to love and to be wise is scarcely allowed to God.

1527 tr. Erasmus’ Sayings of Wise Men B1VTo have a sadde [serious] mynde and loue is nat in one person.

1539 tr. Erasmus’ Adages II. A5 To be in loue and to be wyse is scase graunted to god.

1612 Essays ‘Of Love’ xii. It is impossible to loue and bee wise.

1631 English Gentlewoman 32 The Louer is euer blinded .. with affection .. whence came that usuall saying One cannot loue and be wise.

1872 Middlemarch II. III. xxvii. If a man could not love and be wise, surely he could flirt and be wise at the same time?

LOVE begets love
Cf. L. amor gignit amorem, love produces love.

1648 Hesperides 297 Love love begets, then never be Unsoft to him who's smooth to thee.

1812 I'll consider of It iii. ‘Love’ says the proverb, ‘produces love’.

1909 Epistle to Ephesians 275 Love begets love, and .. if a man loves God, then that glowing beam will glow whether it is turned to earth or turned to heaven.

1958 Death of Party vi. The cliché that ‘love breeds love’ was a blatant lie.

LOVE is blind
Cf. THEOCRITUS Idyll x. 19 uλοψης .. ó .. ohgr; ς, love is blind; PLAUTUS Miles Gloriosus I.
1259 caeca amore est, she is blinded by love.

1390 Merchant’s Tale l. 1598 For love is blynd alday, and may nat see.

1591 Two Gentlemen of Verona II. i 61 If you love her you cannot see her.—Why?—Because Love is blind.

1978 Lucky Devil xii. ‘How did you ever come to marry an idiot like Irving? ... ’ ‘Love is blind.’


Love

LOVE laughs at locksmiths

A more graphic expression of the sentiment in LOVE will find a way. Cf. 1592–3 SHAKESPEARE Venus & Adonis l. 576 Were beauty under twenty locks kept fast, Yet love breaks through and picks them all at last.

1803 (title) Love laughs at locksmiths: an operatic farce.

1901 Sexual Debility in Man ix. Love is said to laugh at locksmiths, and incidentally at parental authority, and this young man was no exception.

1922 Jonah & Co iv. And now push off and lock the vehicle. I know Love laughs at locksmiths, but the average motor-thief’s sense of humour is less susceptible.

1977 Parting Breath xiii. ‘Entry ... [was] by the Yale lock on the front door. Child’s play ...’ Sloan grunted. Love wasn’t the only thing that laughed at locksmiths.

Love

LOVE makes the world go round

Cf. Fr. c'est l'amour, l'amour, l'amour, Qui fait le monde A la ronde (Dumerson & Ségur Chansons Nationales & Populaires de France, 1851, II. 180) it is love, love, love, that makes the world go round.

1865 Alice's Adventures in Wonderland ix. “Oh, 'tis love, 'tis love that makes the world go round!”’ ‘Somebody said,’ Alice whispered, ‘that it’s done by everybody minding their own business’.

1902 in Brandur Mag. 27 Sept. 4 It’s said that love makes the world go round. The announcement lacks verification. It's the wind from the dinner horn that does it.

1980 Fall from Grace ix. A nice young man .. but gullible and romantic ...Love makes the world go round.

1998 Washington Post 2 Feb. A2 Love may make the world go round, but it's the oceans that make it wobble like a top.

Love

LOVE me little, love me long

a 1500 in Archiv (1900) CVI. 274 Love me lytyll and longe.

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs II. ii. G1 Olde wise folke saie, loue me lyttle loue me long.

1629 Works 813 Men cannot brooke poore friends. This inconstant Charitie is hateful as our English phrase premonisheth; Loue me Little, and Loue me Long.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 229 Love me little, love me long. A Dissuasive from shewing too much, and too sudden Kindness.

1907 Times Literary Supplement 8 Mar. 77 Mrs. Bellew is a lady who cannot love either little or long. She tires very quickly of the men who are irresistibly drawn to her.

1991 Washington Times 14 Feb. G3 ‘Love me a little less but longer’ is an old folk phrase.

Love

LOVE me, love my dog

Cf. ST. BERNARD Sermon: In Festo Sancti Michaelis iii. qui me amat, amat et canem meum, who loves me, also loves my dog; early 14th-cent. Fr. et ce dit le sage qui mayme il ayme mon chien, and so says the
sage, who loves me loves my dog.

1500 a ‡He that lovyeth me lovyeth my hound.
1692 Fables of Aesop cvi. Love Me, Love my Dog …For there are certain Decencies of Respect due to the Servant for the Master's sake.
1826 Elia's Last Essays (1833) 262 That you must love me, and love my dog. .. We could never yet form a friendship without the intervention of some third anomaly the understood dog in the proverb.
1975 Snow Tiger xvi. I'll have to bring Victor …Love me—love my dog.

associates ; love

LOVE will find a way

1607 Gentle Craft (1648) I. XV. Thus love you see can finde a way, To make both Men and Maids obey.
1661 ‘T.B.’ (title) Love will finde out the way.
1765 in Reliques III. III. 236 Over the mountains, And over the waves; Love will find out the way.
1962 Killed by Scandal ix. But he's so fond of June that I'm sure it's going to be all right. Love will find a way.
1975 Listener 16 Oct. 504 The red-plush curtain fell on a reprise of ‘Love will find a way.’

love

see also (noun) the COURSE of true love never did run smooth; all's FAIR in love and war; when the FURZE is in bloom, my love's in tune; LUCKY at cards, unlucky in love; MONEY is the root of all evil; it is best to be OFF with the old love before you are on with the new; PITY is akin to love; when POVERTY comes in at the door, love flies out of the window; PRAISE the child, and you make love to the mother; the QUARREL of lovers is the renewal of love; (verb) EVERYBODY loves a lord; whom the GODS love die young.

loved

see BETTER to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all.

Lovell

see the CAT, the rat, and Lovell the dog, rule all England under the hog.

lover

see LOVE but laughs at lovers' perjury; the QUARREL of lovers is the renewal of love.

There is LUCK in leisure

It is often advisable to wait before acting.

1683 Yorkshire Dialogue 9 There's luck in Leizur.
1859 Fisher's River viii. Thinks I, ‘There's luck in leisure,’ as I've hearn folks say …So I jist waited a spell.
1936 While Murder Waits xxii. ‘You …won't decide now?’ .. ‘There's luck in leisure, Victoria.’

patience and impatience ; procrastination

There is LUCK in odd numbers

A superstition similar to that in THIRD time lucky. Cf. VIRGIL Eclogues viii. 75 numero deus impare gaudet, the god delights in an uneven number.

1598 Merry Wives of Windsor v. i. 3 This is the third time; I hope good luck lies in odd numbers.

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1883 Thicker than Water I. i. She was .. by no means averse to a third experiment in matrimony .. ‘There was luck in odd numbers’.
1963 Day of Adder i. You can make that five then ...There’s luck in odd numbers.

luck ; superstition
luck
see also the DEVIL’S children have the Devil's luck; DILIGENCE is the mother of good luck; FOOLS for luck; see a PIN and pick it up, all the day you'll have good luck.

LUCKY at cards, unlucky in love
The idea is present in 1738 SWIFT Polite Conversation III. 213 Well, Miss, you'll have a sad Husband, you have such good Luck at Cards.

□1866 Society II. ii. ‘I'm always lucky at cards!’ .. ‘Yes, I know an old proverb about that ...Lucky at play, unlucky in—.’
a 1871 — Play (1889) III. ii. Unlucky in love, lucky at cards.

1941 Trap for Bellamy iv. ‘Lucky at cards, unlucky in love.’.. I’m going to find out if the proverb's true. What are they playing tonight?

1981 Oxford Mail 29 Aug. 5 Arthur and Hilda Cover have defied the old proverb by being lucky at cards and lucky in love.

love ; luck
lucky
see also it is BETTER to be born lucky than rich; THIRD time lucky.
lunch
see there's no such thing as a FREE lunch.

Where MACGREGOR sits is the head of the table
The proverb is sometimes attributed to Robert MacGregor of Campbell (‘Rob Roy’: 1671–1734), highland freebooter. Other names are used as well as MacGregor. The idea is explained in the two following quots: 1580 LYLY Euphues & his England II. 39 When .. Agesilaus sonne was set at the lower end of the table, and one cast it in his teeth as a shame, he answered: this is the vpper end where I sit; 1732 T. FULLER Gnomologia no. 4362 That is the upper End, where the chief Person sits.

□1837 American Scholar 19 Wherever Macdonald [the head of the Macdonald clan] sits, there is the head of the table. Linnaeus makes botany the most alluring of studies and wins it from the farmer and the herb-woman.

1903 Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm viii. If wherever the MacGregor sat was the head of the table, so .. wherever Rebecca stood was the centre of the stage.

1918 Leaves in Wind 197 There are .. people who carry the centre of the stage with them... ‘Where O'Flaherty sits is the head of the table’.

1940 Bones of Napoleon 69 Like Macdonald—where Lord Innes sat was the head of the table.

1980 Times 12 May 15 (letter from His Honour Judge MacGregor) Sir, Where MacGregor sits is the head of the table.

honour ; pride
Don't get MAD, get even
Some of the reasons have their roots in that wonderful law of the Boston Irish political jungle: ‘Don’t get mad; get even’.

Nancy Reagan made more than $2 million from her ‘don't get mad, get even’ memories.

Don't get mad; get even

see also whom the GODS would destroy, they first make mad.

GOD made the country, and man made the town; PROMISES, like piecrust, are made to be broken; RULES are made to be broken; also MAKE.

if the MOUNTAIN will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet must go to the mountain.

MAKE hay while the sun shines

Whan the sunne shynth make hey.

Yt is well therefore to make hay while the sunne shines.

‘It is good to make hay while the sun shines,’ which means, in the present case .. to catch hold of a friend while she is in the humour.

The countess's enthusiasm was cooling. Martin .. said warningly, ‘You must make hay, my child, while the sun shines’.

‘Make hay while the sun shines,’ quoted Anna aloud. It seemed as encouraging a proverb as any under the circumstances.

As you MAKE your bed, so you must lie upon it

As soon as his relatives .. heard .. they told him .. that as he had made his bed, so he must lie upon it.

There's no doubt she was out with one of them .. and went further than she meant ..but if you make your bed you must lie on it.

Your mother says serves you right, you've made your bed and now you lie on it, I never liked him...

make

you cannot make BRICKS without straw; CLOTHES make the man; make HASTE slowly; if you don't make MISTAKES you don't make anything; you cannot make an OMELETTE without breaking eggs; you can't make a SILK purse out of a sow's ear.

the FEMALE of the species is more deadly than the male.

you cannot serve GOD and Mammon.
MAN cannot live by bread alone
With allusion to two biblical passages (both AV): DEUTERONOMY viii. 3 Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live; MATTHEW iv. 4 Man shall not live by bread alone.

1875 in North American Review May–June 418 Man does not live by bread alone, but by faith, by admiration, by sympathy.
1927 Witch Wood iii. Man canna live by bread alone, but he assuredly canna live without it.
1973 Galt Toy Catalogue 35 As the saying goes—Man cannot live by bread alone.

food and drink; life
Whatever MAN has done, man may do
There is a similar idea behind 1723 S. CRANSTON in G. S. Kimball Correspondence of Colonial Governors of Rhode Island (1902) I.9 But as the Proverb is what hath been may be againe.
1863 Hard Cash II. xiv. ‘Dark Deeds are written in an unknown tongue called ‘Lawyerish’ …; pick it out if you can.’ ‘Whatever man has done man may do,’ said Dr. Sampson stoutly.
1910 Reginald in Russia 14 I fell in love … with the local doctor’s wife… On looking back at past events it seems to me that she must have been distinctly ordinary, but I suppose the doctor had fallen in love with her once, and what man has done man can do.

possibility and impossibility
A MAN is as old as he feels, and a woman as old as she looks
Both parts of the proverb are sometimes used on their own (see also quot. 1930).
1871 Thames Journal 27 Aug. (1975) 114 She is always making me out so much older than I am and that’s not fair, for a man is only as old as he feels and a woman is only as old as she looks.
1891 News from Nowhere iii. ‘How old am I, do you think?’ ‘Well,’ quoth I, ‘I have always been told that a woman is as old as she looks’.
1907 Illustrated London News 25 May 794 The adage that a man is as old as he feels, and a woman as old as she looks, may be said to contain much inherent truth.
1930 Brief Candles 262 He’s always saying he’s so old, which is all nonsense, because you’re only as old as you feel.
1981 Words on Air 67 Two ways of looking at old age. … ‘Be your age!’ is the first, ‘A man is as old as he feels’ is the second.

men and women; old age
MAN is the measure of all things
Cf. PROTAGORAS in Plato Cratylus vi. παντων ἐπιμετρεῖν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, man is the measure of all things.
1547 Morall Phylosophie III. xvi. 06 Vân man is the measure of all thynges.
1631 Warres of Pompey & Caesar II. E2 As of all things, man is said the measure, So your full merits measure forth a man.
1948 Northern Farm xii. ‘Man the measure of all things.’ A good adage.
1980 Times Greece Supplement 15 Dec p. iv. The belief that man was the measure of all things … led the Greeks into .. new disciplines.

human nature
MAN proposes, God disposes
Cf. early 14th-cent. Fr. car se li homme mal propose, Diex .. le dispose, for if man proposes evil, God .. disposes of it; c 1420 T. à KEMPIS De Imitatione Christi I. xix. homo proponit, sed Deus disponit, man proposes but God disposes.
A man off malice may a thyng purpose .. But God a-boue can graciously dispose [determine] Ageyn such malice to make resistence.

For man purposith and god disposith.

Man proposes, God disposes .. that every nation in Europe possesses.

Man purposith and god disposith.

For man purposith and god disposith.

In diplomacy one can only propose, never dispose. That is up to God, don't you think?

‘Man proposes, God disposes’.

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man to his taste; EVERY man to his trade; it's ill speaking between a FULL man and a fasting; a HUNGRY man is an angry man; you should KNOW a man seven years before you stir his fire; a man who is his own LAWYER has a fool for his client; one man's LOSS is another man's gain; MANNERS maketh man; like MASTER, like man; one man's MEAT is another man's poison; MONEY makes a man; a MONEYLESS man goes fast through the market; NINE tailors make a man; NO man can serve two masters; NO man is a hero to his own valet; NO moon, no man; there is NOTHING so good for the inside of a man as the outside of a horse; the RICH man has his ice in the summer and the poor man gets his in the winter; give a man ROPE enough and he will hang himself; SIX hours' sleep for a man, seven for a woman, and eight for a fool; one man may STEAL a horse, while another may not look over a hedge; the STYLE is the man; TIME and tide wait for no man; for WANT of a nail the shoe was lost; the WAY to a man's heart is through his stomach; a WILFUL man must have his way; when the WIND is in the east, 'tis neither good for man nor beast; a YOUNG man married is a young man marred; also MEN.

**What MANCHESTER says today, the rest of England says tomorrow**

The proverb occurs in a variety of forms. Quot. 1902 sets it in its historical context: the Corn Law, restricting the importation of foreign corn, was abolished in 1846, and Manchester (formerly part of Lancashire), considered the home of free trade, was in the forefront of the campaign against restrictive legislation.

□1898 Day's Work 51 What the horses o' Kansas think to-day, the horses of America will think to-morrow; an' I tell you that when the horses of America rise in their might, the day o' the Oppressor is ended.

1902 Collectanea I. 116 What Lancashire thinks to-day all England will think to-morrow. This was in the days of the Anti-Corn-Law League. Since then the initiative in political movements proceeds from Birmingham.

1944 Journal 24 Aug. in Diaries (1979) xiii. Manchester rang its bells yesterday—a day before St. Paul's .. thus justifying its words, so often used: ‘What Manchester says today, the rest of England says tomorrow!’

1980 Listener 6 Mar. 300 What Manchester does today—.. is the old boast that ‘What Manchester does today London thinks tomorrow.’

imitation ; opinions ; public opinion

**Manchester**

see also YORKSHIRE born and Yorkshire bred, strong in the arm and weak in the head.

**MANNERS maketh man**

William of Wykeham (1324–1404), bishop of Winchester and chancellor of England, was the founder of Winchester College and New College, Oxford (see also quot. a 1661).

□c 1350 Douce MS 52 no. 77 Maner makys man.

c 1450 in Archiv (1931) CLIX. 88 Maners and clothying makes man.

1509 Ship of Fools 118 An old proverbe .. Sayth that good lyfe and maners makyth man.

a 1661 Worthies (Hants) 3 Manners makes a man, Quoth William Wickham. This generally was his Motto, inscribed frequently on the places of his Founding.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 246 Meat feeds, Cloth cleeds, but Manners makes the Man ... Good Meat, and fine Cloaths, without good Breeding, are but poor Recommendations.

1824 Don Juan xv. xviii. The difference is, that in days of old Men made the manners; manners now make men.

1966 Time of Angels xii. A single lamp revealed .. the very large glass-fronted bookcase superscribed
Manners Makyth Man.
1983 Case of Missing Bronte vi. Gracious little twit. The idea that manners makyth man clearly went out of the educational system before he went into it.

Manners

see EVIL communications corrupt good manners; OTHER times, other manners.

MANY a little makes a mickle
The proper version of the next proverb. Pickle, a Scottish word for ‘a small quantity or amount’, is also found instead of little. Mickle (‘a great quantity or amount’) is now only Scottish.

1250 Ancrene Wisse (1962) 32 Thys ofte as me seith, of lutel muchel waxeth.
1390 Parson's Tale 1. 361 The proverbe seith that ‘manye smale maken a greet’.
1545 tr. Erasmus' Adages (ed. 2) G5 We commonly say in englyshe: Many a lyttle maketh a great.
1614 Remains concerning Britain (ed. 2) 310 Many a little makes a mickle.
1822 in Life (1884) I.xii. ‘Many a little makes a mickle.’ It will be a long .. and weary job, but I must plod along.
1905 Westminster Gazette 29 Apr. 3 ‘There is the Tithe Relief… But that is a small item.’ ‘Yes, but many a pickle maks a muckle’.
1979 Maria Edgeworth in France & Switzerland 196 Many a pickle (or little) makes a mickle.

great and small

MANY a mickle makes a muckle
A popular corruption of the preceding entry. This alternative form is in fact nonsensical, as muckle is merely a variant of the dialectal mickle ‘a large quantity or amount’.

1793 Writings (1939) XXXII. 423 A Scotch addage, than which nothing in nature is more true.. ‘many mickles make a muckle’.
1940 Huntly Express 19 Jan. 3 He said at the close of his address ‘As the Scots say, and they should know, mony a mickle mak's a muckle.’ .. As the Scots know, he had quoted the proverb wrongly.
1968 Death among Stars v. Many a mickle makes a muckle, as Sir P. says. And Sir P. would be generous.
1982 Local Lads x. Though you can perform a minor task easily yourself, command that a minion do it. It emphasizes your eminence, many a mickle making a muckle.

great and small

There's MANY a slip between cup and lip
Cf. CATO THE ELDER in Aulus Gellius Noctes Atticae XIII. xviii. 1 (saepe audivi) inter os atque offam multa intervenire posse, (I have often heard) that many things can come between mouth and morsel;

1539 tr. Erasmus' Adages 15 Many thynges fall betwene the cuppe and the mouth ... Betwene the cuppe and the lyppes maye come many casualties.
1783 in Collections of Massachusetts Hist. Society (1877) 5th Ser. II. 216 Have a care, and remember the old proverbe of ‘many a slip,’ &c.
1840 Ingoldsby Legends 1st Ser. 280 Doubtless the adage, ‘There's many a slip 'Twixt the cup and the lip,’ hath reference to medicine.
1934 12.30 from Croydon xii. He had seen nothing in writing on the subject, and he could not help being worried by dark thoughts of slips between cups and lips.
1979 Summer Scandal xiii. ‘I thought you were here for life.’ .. ‘There's many a slip between cup and lip.’
disappointment; error

MANY are called but few are chosen
With allusion to MATTHEW xxii. 14 (AV) For many are called, but few are chosen.

1871 Life J.S. Batkins xxviii. The saying that ‘many shall be called, but few chosen’.

1980 Dissident iii. ‘Many are called .. but few are chosen.’ He’s right. Those of us conscious of our destinies may fairly be termed ‘elitistes’.

choice

MANY hands make light work
Cf. HESIOD Works & Days 380 πλεον ἐν πλεον ἔλητι, more hands mean more work; ERASMUS Adages II.iii. 95 multae manus onus levius reddunt, many hands make a burden lighter.

c 1330 Sir Beves (EETS) 1. 3352 Ascopard be strong and sterk [physically powerful], Mani hondes maketh light werk!

1678 Hudibras III. ii. Most Hands dispatch apace, And make light work, (the proverb says).

1721 Scottish Proverbs 244 Many Hands make light Work. Because it is but little to every one.

1923 Observer 11 Feb. 9 What is the use of saying that ‘Many hands make light work’ when the same copy-book tells you that ‘Too many cooks spoil the broth’?

1978 Dream Apart ix. Well, Lorenzo.., you back again? Got the family with you this time, hah? Many hands make light work.

assistance; work

many
see also there's many a GOOD tune played on an old fiddle; many a TRUE word is spoken in jest; many go out for WOOL and come home shorn.

MARCH comes in like a lion, and goes out like a lamb
The weather is traditionally wild at the beginning of March, but fair by the end.

a 1625 Wife for Month (1717) II. i. ‘I would chuse March, for I would come in like a Lion.’ .. ‘But you’d go out like a Lamb when you went to hanging’.

1670 English Proverbs 41 March hack ham comes in like a lion, goes out like a lamb.

1849 Shirley II. iv. Charming and fascinating he resolved to be. Like March, having come in like a lion, he purposed to go out like a lamb.

1906 Country Diary of Edwardian Lady (1977) 25 March has come in like a lamb with a warm wind .. from the South-west.

1980 Eastern Evening News 3 Apr. 13 That old proverb of ‘March coming in like a lion and going out like a lamb’ proved to be quite the reverse.

weather lore

March
see also APRIL showers bring forth May flowers; on the FIRST of March the crows begin to search; so many MISTS in March, so many frosts in May; a PECK of March dust is worth a king's ransom.

march
see an ARMY marches on its stomach.

mare
see the GREY mare is the better horse; MONEY makes the mare to go; NOTHING so bold as a blind mare.

market
see BUY in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest; a MONEYLESS man goes fast through the market.
MARRIAGE is a lottery

1642 Holy State III. xxii. Marriage shall prove no lottery to thee, when the hand of providence chuseth
for thee, who, if drawing a blank, can turn into a prize by sanctifying a bad wife unto thee.
1875 Thrift xii. ‘Marriage is a lottery.’ It may be so, if we abjure the teachings of prudence.
1939 Sullivan at Bay 14 What is marriage?.. Marriage is a lottery.

There goes more to MARRIAGE than four bare legs in a bed

1549 Dialogue of Proverbs I. viii. B1 In house to kepe household, whan folks wyll wed, Mo thyngs
belong, than foure bare legs in a bed.
1623 Remains concerning Britain (ed. 3) 273 Longs more to marriage then foure bare legs in a bed.
1738 Polite Conversation I. 84 Consider, Mr. Neverout, Four bare Legs in a Bed; and you are a younger
Brother.
1958 in Dict. Painting p. vii. As the old proverb has it, ‘there goes more to marriage than four bare legs
in a bed.’

marriage

see also DREAM of a funeral and you hear of a marriage; HANGING and wiving go by destiny.

MARRIAGES are made in heaven

1567 Palace of Pleasure xxiii. True it is, that marriages be don in Heaven and performed in earth.
1580 Euphues & his England II. 223 Mariages are made in heauen, though consumated in yearth.
1738 Polite Conversation I. 78 They say, Marriages are made in Heaven; but I doubt, when she was
married, she had no Friend there.
1932 Cold Comfort Farm i. I prefer the idea of arrangement to that other statement, that marriages are
made in Heaven.
1980 Weep for Her 187 She's a sentimental sort who believes marriages are made in heaven.

married

see a YOUNG man married is a young man marred.

Never MARRY for money, but marry where money is

1870 Northern Farmer, New Style in The Holy Grail 163 Doänt thou marry for munny, but goä wheer
munny is!
1968 Cool Day for Killing ii. He’d have heard the ancient saw. Never marry for money, but marry where
money is.
1991 Bookseller 16 Aug. 403 ‘Never marry money but go where money is.’ For the book as an entity to
make news consistently, it must go where news is consistently made—as with the royal family.

money

MARRY in haste and repent at leisure

This formula can be applied to rash steps other than marriage: e.g. 1998 Spectator 10 Jan. 6 All modern
governments legislate in haste and repent at leisure. A frequent recent variant is Act in haste, repent at
leisure: e.g. 1998 Times 26 Jan. 21 ‘Act in haste, repent at leisure’ would be a poor epitaph for the UK’s
presidency [of the EU].

1568 Duties in Marriage B4 Some haue loued in post hast, that afterwards haue repented them at

www.EnglishPro.ir
Some earlier related proverbs are also illustrated below. There are a number of old beliefs about the malign influence of this month, e.g. MAY chickens come cheeping. Cf. OVID Fasti v. 489 si te proverbia tangunt, mense malum Maio nubere volgus ait, if proverbs influence you, the common people say it is bad luck to marry in May.

1675 Poor Robin's Almanack May, The Proverb saies .. Of all the Moneths 'tis worst to Wed in May.

1821 Annals of Parish vi. We were married on the 29th day of April .. on account of the dread that we had of being married in May, for it is said, ‘Of the marriages in May, The bairns die of a decay’.

1872 Works (1891) VI. xvii. ‘Marry in haste and repent at leisure’ is a proverb that may be borne in mind with advantage in the choice of a party as well as of a wife.

1979 Tomorrow's Ghost ix. It stands to reason you know better what to look for the second time round — ‘Marry in haste and repent at leisure.’

MARRY in May, rue for aye

Some earlier related proverbs are also illustrated below. There are a number of old beliefs about the malign influence of this month, e.g. MAY chickens come cheeping. Cf. OVID Fasti v. 489 si te proverbia tangunt, mense malum Maio nubere volgus ait, if proverbs influence you, the common people say it is bad luck to marry in May.

1615 Festivals x. Marrying in hast, and Repenting by leasure.

1734 Poor Richard's Almanack (May) Grief often treads upon the heels of pleasure, Marry'd in haste, we oft repent at leisure.

1879 Tomorrow's Ghost ix. It stands to reason you know better what to look for the second time round — ‘Marry in haste and repent at leisure.’
The proverb literally means that the weakness of chickens born in May is apparent from their continual feeble cries.

1868 Proverbs of Scotland 223 May birds are aye cheeping. This refers to the popular superstition against marrying in May, the children of which marriages are said to ‘die of decay’.

1895 Household Tales II. viii. Children born in the month of May require great care in bringing up, for ‘May chickens come cheeping.’

May

see also APRIL showers bring forth May flowers; ne'er CAST a clout till May be out; MARRY in May, rue for aye; so many MISTS in March, so many frosts in May; a SWARM in May is worth a load of hay; SWEEP the house with broom in May, you sweep the head of the house away.

may

see he that WILL not when he may, when he will he shall have nay.

means

see the END justifies the means; he who WILLS the end, wills the means.

There is MEASURE in all things

Similar to MODERATION in all things. HORACE Satires I. i. 106 est modus in rebus, there is measure in things.

c 1385 Troilus & Criseyde II. 715 In every thyng, I woot, there lith mesure [moderation].

1598–9 Much Ado about Nothing II. i. 59 If the prince be too important, tell him there is measure in every thing.

1616 Adages 131 There is a measure in all things.

1910 Rewards & Fairies 84 There's no clean hands in the trade. But steal in measure…There is measure in all things made.

1942 Marling Hall iii. ‘Good God, mamma dear,’ said Oliver. ‘You cannot throw old governesses together like that. There is measure in everything’.

1958 King must Die II. i. One expects some fooling when they bring the bridegroom, but there is measure in everything.

measure

see also MAN is the measure of all things.

MEAT and mass never hindered man

a 1628 Proverbs in Scots no. 134 A mease [mess = serving] of meat hinderit never man.

1639 Paremiologia Anglo-Latina 273 Meat and mattens hinder no mans journey.

1641 Scottish Proverbs (STS) no. 644 Meat and masse never hindred no man.

1817 Rob Roy III. ii. ‘What the devil are ye in sic a hurry for?’ said Garschattachin; ‘meat and mass never hindered wark’.

1893 Catriona I. xix. Meat and mass never hindered man. The mass I cannot afford you, for we are all good Protestants. But the meat I press on your attention.

Christianity; food and drink

One man's MEAT is another man's poison

Cf. LUCRETIUS De Rerum Natura IV. 637 quod ali cibus est aliis fuat acre venenum, what is food to one person may be bitter poison to others.

That ould moth-eaten Proverbe .. One mans meate, is another mans poyson. 

May I not nauseate the food which you Covet; and is it not even a Proverb, that what is meat to one Man is Poyson to another.

It is more true of novels than perhaps of anything else, that one man's food is another man's poison.

‘I don't see what he sees in her.’ ‘One man's meat is another man's poison.’

One man's food is other man's poison.

meat

you BUY land you buy stones; GOD never sends mouths but He sends meat; GOD sends meat, but the Devil sends cooks; the NEARER the bone, the sweeter the meat.

meddler

see LAY-OVERS for meddlers.

Do not MEET troubles halfway

There are a number of sayings along similar lines, e.g. never TROUBLE trouble till trouble troubles you.

What help is it to run out to meet your troubles?; 1598–9 SHAKESPEARE Much Ado about Nothing I. i. 82 Are you come to meet your trouble? The fashion of the world is to avoid cost, and you encounter it.

I can't see the use of anticipating the worst and trying to meet troubles halfway.

What happens when she goes?.. Do not meet troubles half way ...When need arises we will see what can be done.

Don't go meeting trouble half-way. There might just be something we can do.

misfortune

meet

EXTREMES meet; when GREEK meets Greek then comes the tug of war.

memory

a LIAR ought to have a good memory.

So many MEN, so many opinions

so many men, so many opinions; mid 14th-cent. Fr. que tant de testes, tant de sens, so many heads, so many opinions.

As many heddes, as manye wittes ther been.

Many men many opinions. Every man has his guyse.

So many Men, so many Minds; and this Diversity of Thought must necessarily be attended with Folly, Vanity, and Error.

Doctors differ. So many persons, so many minds.

They were all those things, and they would remember the old saying, so many men, so many opinions.

mend

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It is NEVER too late to mend; when THINGS are at the worst they begin to mend.

mended
see LEAST said, soonest mended.

mending
see a WOMAN and a ship ever want mending.

mention
see never mention ROPE in the house of a man who has been hanged.

merrier
see the MORE the merrier.

It is MERRY in hall when beards wag all

□ c 1300 King Alisaunder (EETS) I. 1164 Swithe [so] mury hit is in halle, When the burdes wawen alle!
1546 Dialogue of Proverbs II. vii. 13^VIt is mery in halle, When berds wag all.
1598 Henry IV, Pt. 2 v. iii. 35 Be merry, be merry, my wife has all ... 'Tis merry in hall when beards wag all.
1738 Polite Conversation II. 170 Come; they say, 'Tis merry in Hall, when Beards wag all.
1857 Barchester Towers III. iv. ‘Twas merry in the hall when the beards wagged all;' and the clerical beards wagged merrily .. that day.
1976 Treasury Alarm i. Presumably this is how the Treasury greybeards get their fun. Are they in fact grey-beared. One rather assumes a great wagging of beards: 'tis merry in hall when beards wag all.

hospitality; merriment

merry
see also a CHERRY year, a merry year.

Merryman
see the best DOCTORS are Dr Diet, Dr Quiet, and Dr Merryman.

mice
see the BEST-laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley; a CAT in gloves catches no mice; when the CAT'S away, the mice will play; KEEP no more cats than will catch mice.

mickle
see MANY a little makes a mickle; MANY a mickle makes a muckle.

midge
see the MOTHER of mischief is no bigger than a midge's wing.

midnight
see one HOUR'S sleep before midnight is worth two after.

mid-stream
see don't CHANGE horses in mid-stream.

MIGHT is right

Cf. PLATO Republic I. 338c θε ε β η ο ι οί ι οι ι οi
1327 in Political Songs (1839) 254 For miht is right, the lond is laweless.
1546 Dialogue of Proverbs II. v. H2^VWe se many tymes myght myght overcomyth ryght.
1790 Proverbs Exemplified 78 The law is so expensive ... Might too often overcomes right.
1892 Carlyle iv. [In] Chartism .. he clearly enunciates 'Might is right'—one of the few strings on which .. he played through life.

1979 Guardian 17 May 24 By adult examples, pupils are being taught such evil doctrines as 'Might is right'.

1997 Washington Post 11 Jan. E20 'Might makes right, doesn't it?..Who wouldn't look to his strongest suit for tricks?'

justice and injustice ; power

mightier

see the PEN is mightier than the sword.

mighty

see a REED before the wind lives on, while mighty oaks do fall.

mile

see a MISS is as good as a mile.

milk

see why buy a COW when milk is so cheap?; it is no use CRYING over spilt milk.

The MILL cannot grind with the water that is past

□1616 Adages 151 The water that is past, cannot make the mill goe.

1640 Outlandish Proverbs no. 153 The mill cannot grind with the water that's past.

1856 Poems 197 Oh seize the instant [present] time; you never will With waters once passed by impel the mill.

1980 Red Kill xiv. It did no good to think back. The mill cannot grind with the water that is past, as the old people in the mountains used to say.

opportunity, missed ; past

mill

see also all is GRIST that comes to the mill.

The MILLS of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small

Quoted in Sextus Empiricus Against Professors I. 287, the mills of the gods are late to grind, but they grind small.

□1640 Outlandish Proverbs no. 747 Gods Mill grinds slow, but sure.

1870 Poems (1960) 331 Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small; Though with patience he stands waiting, with exactness grinds he all.

1942 Twelve Disguises i. That's my business ...The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small.

1989 Remains to be Seen vii. Military record keepers were like the mills of God. They ground slow, and exceeding small, but only at their own pace.

justice and injustice ; retribution

mind

see the EYES are the window of the soul; GREAT minds think alike; LITTLE things please little minds; OUT of sight, out of mind; TRAVEL broadens the mind.

The age of MIRACLES is past

□1599 Henry V I. i. 67 It must be so; for miracles are ceas'd; And therefore we must needs admit the means How things are perfected.

1602—All's Well that ends Well II. iii. 1 They say miracles are past; and we have our philosophical
persons to make modern and familiar things supernatural and causeless.

1840 On Heores & Hero Worship iv. The Age of Miracles past? The Age of Miracles is for ever here!
1974 Other Paths to Glory II. viii. Of course he found nothing... The age of miracles is long past.

mischief

see the MOTHER of mischief is no bigger than a midge's wing.

MISERY loves company

Now predominantly current in the United States. Cf. mid-14th cent. L. gaudium est miseris socios habuisse penarum; a 1349 R. ROLLE Meditations on Passion in C. Horstmann Yorkshire Writers (1895) I. 101 It is solace to haue companie in peyne.

1578 Euphues I. 238 In miserie Euphues it is a great comfort to haue a companion.
1620 tr. Cervant's Don Quixote II. xiii. If that which is commonly spoken be true, that to haue companions in misery is a lightner of it, you may comfort me.

1775 Letter 4 May in Naval Documents of American Revolution (1964) I. 279 All my Letters are inter septed by those Rebels who want Every one to be kept in Dark like themselves. (Misery Loves Company).

1851 Journal 1 Sept. (1949) II. 440 If misery loves company, misery has company enough.

1979 Cannibals & Missionaries v. Misery loved company, and their own band of liberals could stand some diversification.

1997 Washington Times 4 Dec. C2 You were told you were not alone. Misery loves company, after all.

malice; misfortune

MISFORTUNES never come singly

Cf. early 14th-cent. Fr. ung meschief ne vient point seul, a misfortune does not come alone.


1509 Ship of Fools 236 Wyse men sayth, and oft it fallyth so .. That one myshap fortuneth neuer alone.


1711 Spectator 8 Mar. The Lady .. said to her Husband with a Sigh, My Dear, Misfortunes never come single.

1791 Letter 27 July in Memoirs of Aaron Burr (1836) I. 301 We certainly see the old proverb very often verified. ‘That misfortunes never come singly,’ that poor little woman is a proof.

1894 Perlycross II. vii. As misfortunes never come single, the sacred day robbed him of another fine resource.

1931 Wanted for Murder v. Blessings, like misfortunes, never come singly. There was even a packet of Havana cigarettes .. behind the bath salts.

1981 Death-Cap Dancers v. ‘The car .. skidded and hit a tree.’ ‘Misfortunes never come singly.’

misfortune

A MISS is as good as a mile

The syntax of the proverb has been distorted by abridgement: the original structure is apparent from quot.

1614. Remains concerning Britain (ed.2) 303 An ynche in a misse is as good as an ell [a former measure of length equal to about 1.1 m].

1655 Hist. Cambridge 37 An hairs breadth fixed by a divine-finger, shall prove as effectuall a separation from danger as a miles distance.

1788 American Museum Apr. 382 A miss is as good as a mile.

1825 Journal 3 Dec. (1939) 28 He was very near being a poet—but a miss is as good as a mile, and he always fell short of the mark.
1978 Throwback vii. If you aimed at a grouse it was hit or miss and a miss was as good as a mile.

You never MISS the water till the well runs dry


Proverbs (British) 24 Of the Well we see no want, till either dry, or Water skant.

Scottish Proverbs 351 We'll never know the worth of Water 'till the well go dry.

You never miss Water 5 Do not let your chances, like sunbeams pass you by; For you never miss the water till the well runs dry.

Competition for Alan x. It's a case of not missing the water until the well runs dry.

Washington Times 18 July A6 ‘There is an old adage,’ Sen. Robert Byrd .. recalled this week, ‘that “you never miss the water until the well runs dry.”’

blessings ; gratitude and ingratitude

If you don't make MISTAKES you don't make anything

Outcast of Islands III. ii. It's only those who do nothing that make no mistakes, I suppose.

The comforting assurance that ‘a man who never makes mistakes never makes anything’.

If you don't make mistakes you don't make anything, she said, a motto which Hugo seemed to remember having seen pinned over the desk.

So many MISTS in March, so many frosts in May

Concordancy of Years xxx. Some say, so many mistes in March, so many hoare frosts after Easter.

So many frosts in March so many in May.

Many old country beliefs are not content with generalities but strive to be more precise. A well-known proverb is: So many mists in March, So many frosts in May.

mixen

BETTER wed over the mixen than over the moor.

MUTERATION in all things

A more recent formulation of the idea contained in there is MEASURE in all things. The Latin word modus can be translated as either ‘moderation’ or ‘measure’, but the former seems to be gaining currency at the expense of the latter, possibly because ‘measure’ has several meanings and so could be misunderstood. HESIOD Works & Days 1. 694 μην ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις τὸν μέτρον ἐπιτίθεντα, observe due measure; moderation is best in all things; PLAUTUS Poenulus 1. 238 modus omnibus rebus .. optimus est habitu, moderation in all things is the best policy.

Mardi II. lxxvii. I am for being temperate in these things... All things in moderation are good; whence, wine in moderation is good.

tr. Swiss Family Robinson ii. ‘Oh, father, sugar canes ...Do let us take a lot home to mother.’ .. ‘Gently there... Moderation in all things.’

Death & Pregnant Virgin ii. Norfolk..[is] on the same scale I am. No Niagaras, no hills higher than
hills .. ought to be. Moderation in all things.

- moderation

Monday
see Monday's CHILD is fair of face.

MONEY has no smell
L. non olet, it [money] does not smell. Titus, son of the Roman emperor Vespasian, had criticized a tax on public lavatories. Vespasian held a coin from the first payment to his son's nose and asked him whether the smell was offensive. Titus said no. Vespasian replied ‘And yet it comes from urine’ (Suetonius Vespasian xxiii).

1914 Max Carrados 45 The Romans, Parkinson, had a saying to the effect that gold carries no smell. That is a pity sometimes. What jewellery did Miss Hutchins wear?

1922 Mr. Prohack iii. The associations of the wealth scarcely affected him. He understood in the flesh the deep wisdom of that old proverb .. that money has no smell.

1940 Farewell, my Lovely xxxiv. He punched the cash-register and dropped the bill into the drawer. They say money don't stink. I sometimes wonder.

1998 Times: Weekend 27 June 6 It has been known from the time of the Emperor Vespasian that money has no smell; thanks to the World Cup, we also know that it has no taste.

- money

MONEY isn't everything

1927 Marco Millions iii. Money isn't everything, not always.

a 1947 Still glides Stream (1948) ii. He said quite angrily that money was not everything, there was the satisfaction of knowing you'd turned out a good job.

1975 Young Pattullo xv. If one owns property one can always have a little money follow one around. But we all know that money isn't everything.

- money

MONEY is power
A more worldly alternative to KNOWLEDGE is power.

1741 Almanack 4 Laws bear Name, but Money has the Power.

1789 Letter 16 May in Works (1854) I. 39 Money is power, a permanent revenue is permanent power, and the credit which it would give was a safeguard to the government.

1818 Letter 13 Oct. (1971) 115 Now he had money ‘and money is power’.

1930 Strange Death of President Harding iv. One can do nothing—be nothing, without money, not even in the White House. Money is power.

1980 No Country for Young Men i. The lads would have to have .. money if they were to get guns… Money was power.

- money ; power

MONEY is the root of all evil
Cf. I TIMOTHY vi. 10 (AV) The love of money is the root of all evil.

□c 1000 Homilies (1843) I. 256 Seo gytsung is ealra yfelra thinga wytrruma [covetousness is the root of all evil things].

c 1449 Repressor of Blaming of Clergy (1860) II. 555 Loue to money .. is worthi to be forborn .. as Poul seith, it is ‘the roote of al yuel’.

1616 Dict. (rev. ed.) 546 Riches are the root of all euill.

1777 in et al. Adams Family Correspondence (1963) II. 345 Many have been loth to believe .. That Money is the Root of all Evil.
Dr. Thorne. I. xii. ‘But, doctor, you'll take the money.’ .. ‘Quite impossible..’ said the doctor, .. valiantly rejecting the root of all evil.

Magazines have got these funny little sayings .. Here's one. ‘Money is the root of all evil .. but that's one evil I'm rooting for’.

It'll be the partner, you mark my words. It's true about money being the root of all evil.

This latest financial scandal affecting people who should know that the love of money is the root of all evil’ ought to prove again the danger of building huge organizations .. that must constantly be fed from charitable resources.

MONEY makes a man

Cf. L. divitiae virum faciunt, wealth makes the man.

In Early English Carols (1935) 263 Yt ys allwayes sene nowadayes That money makythe the man.

We commonly say .. In the Change [Exchange], Money makes a man, which puts him in a solvable condition.

The continent only does for us English people to see... Here, you know, ‘money makes the man’.

Money maketh a man; even if he was a monkey to start with.

I doubt whether he understands the place of money in vulgar estimation...

Money maketh man.

MONEY makes money

Mony getteth money.

‘Tis a vain thing to say, Money begets not Money; for that no doubt it does.

Money, says the proverb, makes money. When you have got a little, it is often easy to get more.

We have got to recollect that money makes money, as well as makes everything else.

Everything she did turned out well. Money made money.

Well .. maybe she made some clever investments? But no, she would have had to have money to begin with—it takes money to make money, my husband always said.

MONEY makes the mare to go

In the heyweyes [highways] ther joly [spirited] palfreys Yt [money] makyght to .. praunce.

Money makes the horsse to goe.

It's money makes the mare to go.

A leading man in the House of Commons, is a very important character; because that house has the giving of money: And Money makes the mare to go.

I'm making the mare go here .. without the money too, sometimes. I'm steward now.

'Tis money makes the mare go ...They're all after it, every one of them.
Countryman Spring 193 Weardale farmer's advice to daughter about to reject a proposal of marriage from a wealthy tradesman: ‘Never cock your snoop at money, my lass, 'cos it's money that makes the mare to go.’

MONEY talks
Meaning that money has influence.

1666 Italian Proverbs 179 Man prates, but gold speaks.

1681 Rover II. III. i. Money speaks in a Language all Nations understand.

1903 Saturday Evening Post 5 Sept. 12 When money talks it often merely remarks ‘Good-by’.

1915 Something Fresh iii. The whole story took on a different complexion for Joan. Money talks.

1984 Hotel du Lac (1985) xi. ‘At least I assume they are millionaires?’ ‘That is what they would like you to assume, certainly. And if money talks, .. they are certainly making the right amount of noise’.


Money; power
money
see also BAD money drives out good; a FOOL and his money are soon parted; LEND your money and lose your friend; never MARRY for money, but marry where money is; where there's MUCK there's brass; you PAYS your money and you takes your choice; TIME is money.

A MONEYLESS man goes fast through the market
The proverb is explained in quot. 1721. The last example represents a variation of the original proverb, asserting that a person rushes to wherever what he lacks may be found. Cf. late 14th-cent. Fr. cilz qui n’a point d’argent n’a que faire au marché, he who has no money can only go to (i.e. cannot buy anything at) the market.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 10 A silverless Man goes fast through the Market. Because he does not stay to cheapen [bargain] or buy.

1732 Gnomologia no. 330 A Moneyless Man goes fast thro' the Market.

1977 Five-Minute Marriage iv. Found your way here at last, then, miss, have you? A moneyless mare trots fast to the market.

buying and selling; poverty
monk
see the COWL does not make the monk.

monkey
see the HIGHER the monkey climbs, the more he shows his tail; if you PAY peanuts, you get monkeys; SOFTLY, softly, catchee monkey.

moon
see NO moon, no man.

moor
see BETTER wed over the mixen than over the moor.

MORE people know Tom Fool than Tom Fool knows
Tom Fool is a name traditionally given to a simpleton, or to one who acts the part of a fool, as in a drama or morris dance.

1656 Wit & Fancy II. i. In all Comedies more know the Clown, then the Clown knows.

1723 Colonel Jack (ed. 2) 347 It was no satisfaction to me that I knew not their faces, for they might know mine .. according to the old English proverb, ‘that more knows Tom Fool, than Tom Fool knows’.

1865 Facey Romford's Hounds xxxii. ‘Good mornin’, Mr. Swig,’ said the man; for the aphorism that
more people know Tom Fool than Tom Fool knows,’ holds particularly good as regards huntsmen and field servants.

1922 Times 15 Nov. 10 One of the candidates .. sent me his election address... More people, thought I, know Tom Fool than Tom Fool knows.

1980 Hooky & Prancing Horse iv. Hookey asked ‘..How's the great pulsating world of journalism?’ Mac was .. surprised; but he consoled himself with the thought that more people know Tom Fool than Tom Fool knows.

associates ; fame and obscurity

The MORE the merrier

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associates ; fame and obscurity

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□ c 1380 Pearl (1953) 1. 850 The mo [more] the myryer, so God me blesse.

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs II. vii. I3 The mo the merier, we all daie here [hear] and se. Ye but the fewer the better fare (saied he).

1614 Devil's Banquet IV. 196 The company is .. all the Patriarchs, Prophets, Saints... The more the mirrier, yea, and the better cheare to.

1855 Westward Ho! III. iv. The old proverb comes true—‘the more the merrier: but the fewer the better fare’.

1976 Kinflicks xiii. ‘Take my word for it. Have another baby.’ .. ‘The more, the merrier!’


1997 Old Gang of Mine xi. 147 ‘We will have the whole damn place in on this!’ ‘You got a problem with that?.. I figure the more the merrier.’

hospitality ; merriment

The MORE you get, the more you want

More succinctly stated in MUCH would have more. Cf. HORACE Epistles II. ii. 147 quanto plura parasti, tanto plura cupis, you want as much again as you have already got.

□ c 1340 Psalter (1884) 97 The mare that a man has the brenandere [more ardently] he askis.

a 1450 Castle of Perseverance 1. 3268 in Macro Plays (EETS) The more he hadde, the more he cravyd, Whyl the lyf lefte hym with-Inne.

1578 First Fruits 32 The more a man hath, the more he desireth.

1798 Key of Liberty (1922) 9 In short he is never easy, but the more he has the more he wants.

1940 Glass Triangle x. I was averaging eighty to a hundred [dollars] a week. Well, you know how it is. The more you get the more you want.

greed ; riches

more

see also more HASTE, less speed; LESS is more; MUCH would have more; the more you STIR it the worse it stinks; there are more WAYS of killing a cat than choking it with cream; there are more WAYS of killing a dog than choking it with butter; there are more WAYS of killing a dog than hanging it.

MORNING dreams come true

Cf. MOSCHUS Europa 2 uýt eáeagroú, at the third watch of the night, when dawn is near...and when the flock of true dreams is out grazing; HORACE Satires I. X. 33 post mediam noctem visus, cum somnia vera, he appeared to me after midnight, when dreams are true.

□ 1540 Acolastus II. i. After mydnyght men saye, that dreames be true.

1616 Love Restored VIII. 385 All the morning dreames are true.
This morn .. I dreamt (and morning dreams come true, they say).

Our highest anticipations and desires are not unsubstantial visions, but morning
dreams, which are proverbially sure to be fulfilled.

dreams

see also RED sky at night shepherd's delight.

morning

see also RED sky at night shepherd's delight.

moss

see a ROLLING stone gathers no moss.

most

see who KNOWS most, speaks least.

Like MOTHER, like daughter

The female equivalent of like FATHER, like son. EZEKIEL xvi. 44 (AV) Every one .. shall use this
proverb against thee, saying, As is the mother, so is her daughter.

a 1325 Cursor Mundi (EETS) 1. 18857 O suilk [such] a moder, wel slik [such] a child.

1474 Game of Chess II. ii. For suche moder suche doughter comunely.

1644 Bloody Tenent of Persecution xcix. Is not this as the Prophet speaks, Like mother, like daughter?

1861 Cloister & Hearth II. xvii. ‘Mother, you were so hot against her.’ .. ‘Ay … Like mother like
dughter: cowardice it is our bane’.

1960 Whisper Town II. ii. She had a reputation .. of being ‘fast’. ‘Like mother, like daughter,’ people
said.

1992 Rather English Marriage (1993) xi. 188 ‘Darling, you are hopeless! Why are you always so
broke?’ (Like mother, like daughter, she thought to herself.)

Children and parents ; similarity and dissimilarity

The MOTHER of mischief is no bigger than a midge's wing

a 1628 Proverbs in Scots no. 1468 The mother of mischief, is na mair nor [than] a midgewing.

1796 Parent's Assistant (ed. 2) 149 ‘The mother of mischief’, says an old proverb, ‘is no bigger than a
midge's wing’.

1858 Woman's Thoughts about Women viii. Fatal and vile as her [Gossip's] progeny may be, ‘the mother
of mischief’, says the proverb, ‘is no bigger than a midge's wing.’

beginnings and endings ; great and small ; trouble

mother

see also DILIGENCE is the mother of good luck; NECESSITY is the mother of invention; PRAISE the
child, and you make love to the mother.

If the MOUNTAIN will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet must go to the mountain

Quot. 1625 gives the anecdote behind this saying.

1625 Essays ‘Of Boldness’ xii. Mahomet cald the Hill to come to him .. And when the Hill stood still,
he was neuer a whit abashed, but said; If the Hill will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet wil go to the hil.

1732 Gnomologia no. 2707 If the Mountain will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet must go to the
Mountain.

1975 Snow Tiger xvii. You couldn't go to see him, so the mountain had to go to Mahomet. It was ..
important to him.

necessity ; obstinacy

mountain

see also FAITH will move mountains.
A MOUSE may help a lion
The proverb alludes to Aesop's fable of the lion and the rat, which is told by Caxton in Fables (1484) 40.

1563 Mirror for Magistrates (1938) 274 The mouse may sometyme help the Lyon in nede... O prynces seke no foes.
1732 Gnomologia no. 264 A Lyon may come to be beholding to a Mouse.
1842 Percival Keene I. xvii. A mouse may help a lion, as the fable says.
1935 House of Four Winds xi. I only offer to show my gratitude by doing what I can... A mouse may help a lion.

assistance; great and small
mouse
see also ONE for the mouse, one for the crow; also MICE.
mouth
see out of the FULLNESS of the heart the mouth speaks; never look a GIFT horse in the mouth; GOD never sends mouths but He sends meat; a SHUT mouth catches no flies; a SOW may whistle, though it has an ill mouth for it.
Out of the MOUTHS of babes—
Young children may speak disconcertingly wisely at times. The proverb is used in a variety of abbreviated and allusive forms, often without a knowledge of the complete biblical quotations (both AV):

PSALMS viii. 2 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hath thou ordained strength; MATTHEW xxi. 16 Jesus saith unto them [the Pharisees], Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise.

1899 Stalky & Co. II In the present state of education I shouldn't have thought any three boys would be well enough grounded ...But out of the mouths—.
1906—Puck of Pook's Hill 285 Out of the mouths of babes do we learn.
1979 Some die Eloquent xviii. It was something Crosby said ...‘About the source of the money.’ ‘Out of the mouths,’ conceded Leeyes.

children; wisdom
move
see FAITH will move mountains.

MUCH cry and little wool

1350 Douce MS 52 no. 65 Mykull [much] wulle more.
a 1400 Wars of Alexander (EETS) I. 4397 Mekill wald have mare as many man spellis [tells].
1597 Plain Introduction to Music II. 70 The Common Prouerb is in me verified, that much would have
1732 Gnomologia no. 3487 Much would have more; but often meets with less.

1897 Hist. Own Times V. 131 Expedition after expedition has been sent out to extend the Egyptian frontier ... 'Much will have more,' the old proverb says; but in this case .. much is compelled for the sake of .. security to try to have more.

1928 Ransom for London V. iv. Why should ten millions satisfy these people?..There is an old adage to the effect that much wants more.

1943 Farming Adventure xii. 'Where there's muck there's money' is as true now as then. But farms today lack the mud.

1967 Punch 13 Sept. 396 ‘Where there's muck there's brass’ synopsisised for many a North-country businessman the value of dirt in the profit-making process.

1980 Cosmopolitan Dec. 4 Our report [on blue-collar jobs for women] .. should bury the myth that women don't like getting dirt on their hands ... Where there's muck there's brass.

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1928 Gnomologia no. 3487 Much would have more; but often meets with less.

1897 Hist. Own Times V. 131 Expedition after expedition has been sent out to extend the Egyptian frontier ... 'Much will have more,' the old proverb says; but in this case .. much is compelled for the sake of .. security to try to have more.

1928 Ransom for London V. iv. Why should ten millions satisfy these people?..There is an old adage to the effect that much wants more.
It's really very inconvenient .. for any of my young men to be absent .. but —I suppose—what must be must be.

‘My love,’ observed Mr. Micawber, ‘..I am always willing to defer to your good sense. What will be—will be’.

Peter is sensible ...He knows what must be must be.

Oh well, what must be, must be.

—fate and fatalism

nail
see when all you have is a HAMMER, everything looks like a nail; ONE nail drives out another; for WANT of a nail the shoe was lost.

name
see give a DOG a bad name and hang him; he that has an ILL name is half hanged; NO names, no pack-drill.

nation
see happy is the COUNTRY which has no history; the ENGLISH are a nation of shopkeepers.

NATURE abhors a vacuum
Cf. L. natura abhorret vacuum, Nature abhors a vacuum.

1551 Answer to Gardiner 299 Naturall reason abhorreth vacuum.

1642 Holy State v.ii. Queen Joan .. (hating widowhood as much as Nature doth vacuum) maried James King of Majorca.

1686 Free Inquiry VII. 292 The Axiom of the Schools, that Nature abhors a Vacuum.

1771 Letter 20 June (1952) I. 249 Whatever philosophy may determine of material nature, it is certainly true of intellectual nature, that it abhors a vacuum: our minds cannot be empty.

1975 Our Man in Camelot 10 The vacuity of Major Davies's personal file .. was damning. Because, like nature, the CIA abhorred a vacuum.

Nature ; opportunity, taken

NATURE

see also you can DRIVE out Nature with a pitchfork, but she keeps on coming back; SELF-preservation is the first law of nature.

nay
see he that WILL not when he may, when he will he shall have nay.

NEAR is my kirtle, but nearer is my smock
A justification for looking after one's own closest interests; see also the next proverb. A kirtle is a woman's skirt or gown; a smock is an undergarment. Cf. PLAUTUS Trinummus 1. 1154 tunica propior palliost, my tunic is closer than my cloak.

1461 Paston Letters (1976) II. 228 Nere is my kyrtyl but nerre is my smok.

1545 tr. Erasmus' Adages (ed. 2) B7V The Englysshe prouerbe sayethe thus: nere is my cote, but nerer is my shyrt.

1622 Familiar Letters 1 May (1903) I. 126 That king .. having too many irons in the fire at his own
home .. answered them that his shirt was nearer to him than his doublet.

1861 Cloister & Hearth IV. xxix. You must not think all of him and none of yourself. Near is your kirtle, but nearer is your smock.

**self-preservation**

NEAR is my shirt, but nearer is my skin

See also the preceding proverb. Cf. early 14th-cent. Fr. plus pres m'est char que n'est chemise, my skin is nearer to me than my shirt.

—and c 1570 in Old Ballads (1840) 99 Neerer is my skin then shirte.

1631 Spare Hours of Meditations 63 His charitie beginnes at home, and there it ends; neere is his coat, but neerer is his skinne.

1712 Lewis Baboon v. My Shirt (quoth he) is near me, but my Skin is nearer: Whilst I take care of the Welfare of other Folks, no body can blame me, to apply a little Balsam to my own Sores.

1890 Bondman II. x. ‘We can’t trust you.’ .. ‘Not your own brother?’ said Jacob. ‘“Near is my shirt, but nearer is my skin,” as the saying is.’

**self-preservation**

The NEARER the bone, the sweeter the meat

—and a 1398 tr. Bartholomew's On Properties of Things (1975) xix. 1 The nerer the boon the swetter is the flesshe.

1661 Worthies (Wales) 2 As the sweetest flesh is said to be nearest the bones, so most delicious vallies are interposed betwixt these Mountains.

1778 in Writings (1906) VIII. 258 We all agree the nearer the bone the sweeter the meat.

1945 Lark Rise i. ‘The nearer the bone the sweeter the meat,’ they used to say, and they were getting very near the bone … Their children .. would have to depend wholly upon whatever was carved for them from the communal joint.

1979 Shiborni i. 38 A little skinny .. for my taste, but, like my ol’ daddy used to say: the closer the bone, the sweeter the meat.

1996 Washington Post 27 Nov. B7 He inserts the rib in his mouth. ‘The closer to the bone, the sweeter the meat,’ he notes.

**value**

The NEARER the church, the farther from God

—and 1303 Handlyng Synne (EETS) I. 9242 Tharfor men seys, an weyl ys trowed [believed], ‘the nere the cherche, the fyrther fro God’.

1620 tr. Cervantes' Don Quixote II. xlvi. Eat nothing of all this meat .. for this dinner was presented by Nunnes, and it is an olde saying, The neerer the Church, the farther from God.

1879 Work amongst Working Men i. I fear it was a practical comment on the truth of the uncomfortable proverb, ‘The nearer the church, the farther from God,’ that so bad a district should adjoin one of the great head-quarters of the church.

1957 They hanged my Saintly Billy ii. ‘The nearer the church, the farther from God,’ is a proverb of doubtful truth. But true it is that William Palmer, as a child, had two churches frowning down on him.

**Christianity**

NECESSITY is the mother of invention

Cf. 1519 W. HORMAN Vulgaria 52 Nede taught hym wytte. Necessitas ingenium dedit.

1545 Toxophilus II. 18V Necessitie, the inuentor of all goodnesse (as all authours in a maner, doo saye) .. inuented a shaft heed.
The great Mother, Of all productions (graue Necessity).

Art imitates Nature, and Necessity is the Mother of Invention.

I soaled my Shoes with wood, which I cut from a Tree ...No man could more verify the Truth .. That, Necessity is the Mother of Invention.

You know Necessity is the mother of—.’ ‘Ay! ay, that is old enough, o' conscience’.

Necessity has been once more the mother of invention. I have invented Captain Lefevre.

They say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, but in the case of personal computer imitation, the more appropriate adage may be ‘necessity is the mother of invention.’

NECESSITY knows no law

Cf. L. necessitas non habet legem, necessity has no law.

Two things are without law, God and necessity.

The latter reason .. includeth a necessitie which after the common saying hath no law.

Necessity has no Law; I must be patient.

Troops .. quarter themselves in any houses they find shut up. Necessity knows no law.

Necessity has no law, and he was obliged to rise.

‘Don't speak to the man at the wheel” is a very good rule.’ ‘So’, said I, ‘is "Necessity knows no law."’

Necessity knows no law. I must admit it. From time to time, I flew.

NEEDS must when the Devil drives

Needs must is used elliptically for ‘one needs must (i.e. must of necessity) go’.

Hit ys oft seyde by hem that yet lyues He must nedys go that the deuell dryues.

He must needs go that the devil drives.

Needs must go when the Devil drives!.. But I'd rather do any thing than injure that poor blue-eyed beauty.

I don't want to marry the damned woman either, but needs must when the devil drives.

He needs must go whom the devil drives.
The public at large have reaped much of the crop sown by Government for its own army, but, as the Scottish saying has it, ‘What a neighbour gets is not lost.’

neighbours; winners and losers

neighbour

see also GOOD fences make good neighbours.

nest

see there are no BIRDS in last year's nest; BIRDS in their little nests agree; it's an ILL bird that fouls its own nest.

**In vain the NET is spread in the sight of the bird**

With allusion to PROVERBS i. 17 (AV) Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird; cf. c 1395 WYCLIF Bible (1850) Proverbs i. 17 A net is leid in veyn before the ighen [eyes] of briddis.

1581 tr. S. Guazzo's Civil Conversation i. 20 V In vaine (as the Prouerb sayth) The net is pitcht in the sight of the birdes.

1888 Economic Interpretation of Hist. xxi. The landowners in Pitt's time foresaw this ... They would certainly be caught, and the net was spread in vain in sight of the bird.

1941 They tell No Tales x. ‘Keep a good look out.’ .. ‘In vain is the net spread in the sight of the bird, anyway.’

1961 Dragon of Ishtar Gate vii. ‘If they come, we shall be ready,’ said Bessas. ‘In vain the net is spread in the sight of the bird.’

**deception; futility**

net

see also all is FISH that comes to the net.

If you gently touch a NETTLE it'll sting you for your pains; grasp it like a lad of mettle, an' as soft as silk remains.

The metaphorical phrase to grasp the nettle, to tackle a difficulty boldly, is also found.

1578 Euphues I. 212 True it is Philautus that he which toucheth ye nettle tenderly, is soonest stoung.

1660 Nonsuch Professor I. 156 Sin is like the nettle, that stings when it is gently touched, but doth hurt not when it is ruggedly handled.

1753 Works IV. 120 Tender-handed stroke a nettle, And it stings you, for your pains: Grasp it like a man of mettle, And it soft as silk remains.

1830 Vocabulary of East Anglia 430 ‘Nip a nettle hard, and it will not sting you’ — i.e. Strong and decided measures prevail best with troublesome people.

1925 Juno & Paycock I. 35 Be firm, Captain... If you gently touch a nettle it'll sting you for your pains; grasp it like a lad of mettle, an' as soft as silk remains.

**boldness**

NEVER is a long time

1390 Canon's Yeoman's Tale I. 1411 Nevere to thryve were to long a date.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 260 Never is a long Term... Spoken to them that say they will never get such a Thing effected.

1887 Springhaven I. xvii. She never could pay her rent. But ‘never is a long time’ .. and .. she stood clear of all debt now.

1979 Sealed Envelope iii. ‘I never reveal my sources.’ .. ‘Never is a long time.’

**future**

NEVER say never

Probably a pithy modern reformulation of the preceding proverb.
1977 Economist 9 April 6 Mr Colley .. is politician enough never to say never.
1996 Daily Mirror 4 Jan. 41 He is still in my plans. You never say ‘never’ in this game.

future
It is NEVER too late to learn
A later variation of the next two proverbs.

1678 Seneca's Morals II. xx. It is never too late to learn what it is always necessary to know.
1721 Scottish Proverbs 266 Never too late to learn.
1856 Lady of Glenwith Grange in After Dark II. 3 ‘It is never too late to learn,’ cried he. ‘I will make a fisherman of you in no time, if you will only attend to my direction.’
1927 Lucia in London ii. We want to know what the cosmopolitan mind is thinking about. Of course we're old, but it is never too late to learn.
1976 Memorial Service vii. You might not be too bad at it. Why not have a try, eh? Never too late to learn.

lateness ; learning
It is NEVER too late to mend
See also the two adjacent proverbs.

1590 (title) Never too late.
1594 & Looking-Glass for London I3VAmends may neuer come too late.
1645 Familiar Letters 9 Nov. (1903) III. 139 We have both of us our failings that way .. but it is never over late to mend.
1856 (title) It is never too late to mend.
1934 Shabby Tiger iv. Adolf shrugged a shoulder which suggested that it's never too late to mend.
1961 It wasn't Me! i. How kind … Never too late to mend.

improvement ; lateness
NEVER too old to learn
See also the two preceding proverbs. Cf. SENECA Epistle LXXVI. iii. tamdiu discendum est, quamdiu nescias: si proverbio credimus, quamdiu vivas, we must go on learning as long as we are ignorant; or, if we believe the proverb, as long as we live.

1530 Eclogues (EETS) II. 538 Coridon thou art not to olde for to lere.
1555 Institution of Gentleman B7VNo man can be to olde to learne.
1670 English Proverbs 112 Never too old to learn.
1712 Law is Bottomles Pit I. vii. A Lawyer I was born, and a Lawyer I will be; one is never too Old to learn.
1858 Dr. Thorne I. x. One should never be too old to learn—there's always something new worth picking up.
1981 Xanadu Talisman ii. I've made sure you were schooled in every possible subject .. but you're never too old to learn.

learning ; old age
never
see also BETTER late than never; never send a BOY to do a man's job; never do EVIL that good may come of it; what you've never HAD you never miss; PAY beforehand was never well served; never let the SUN go down on your anger.
NEW brooms sweep clean

The phrase *new broom* (one newly appointed to a position who makes changes in personnel or procedures) derives from this proverb.

1546 *Dialogue of Proverbs* II. i. F3

Som therto said, the grene new brome swepith cleene.

1578 Euphues I. 232

Ah well I wotte [know] that a newe broome sweepe cleene.

1616 *Dict.* (rev. ed.) 569

New bromes sweepe cleane, yet old friendship still retaine.

1776 *New Brooms!* 15

I am glad he is gone—Glad!—To be sure. New Brooms, you know.

1877 Short Studies 3rd Ser. 55

New brooms sweep clean. Abbot Thomas, like most of his predecessors, began with attempts at reformation.

1930 *Crime in India* I. i.

Datt was a new broom, and he began to sweep vigorously.

1979 *Sweet & Deadly* iv.

He was all right at first. It was a case of a new broom sweeping clean.

Improvement; innovation

What is NEW cannot be true

1639 *Paroemiologia Anglo-Latina* 228

The newest things, not always truest.

1791 *Life of Johnson* II. 283

I found that generally what was new was false.

1880 *Byron* ix.

We are told .. that he knew little of art or music. .. It is true but not new. But when Hunt proceeds to say that Byron had no sentiment .. it is new enough, but is manifestly not true.

1928 *Times* 4 Feb. 8

Sir Arthur Evans has fallen a victim .. to the old slogan ‘What is new cannot be true.’

Innovation

NEW lords, new laws

Cf. a 1450

St. Editha (1883) 96

Willyham Conquerour was made here kyng, And made newe lordus and eke new lawe.

a 1547 *Chronicle* (1548) Hen. VI 169

Tholde spoken prouerbe, here toke place: New Lordes, new lawes.

1824 *St. Ronan’s Well* II. i.

But new lords new laws—naething but fine and imprisonment, and the game no a feather the plentier.

1874 *Far from Madding Crowd* I. viii.

‘I was lately married to a woman, and she’s my vocation now.’ .. ‘New lords new laws, as the saying is.’

Change; circumstances

You can't put NEW wine in old bottles

With allusion to *Matthew* ix. 17 (AV) Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish. The idea is also expressed allusively as a metaphorical phrase.

1912 *Landmarks in French Literature* vi.

The new spirits had animated the prose of Chateaubriand and the poetry of Lamartine; but .. the form of both these writers retained most of the important characteristics of the old tradition. It was new wine in old bottles.

1948 *Civilization on Trial* vi.

The new wines of industrialism and democracy have been poured into old bottles and they have burst the old bottles beyond repair.

1960 *Dignity & Purity* viii.

‘I don't think you can put new wine in old bottles.’ I looked doubtful ... ‘A lot of this could be rationalized.’

1974 *Porterhouse Blue* x.

‘Motives?..Good old-fashioned lust.’ ‘That hardly explains the explosive nature of his end.’ .. ‘You can't put new wine in old bottles.’

Innovation

new
see also there is NOTHING new under the sun; it is best to be OFF with the old love before you are on with the new; you can't TEACH an old dog new tricks.

news
see BAD news travels fast; GO abroad and you'll hear news of home; NO news is good news.

nibble
see a BLEATING sheep loses a bite.

NIGHT brings counsel

Cf. MENANDER Sententiae no. 222 ἡ νύκτις, at night comes counsel to the wise; L. in noce consilium, in night is counsel.

1590 Faerie Queene i. 291 Vntroubled night .. giues counsell best.

1640 Outlandish Proverbs no. 746 Night is the mother of Counsels.

1660 Astræa Redux i. 93 Well might the Ancient Poets then confer On Night the honour'd name of Counseller.

1928 Darkest Spot xviii. The saying that night brings counsel is often true ...Peter .. woke next morning with a plan of campaign fully developed.

1967 Strike out where not Applicable 184 ‘Home you go, boy. Night brings counsel.’ Night did bring counsel. Or rather Verbiest, the young inspector, brought it.

advice

night
see also BARNABY bright, Barnaby bright, the longest day and the shortest night; all CATS are grey in the dark; RED sky at night shepherd's delight; SING before breakfast, cry before night.

NINE tailors make a man

The literal meaning is that a gentleman must select his attire from various sources. It is now sometimes specifically associated with bell-ringing (see quotas. 1908 and 1934).

1613 Tarlton's Jests C1 Two Taylors goes to a man.

1647 Simple Cobbler 26 It is a more common then convenient saying, that nine Taylers make a man; It were well if nineteene could make a woman to her minde.

1776 Poor Robin's Almanack II. C6VDo ye know how many Taylers make a Man? Why Nine—Nine Taylors make a Man.

1819 Letter 26 July (1933) V. 427 They say it take nine tailors to make a man—apparently, one is sufficient to ruin him.

1908 Church Bells v. When the Knell is rung, it is a frequent practice to indicate the .. sex of the deceased ... The old saying ‘nine tailors make a man’ is really ‘nine tellers’ [strokes], or three times three.

1912 New Girl at St. Chad's i. There's a saying that it takes nine tailors to make a man, so if your name is Taylor you can only be the ninth part of a lady!

1934 Nine Tailors IV. v. iii. The voice of the bells of Fenchurch St. Paul... Nine Tailors Make a Man.

dress

nine
see also PARSLEY seed goes nine times to the Devil; POSSESSION is nine points of the law; it is not SPRING until you can plant your foot upon twelve daisies; a STITCH in time saves nine.

NO cure, no pay
The expression is known principally from its use on Lloyd's of London's Standard Form of Salvage Agreement; Cf. the earlier no purchase, no pay and similar proverbs.
No Cure, No Pay.

Alphabetical Reference Index to Recent & Important Maritime Law Decision 194 Agreement—‘no cure no pay.’

Treatise .. Law of Civil Salvage (ed. 2) 270 (heading) Salvage agreement on basis of Lloyd's standard form of ‘no cure—no pay’ agreement.

Reports of Tax Cases (Inland Revenue) XVII. 352 The charges of those accountants .. were made on the ‘No cure, no pay’ principle.

Lloyd's List Law Reports I. 429 The master .. made a bargain with .. Mr. Bezikis .. who .. agreed to make good the steering engine .. at a cost of what was described as £420 ‘no cure no pay.’

Outlook Dec. 113 The most violent tooth-ache cured in a few minutes without drawing (no cure no pay).

The divers .. will earn their money … If they find nothing, they will receive nothing …No cure, no pay.

NO man can serve two masters

With allusion to MATTHEW vi. 24 (AV) No man can serve two masters, the verse which concludes you cannot serve GOD and Mammon.

in Political Songs (1839) 325 No man may wel serve tweie lوردes to queme [please]

Jason (EETS) 57 No man may wel serve two maistres, for that one corumpeth that other.

You cannot have your will .. and Christ too; no man can serve two masters.

On Lessons in Proverbs v. Our lord .. has said: ‘No man can serve two masters.’ .. So the Spanish proverb: He who has to serve two masters, has to lie to one.

The Coroner's Officer existed in a sort of leaderless no-man's-land. Hostilities had broken out over this more than once …No man can serve two masters.

NO man is a hero to his valet

Attributed to Mme Cornuel (1605–94): il n'y a pas de héros pour son valet-de-chambre, no man is a hero to his valet.

tr. Montaigne's Essays III. ii. Few men haue beene admired of their familiers … In my climate of Gascoigne they deeme it as iest to see mee in print.

It has been said .. that no man is a hero to his valet de chambre; now I am afraid when you and I grow a little more intimate .. you will be horribly disappointed in your high expectations.

Many men have been heroes to their valets, and most (except Pope and Poe) to their biographers.

One, Two, buckle my Shoe i. It has been said that no man is a hero to his valet. To that may be added that few men are heroes to themselves at the moment of visiting their dentist.

Just as no man was a hero to his valet, so no member of a profession was a sea-green incorruptible to a policeman.

NO moon, no man

Return of Native I. I. iii. ‘No moon, no man.’ 'Tis one of the truest sayings ever spit out. The boy never comes to anything that's born at new moon.

In Cornwall, when a child is born in the interval between an old moon and the first appearance of a new one, it is said that it will never live to reach the age of puberty. Hence the saying ‘No moon, no man.’
**calendar lore ; children**

**NO names, no pack-drill**

If nobody is named as being responsible for something, then nobody can be blamed and punished. Also used more generally in favour of reticence on a subject. **Pack-drill** is a military punishment in which the offender is compelled to march up and down in full marching order.

*1923 Peace in our Time* I. ii. *Men had a way of omitting the names of those of whom they spoke; no names no pack-drill.*

*1925 Juno & Paycock* II. 61 *I know some as are as sweet as the blossoms that bloom in the May—oh, no names, no pack drill.*

*1955 Beckoning Lady* ii. *It just means no name, no pack drill, and always speak well of them as has money to sue.*

*1979 Hooky & Villainous Chauffeur* x. *If you gave your word to a girl you'd stick to it. But there as plenty as don't... No names, no packdrill, as my old dad used to say.*

**speech and silence**

**NO news is good news**

*1616 in Loseley MSS* (1836) 403 *No newis is bettir then evill newis.*

*1640 Familiar Letters* 3 June (1903) II. 144 *I am of the Italians mind that said, ‘Nulla nuova, buona nuova’, (no news, good news).*

*1850 Frank Fairlegh* x. Arguing .. (on the ‘no news being good news’ system) that I should have heard again if anything had gone wrong, I dismissed the subject from my mind.

*1979 Porterhouse Blue* xxii. *‘He can't reply’, the Senior Tutor pointed out. ‘I find that most consoling. After all no news is good news.’*

**news**

**NO pain, no gain**

*1577 Works of Young Wit* 33\(^V\)*They must take pain that look for any gayn.*

*1648 Hesperides* 298 *No Paines, no Gaines. If little labour, little are our gaines: Mans fortunes are according to his paines.*

*1853 On Lessons in Proverbs* iv. *For the most part they courageously accept the law of labour, No pains, no gains,—No sweat, no sweet, as the appointed law and condition of man's life.*

*1985 Washington Post* 22 May (Health Supplement) 14 *Forget the coach’s rule of ‘no pain, no gain’. Today, exercise researchers are replacing it with the ‘talk rule.’*

*1997 American Spectator* May 47 *As the cliché goes, no pain, no gain. In fact, in our confessional age, you can make quite a lot of gains for very little pain.*

**wanting and having**

**NO penny, no paternoster**

*1528 Obedience of Christian Man* fo. lxxxii\(^V\)*After the commune sayenge, no peny no Pater noster.*

*1648 Hesperides* 302 *Who .. Can’t send for a gift A Pig to the Priest for a Roster [roast], Shall heare his Clarke say... No pennie, no Pater Noster.*

*1721 Scottish Proverbs* 259 *No Penny, no Pater Noster.*

*1925 My Life* ix. *If the churchly motto ‘No penny, no Paternoster’ was true, how could a church .. stay downtown when its congregation was moving north.*

*1940 Broken Face Murders* ii. *No penny, no paternoster. I neither pay the piper nor do I dance.*

**just deserts**
see also [HALF a loaf is better than no bread; there's no great LOSS without some gain; there's no PLACE like home; if there were no RECEivers, there would be no thieves; there is no ROYAL road to learning; SEE no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil; SHROUDS have no pockets; no SMOKE without fire; TIME and tide wait for no man; no TIME like the present.]

nobody
see EVERYBODY'S business is nobody's business; it's an ILL wind that blows nobody any good.

A NOD'S as good as a wink to a blind horse
A fanciful assertion, often abbreviated as in quot. 1822, that the slightest hint is enough to convey one's meaning in the case.

1794 Caleb Williams I. viii. Say the word; a nod is as good as a wink to a blind horse.
1822 Gil Blas (rev. ed.) I. ii. ix. I shall say no more at present; a nod is as good as a wink.
1925 Shadow of Gunman in Two Plays I. 142 You needn't say no more—a nod's as good as a wink to a blind horse.
1979 Hooky & Villainous Chauffeur vi. The way he behaves .. Other men's wives. Still, I expect you know as much about that as I do …They say a nod's as good as a wink to a blind horse.
1992 Root into Europe ii. 34 Got a good PR machine working for you, I expect. Say no more… Nod's as good as a wink.

hints ; tact

nod
see also (verb) HOMER sometimes nods.

noise
see EMPTY vessels make the most sound.

none
see a BAD excuse is better than none; there's none so BLIND as those who will not see; none but the BRAVE deserve the fair; there's none so DEAF as those who will not hear; TWO is company, but three is none..

no one
see no one should be JUDGE in his own cause.

nose
see don't CUT off your nose to spite your face.

NOTHING comes of nothing
Cf. ALCAEUS Fragment cccc x. (Lobel-Page) οὐδὲν ἐκ δεν-ψυχεν ὀτρο, nothing comes of nothing; L. ex nihil nihil fit.

1380 Boethius v. pr. i. For this sentence is verray and soth, that ‘no thing hath his beynge of naught.’
1551 Answer to Gardiner 369 Sicut ex nihil nihil fit, Ita nihil in nihilum redigitur, As nothyng can be made of nought, so nothyng can be tourned into nought.
1605–6 King Lear I. i. 89 Nothing will come of nothing. Speak again.
1818 Heart of Midlothian I. i. You are to give me all your business …If you have none, the learned gentleman here knows nothing can come of nothing.
1946 Lady Sarah Lennox iv. ‘What did you think of it?’ ‘Nothing, Sir.’ ‘Nothing comes of nothing!’ the King exclaimed impatiently.
1979 Sense of Order viii. Nothing comes out of nothing. The great ornamental styles could no more have been the invention of one man .. than could the organ fugue.
NOTHING for nothing

- 1704 Works (1707) I. 131 Thou know'st the proverb, nothing due for nought.
- 1800 Castle Rackrent 167 Nothing for nothing, or I'm under a mistake with you, Jason.
- 1858 Interpreter xxv. Sir Harry .. recollected the old-established principle of himself and his clique, ‘Nothing for nothing, and very little for a halfpenny.’
- 1908 Ezekiel 172 The last touch in the picture is meanness, which turned everything into money ... Is not ‘nothing for nothing’ an approved maxim to-day?
- 1981 One Damn Thing after Another iv. Their heart's not in it. Nothing for nothing and not much for sixpence.

NOTHING is certain but death and taxes

- 1726 Hist. Devil II. vi. Not the Man in the Moon ... not the Inspiration of Mother Shipton, or the Miracles of Dr. Faustus, Things as certain as Death and Taxes, can be more firmly believ'd.
- 1789 Letter 13 Nov. in Writings (1907) X. 69 In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.
- 1912 Spectator 18 May 785 It is not merely the .. amount of the taxes... It is their compulsory and irresistible incidence... ’There are only two evils from which no man can escape—death and the King’s taxes.’
- 1939 By Shores of Silver Lake xxv. Everything's more or less a gamble... Nothing is certain but death and taxes.
- 1989 Time 13 Feb. 82 Nothing is certain, goes the old saw, but death and taxes. Death, yes. But probably not taxes—if, that is, one is wealthy enough to hire lawyers and accountants with a working knowledge of loopholes in the Internal Revenue code.

NOTHING is certain but the unforeseen

- 1886 Oceana vii. There is a proverb that ‘nothing is certain but the unforeseen’, and in fact few things turn out as we expect them.
- 1905 Gospel according to St. Matthew I. 322 There is nothing certain to happen, says the proverb, but the unforeseen. Tomorrow will have its cares.

NOTHING new under the sun

- 1592 French Alphabet II. 7 Under the large Cope of heauen, we see not a new thing.
- 1664 Works (1867) 53 There is no new thing under the sun.
- 1801 Writings (1904) X. 229 We can no longer say there is nothing new under the sun.
- 1850 Alton Locke I. xviii. There is nothing new under the sun; all that, is stale and trite to a septuagenarian, who has seen where it all ends.
- 1979 Sense of Order i. It rather looks as if there were nothing new under the sun and as if all change was only apparent.
- 1997 American Spectator Feb. 68 His message—there's nothing new under the sun—is hardly original, but his manner of telling it is.
NOTHING should be done in haste but gripping a flea

1655 in Anecdotes & Traditions (1839) I. 55 A grave gentleman in this Kingdome us'd this phrase often: 'Do nothing rashly, but catching of fleas.'

1678 English Proverbs (ed. 2) 151 Nothing most be done hastily but killing of fleas.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 261 Nothing to be done in haste, but gripping of Fleas... Spoken when we are unreasonably urged to make haste.

1927 Witch Wood xii. What's the need o' hurry when the body's leg is still to set. As my auld mither used to say, naething suld be done in haste but grippin' a flea.

1969 Compleat Flea i. ‘Do nothing hastily but catching of fleas’, warns a wary proverb.

NOTHING so bad but it might have been worse

A more positive version is 1817 SCOTT Rob Roy II. xiii. There's naething sae gude on this side o' time but it might hae been better.

1876 Manchester Man III. xiii. However, there is nothing so bad but it might be worse.

1885 How to be Happy though Married xxi. Let us resolve to look at the bright side of things ... ‘Nothing so bad but it might have been worse.’

1908 Times 5 Oct. 3 Farmers .. will regard the .. meteorological changes as illustrating the ancient axiom to the effect that circumstances are never so bad that they cannot be worse.

NOTHING so bold as a blind mare

1628 Proverbs in Scots no. 1435 The blind horse is hardiest.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 266 Nothing so bold as a blind Mare.

1922 Huntingtower x. He spoke of the still unconquered enemy with .. disrespect, so that Mrs Morran was moved to observe that there was ‘naething sae bauld as a blind mear.’

NOTHING so good for the inside of a man as the outside of a horse

A proverb asserting the benefit of horse-riding to health.

1906 Social Silhouettes xxxii. The Squire will wind up .. with an apocryphal saying which he attributes to Lord Palmerston—‘There's nothing so good for the inside of a man as the outside of a horse.’

1946 Horseman's Encyclopædia 338 ‘There is something about the outside of a horse which is good for the inside of a man.’ This adage is wiser than might first appear. But one should not consider just the hours spent in the saddle as beneficial.

1987 Time 28 Dec. 52 There is nothing better for the inside of a man than the outside of a horse. Ronald Reagan President.

NOTHING succeeds like success

Cf. Fr. rien ne réussit comme le succès, nothing succeeds like success.

1867 Beyond Mississippi xxxiv. ‘Nothing succeeds like success.’ There was much Southern sympathy on the island; now all are our dear friends.

1872 Ready-Money Mortiboy I. ix. In Mr. Mortiboy's judgment no proverb could be better than .. ‘Nothing succeeds like success.’ Success dazzled him.

1980 History & Imagination 9 Nothing succeeds like success, and if Hitler had founded his empire .. we can well imagine how later historians would have treated him.

NOTHING venture, nothing gain
A variant of the next proverb. Cf. late 14th-cent. Fr. *qui onques rien n'enprist riens n'achieva*, he who never undertook anything never achieved anything; 1481 CAXTON *Reynard* (1880) xii. He that will wynne he muste laboure and aventure.

1624 Captives IV. i. *I see hee that nought venters, nothinge gaynes.*


1876 Cripps III. iv. *We must all have been in France .. if—well, never mind. Nothing venture, nothing win.*

1967 Naked Ape iv. *For him [the withdrawn individual] the old saying: ‘Nothing ventured, nothing gained’ has been rewritten: ‘Nothing ventured, nothing lost.’*

1979 Tomorrow's Ghost vii. *That was decidedly interesting—‘And Pearson Cole?’ Nothing venture, nothing gain.*


1559 Bibliotheca (ed. 3) s.v. Fortis, Fortune foretherethe [furthers] bolde aduenturers, nothyng venture, nothyng haue.

1791 Life of Johnson II. 166 *I am, however, generally for trying ‘Nothing venture, nothing have.’*

1841 Old Curiosity Shop I. xxix. *I'm sorry the gentleman's daunted—nothing venture, nothing have—but the gentleman knows best.*

1937 Death on Nile II. xxix. *Nothing venture nothing have! It's about the only time in my life I shall be near to touching a fat lot of money.*

nothing

see also BELIEVE nothing of what you hear, and only half of what you see; BLESSED is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed; CIVILITY costs nothing; there is nothing like LEATHER; you don't get SOMETHING for nothing; SOMETHING is better than nothing; the SUN loses nothing by shining into a puddle.

notice

see LONG foretold, long last.

There's NOWT so queer as folk

*Nowt* is a dialect variant of ‘nought’; i.e. ‘nothing’.

1905 English Dialect Dict. IV. 304 *There's nowt sae queer as folk, Old saying.*

1939 Letter 30 May in Letters (1979) 186 *I trust you .. find plenty of interest in people & their doings. Really ‘there is nowt so funny as folk.’*

1955 Miscellany-at-Law I. 72 *There is the infinite charm and variety of human nature itself: ‘there's nowt so queer as folk.’*

1979 Hooky & Villainous Chauffeur viii. *There's nowt so queer as folk, people get up to all sorts of odd things.*
When the OAK is before the ash, then you will only get a splash; when the ash is before the oak, then you may expect a soak.

A traditional way of predicting whether the summer will be wet or dry on the basis of whether the oak or the ash is first to come into leaf in the spring.

1852 Notes & Queries 1st Ser. V. 581 When the oak comes out before the ash, there will be fine weather in harvest. I .. find it generally correct.

1911 Times Literary Supplement 4 Aug. 285 One of the commonest weather rhymes in most parts of England deals with the budding of the oak and the ash:—When the oak's before the ash Then you'll only get a splash, When the ash is before the oak Then you may expect a soak. But in North Germany the signs are exactly inverted, and also in Cornwall.

1987 Daily Telegraph 22 June 12 My farmer neighbour and myself have always been great believers in the saying: ‘Ash before oak, we'll get a soak Oak before ash, we'll only have a splash.’

**weather lore**

Beware of an OAK, it draws the stroke; avoid an ash, it counts the flash; creep under the thorn, it can save you from harm.

1878 Folk-Lore Record I. 43 Mothers teach their children to say—Beware of an oak, It draws the stroke; Avoid an ash; It counts the flash; Creep under the thorn, It can save you from harm.

1945 Lark Rise xvii. Some one would .. warn him to keep away from trees during a thunderstorm... Others would quote: Under oak there comes a stroke, Under elm there comes a calm, And under ash there comes a crash.

**necessity ; security**

oak

see also GREAT oaks from little acrons grow; LITTLE strokes fell great oaks; a REED before the wind lives on, while mighty oaks do fall.

obedience

see the FIRST duty of a soldier is obedience.

He that cannot OBEY cannot command

Cf. SENECA De Ira II. xiv. nemo regere potest nisi qui et regi, no one can rule unless he can also be ruled.

1500 tr. T. à Kempis' De Imitatione Christi (1893) xxiv. No man surely comaundith but he that hath lerned to obeye.
Those only know well how to command, which know well how to obaye.

1734 Poor Richard's Almanack (Aug.) He that cannot obey command.
1850 White Jacket vi. As the only way to learn to command, is to learn to obey, the usage of a ship of war is such that midshipmen are constantly being ordered about by the Lieutenants.
1972 Victorian Son ix. I did not mind the army because I knew I must learn to obey before I could command.

Obedience; rulers and ruled

OBEY orders, if you break owners
A nautical proverb; for the meaning see quot. 1924.

1782 Letter 30 Nov. in Proceedings of Massachusetts Hist. Society (1930) LXIII. 476 You will be safe, though you break orders that would break your owners.
1823 Pilot vii. The old rule runs, ‘Obey orders, if you break owners.’
1924 Gipsy of Horn iii. What could be sounder than ‘Obey orders, if you break owners’—meaning, do as you're told, even if you know it's wrong.
1976 Death on North Sea iv. I was brought up on the old sea maxim, ‘Obey orders if you break owners.’

Obedience

odd
see there is LUCK in odd numbers.
odious
see COMPARISONS are odious.

It is best to be OFF with the old love before you are on with the new.

1801 Belinda I. x. I can give you my advice gratis, in the formula of an old Scotch song … ‘Tis good to be off with the old love, Before you be on with the new.’
1819 Bride of Lammermoor III. ii. It is best to be off wi' the old love Before you be on wi' the new.
1891 Essays in Little 6 Dumas .. met the great man at Marseilles, where .. Alexandre chanced to be ‘on with the new love’ before being completely ‘off with the old’.
1923 Advisory Ben xxxix. That proverb about being off with the old love is a very sound one.
1980 Money Stones III. vi. Off with the old and on with the new. Why not just come out with it? Tell her it's all finished.

constancy and inconstancy; love

OFFENDERS never pardon

1640 Outlandish Proverbs no. 561 The offender never pardons.
1672 Conquest of Granada II. I. ii. Forgiveness to the Injur'd does belong; But they ne'r pardon who have done the wrong.
1876 Manchester Man III. xiii. He was of Mrs. Ashton's mind, that, ‘as offenders never pardon’, Augusta needed a friend.

forgiveness; wrong-doers

OLD habits die hard

1758 in London Chronicle 26–28 Dec. 632 I hear the reader say, Habits are hard to break, and those .. accustomed to idleness or extravagance do not easily change their manners.
1792 Foresters ix. Old habits are not easily broken, and .. they endeavoured .. to transfer the blame from him to his wife.
1944 Rim of Pit XV. ‘Miss Daventry .. started to run. Naturally I ran after her.’ Rogan smiled. ‘Old habits die hard.’

1991 New Scientist 1 June 57 Old habits die hard. A business executive .. tried to fax some documents to an office in Barcelona .. and always failed to get through... When the staff went for lunch they closed the office for several hours. And turned off the fax machine.

1995 Washington Times 31 Mar. E16 Old habits die hard. Police officers who were trained to pump the brakes have been crashing a lot of police cars equipped with anti-lock brakes.

You cannot put an OLD head on young shoulders

1591 Preparative to Marriage 14 It is not good grafting of an olde head vpon young shoulders, for they will never beare it willingly but grudgingly.

1794 Journal 31 Dec. (1889) 256 Tis not the way I could wish my children to conclude the year—in parties—but we can't put old heads on young shoulders.

1951 Sport 30 Mar.–5 Apr. 11 I no longer believe in the old proverb that you cannot put an old head on young shoulders.

1975 Package included Murder xvi. The Hon. Con generously forgave her. Well, you can't expect old heads on young shoulders, can you?

OLD sins cast long shadows

Cf. 1638 SUCKLING Aglaura v. in Plays (1971) 110 Our sins, like to our shadowes, When our day is in its glorie scarce appear: Towards our evening how great and monstrous they are!

1924 Scar xxiii. ‘You don't look well …No fresh worry, I hope.’ ‘No,’ wearily. ‘Only old sins have long shadows.’

1957 Testament of Experience 1. iii. If he hadn't been killed, they would probably never have become what they were... Bygone battles, like old sins, cast long shadows.

1987 Killings at Badger's Drift viii. ‘The father was no good. Drove his poor wife into her grave.’ ‘So I understood.’ ‘Old sins cast long shadows.’

OLD soldiers never die

1920 (song-title) Old soldiers never die.

1930 Songs & Slang of British Soldier 1914–18 II. 67 Old soldiers never die—They simply fade away.

1933 Old Soldiers never Die xxviii. We generally wound up our evenings with the old song, set to the tune of a well-known hymn, ‘Old soldiers never die, they simply fade away.’

1940 Times 6 Apr. 4 There is an old saying that ‘Old soldiers never die’—but they may starve .. when other State pensioners are receiving increased benefits.

1984 Dead Letter ii. Old soldiers never die. I've run across him since the war and he was still alive and kicking.

old age; soldiers

old

see also BETTER be an old man's darling, than a young man's slave; you cannot CATCH old birds with chaff; there's no FOOL; like an old fool; there's many a GOOD tune played on an old fiddle; HANG a thief when he's young and he'll no' steal when he's old; a MAN is as old as he feels, and a woman as old as she looks; NEVER too old to learn; you can't put NEW wine in old bottles; it is best to be OFF with the old love before you are on with the new; an old POACHER makes the best gamekeeper; you cannot
SHIFT an old tree without it dying; you can't TEACH an old dog new tricks; YOUNG folks think old folks to be fools but old folks know young folks to be fools; YOUNG men may die but old men must die; YOUNG saint, old devil.

You cannot make an OMELETTE without breaking eggs
Cf. Fr. on ne fait pas d’omelette sans casser des œufs, one does not make an omelette without breaking eggs.

Audi Alteram Partem II. xc. We are walking upon eggs and .. the omelet will not be made without the breaking of some.

St. Ives viii. You cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs, .. and it is no bagatelle to escape from Edinburgh Castle. One of us, I think, was even killed.

Cf. Fr. on ne fait pas d’omelette sans casser des œufs, one does not make an omelette without breaking eggs.

You cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs.

ONCE a——, always a——
This formula produces a limitless variety of proverbs, many of them depreciatory. Some are of long standing, others appear to be nonce uses. A small selection of such sayings is illustrated below and in the next two entries.

tr. Aleman's Guzman I. 1. i. Once a knaue, and euer a knaue:—For he that hath once beene naught, is presumed to bee so still .. not considering .. whether .. hee had reformed his manners or no.

Latimer by the courtesie of England (once a bishop, and ever a bishop) was in civility saluted Lord.

Spanish & English Dict. s.v. Hurtar, Once a Thief, always a Thief.

Once a Thief, always a Thief.

She loses her rank .. by marrying one of inferior rank—French and Russians are with reason surprised with the superior gallantry of our customs which say once a Lady and always a lady.

Once a copper always a copper, she thought. The bastard was going to charge her.

Once a priest always a priest
An act enabling the clergy of the Church of England to unfrock themselves (the Clerical Disabilities Act) was passed on 9 Aug. 1870.

The great case of Horne Tooke versus the House of Commons—‘Once a priest forever a priest.’

As in this—country we stick to the maxim, ‘once a parson, always a parson,’ I could not .. go in for law.

You must be quite sure, Stephen, that you have a vocation because it would be terrible if you found afterwards that you had none. Once a priest always a priest, remember.

No former celibate, with Boris’s incapacity for blotting out his past, could be happy until he returned to his cell—once a priest always a priest, is a true enough motto so far as he is concerned.

I had this notion that once a priest always a priest, that however far Bebb had fallen, he still bore the mark upon him like an old tattoo or an appendix scar.
constancy and inconstancy

ONCE a whore, always a whore

1613 Laquei Ridiculosi II. cxxi. Well you may change your name, But once a Whore, you shall be still the same.

1659 Proverbs 82 Once a whore and alwaies a whore.

1754 World 31 Jan. 344 Supposing him to have acquired so much wealth, the proverb of ‘Once a whore, and always a whore’, is less significant.

1824 Hist. Kentucky II. v. ‘Once a prostitute, and always a prostitute,’ is a fair mode of argument—at least, among politicians.

1981 Old Priory V. iii. There is a saying, ‘Once a whore, always a whore.’

Once bitten, twice shy

The variant once burned, twice shy is particularly common in the US, perhaps influenced by a BURNT child dreads the fire.

1853 Sponge's Sporting Tour xxxvii. Jawleyford had been bit once, and he was not going to give Mr. Sponge a second chance.

1894 Folk-Phrases 20 Once bitten, twice shy.

1920 Rescue III. ix. Once bit twice shy. He had no mind to be kidnapped.

1949 Dead Sure XV. She was especially on her guard .. because she'd been victimized in a stupid swindle herself, recently. Once burned, twice shy, you know.

1979 Mortal Affair i. The vaguely concealed caution of not wanting to become involved again—once bitten twice shy.

1981 Ransom Game xvi. I can't imagine why this man would be harassing my wife again, Mr. Cooperman. You'd think ‘Once burned, twice shy’, wouldn't you.

1998 Times 7 Jan. 27/6 Once bitten, twice shy when thinking of certain shops.

experience

once

see you can only DIE once; FOOL me once, shame on you.

When ONE door shuts, another opens

1586 tr. Lazarillo D3 This proverbe was fulfild, when one doore is shut the other openeth.

1620 tr. Cervantes' Don Quixote III. vii. Where one door is shut another is opened.

1710 Proverbs 49 When one Door Shuts another Opens... How often does the Divine Bounty surprize us with unthought of Felicity!

1821 Annals of Parish xxvi. Here was an example .. of the truth of the old proverb that as one door shuts another opens; .. A full equivalent for her [the light-headed Lady Macadam] was given in this hot and fiery Mr. Cayenne.

1925 Juno & Paycock I. 16 ‘The job couldn't come at a betther time.’ .. ‘Ah, God never shut wan door but he opened another.’

1979 Queen sends for Mrs Chadwick 80 I do not accept that I have .. come to the end of the road... When one door closes, another one opens.

opportunity

ONE for sorrow, two for mirth; three for a wedding, four for a birth

A traditional country proverb found in a variety of forms, which refers to the number of magpies seen on a particular occasion.
During the journey four magpies rose and flew away... I repeated... the old saw, ‘one for sorrow, two for mirth, three for a wedding, and four for death.’

One for sorrow: two for mirth: three for a wedding: four for a birth: five for silver: six for gold: seven for a secret, not to be told: eight for heaven: nine for hell: and ten for the devil's own self.

I never see magpies myself without relating the old rhyme: ‘One for sorrow, Two for mirth, Three for a death, Four for a birth; Five, you will shortly be In a great company.’

There were a lot of single magpies swooping near the car.

Other forms of this traditional country saying relating to sowing are also illustrated here.

How to sow Beans. ‘One for the mouse, One for the crow, One to rot, One to grow.’

‘Kernels,’ said Pa. ‘Four kernels... One for the blackbird, One for the crow, And that will leave just two to grow.’

Careful farmers.. sow their seed broadcast, saying: One for wind and one for crow One to die and one to grow.

Cf. ARISTOTLE Politics 1314a, one nail knocks out another, according to the proverb.

An neil driueth ut then other.

As one nail by strength drives out another, So the remembrance of my former love Is by a newer object quite forgotten.

Languages and words .. may be said to stick in the memory like nails or pegs in a wainscot door, which used to thrust out one another oftentimes.

One nail drives out another.

Cf. ANCRENE WISSE 1962 206 An neil driueth ut then other.

Two Gentlemen of Verona II. iv. 189 As one nail by strength drives out another, So the remembrance of my former love Is by a newer object quite forgotten.

1851 Familiar Letters 17 Sept. (1903) III. 87 Languages and words .. may be said to stick in the memory like nails or pegs in a wainscot door, which used to thrust out one another oftentimes.

Polonius cxvii. One nail drives out another.

He needed a home with a woman in it. One nail drove out another.

One year's seeding makes seven years' weeding

On the danger of allowing weeds to grow and seed themselves: also used figuratively.

It has been truly remarked that ‘one year's seeding may cost ten years' weeding.’

One year's seeding makes seven years' weeding.

A weed that runs to seed Is a seven years' weed .. implies that disagreeable actions .. only too frequently cling to man in after years.

My advice to weed-persons is: do not let your weeds grow to maturity and seed—‘one year's seeding means seven years' weeding’.

One nail drives out another, according to the proverb.

Cf. ARISTOTLE Politics 1314a, one nail knocks out another, according to the proverb.

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1851 Familiar Letters 17 Sept. (1903) III. 87 Languages and words .. may be said to stick in the memory like nails or pegs in a wainscot door, which used to thrust out one another oftentimes.
Frenchmen; one FUNERAL makes many; one GOOD turn deserves another; one HALF of the world does not know how the other half lives; one HAND for oneself and one for the ship; one HAND washes the other; one HOUR's sleep before midnight is worth two after; one man's LOSS is another man's gain; one man's MEAT is another man's poison; one PICTURE is worth ten thousand words; one man may STEAL a horse, while another may not look over a hedge; one STEP at a time; from the SUBLIME to the ridiculous is only a step; one SWALLOW does not make a summer; it TAKES one to know one; TWO heads are better than one; if TWO ride on a horse, one must ride behind; one VOLUNTEER is worth two pressed men; one WEDDING brings another.

one-eyed
see in the COUNTRY of the blind, the one-eyed man is king.

open
see (adjective) A DOOR must either be shut or open; (verb) A GOLDEN key can open any door; when ONE door shuts, another opens.

The OPERA isn't over till the fat lady sings
Attempts to determine the identity of the diva concerned have been inconclusive.

1978 Washington Post 13 June B1 The opera isn't over till the fat lady sings …One day three years ago, Ralph Carpenter, who was then Texas Tech's sports information director, declared to the press box contingent in Austin, ‘The rodeo ain't over till the bull riders ride.’ Stirred to top that deep insight, San Antonio sports editor Dan Cook countered with, ‘The opera ain't over till the fat lady sings.’
1980 Record (OUP) Dec. 8 Do not relax your vigilance in the fight against the punk paperbacks …‘The opera ain't over 'til the fat lady sings.’
1988 Black Star Murders viii. As soon as the big blond Brünnhilde finished, it was over. All I could think about was the classic line about the opera never being over until the fat lady sings.
1992 Independent 11 Aug. 7 ‘You know, they say that the show's never over until the fat lady sings,’ Mr Bolger said. ‘Well, I think it was her was we heard warming up in the wings this week.’

finality
opinion
see he that COMPLIES against his will is of his own opinion still; so many MEN, so many opinions.

OPPORTUNITY makes a thief

c 1220 Hali Meidenhad (EETS) 23 Man seith that eise maketh theof.
1387 tr. Higden's Polychronicon (1879) VII. 379 At the laste the bischop seide to hym, ‘Me thenke that opportunitie makethe a thefe.’
1623 Remains concerning Britain (ed. 3) 275 Opportunity makes the thief.
1670 English Proverbs 129 Opportunity makes the thief …Therefore, masters .. ought to secure their moneys and goods under lock and key, that they do not give .. a temptation to steal.
1835 Doctor III. cv. Opportunity, which makes thieves, makes lovers also.
1979 Daedalus Summer 107 A child steals from the sleeping woman's pocket, acting out the proverb ‘Opportunity makes a thief.’

honesty and dishonesty; opportunity, taken

OPPORTUNITY never knocks twice at any man's door
Fortune occurs instead of opportunity in earlier forms of the saying. Several quotations below represent slightly different ideas based on the original proverb. In quots. 1809 and 1981, Opportunity is said to knock once or more, but in other quotations, once only. Cf. early 15th-cent Fr. il n'est chance qui ne retourne, there is no opportunity which comes back again.
1567  Bandello 216 Fortune once in the course of our life, doth put into our handes the offer of a good tore.

1809  Port Folio (Philadelphia) Nov. 431 Fortune knocks once, at least, at every man's door.

1889  C. G. Gordon iii. Fate, it is said, knocks once at every man's door ... Gordon had just passed his thirtieth year when Fortune .. knocked at .. the door which was to lead him to fame.

1891  Opportunity in Truth (NY) 19 Feb. 17 I [Opportunity] knock unbidden once at every gate! If sleeping, wake: if feasting rise before I turn away—[for] I return no more!

1941  Unlawful Occasions xxiv. It was an opportunity with a capital O, and if she threw it away it would never come back again. Opportunity never knocks twice at any man's door.

1981  Brock 178 Though opportunity may knock twice, there was no guarantee that it would knock as insistently as now.

*opportunity*

opportunity
see also ENGLAND'S difficulty is Ireland's opportunity; MAN'S extremity is God's opportunity.

opposite
see DREAMS go by contraries.

orders
see OBEY orders, if you break owners.

orphan
see SUCCESS has many fathers, while failure is an orphan.

OTHER times, other manners

The proverb occurs in various forms and languages: cf. PINDAR Fragment ccxxv. (Bowra), οὐκ εἶπαν λόγον, think different thoughts at different times; Fr. autres temps, autres môurs, other times other customs.

1576  Petit Palace 34 Other times, other ways.

1902  Samuel Richardson iv. Notwithstanding the favourite explanation of ‘other times, other manners’, contemporary critics of Clarissa found very much the same fault with her history as people do to-day.

1945  Lark Rise viii. Other days, other ways... The old country midwives did at least succeed in bringing into the world many generations of our forefathers.

1978  Human Factor IV . ii. ‘We used to have better funerals in Africa.’ .. ‘Oh well—other countries, other manners.’

*change ; circumstances ; past*

other
see also DO unto other as you would they should do unto you; the GRASS is always greener on the other side of the fence; one HALF of the world does not know how the other half lives; one HAND washes the other.

An OUNCE of practice is worth a pound of precept

A number of proverbs similar in form are illustrated below. An ounce used figuratively for ‘a small quantity’ is found in 1567 W. CECIL Letter in C. Read Mr. Secretary Cecil (1955) xxi. Marry [to be sure], an ounce of advice is more worth to be executed aforehand than in the sight of perils.


1592  French Alphabet II. 55 An ounce of discretion, is better worth, then a pound of hardinesse [audacity].

www.EnglishPro.ir
Sacrifice of Thankfulness 19 The proverbe is true; an Ounce of Discretion, is worth a pound of Learning.

Essays upon Field Husbandry 12 It used to be the Saying of an old Man, That an Ounce of Experience is better than a Pound of science.

Cradock Nowell II. ix. Remember that rigid probity, and the strictest punctuality .. are the very soul of business, and that an ounce of practice is worth a pound of precept.

Caravan 667 ‘Define it [Beauty], Mr. Vaness.’ ‘An ounce of fact is worth a ton of theory.—It stands before me.’

Xanadu Talisman ix. She said rather primly, ‘An ounce of wisdom is worth a pound of wit.’

Washington Times An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure …All the old saws point up the value of heading off a problem before it reaches the pass.

Out of debt, out of danger

Parœmiologia Anglo-Latina 82 Out of debt and deadly danger.

Worth of Penny (ed. 2) 8 How bold, confident, merry, lively, and ever in humour are moneyed men (for being out of debt, they are out of danger).

Proverbs 132 Out of Debt out of Danger…A Man in Debt is a Slave, and can't act with Liberty.

H.M.I. xxi. Call it ‘distributing capital expenditure over a term of years’, and even a rural dean succumbs. ‘Out of debt, out of danger,’ but ‘out of debt, out of progress.’

Parting Breath vii. ‘Well, they're important, aren't they?’ said Leeyes largely. ‘Out of debt, out of danger.’

security ; thrift

OUT of sight, out of mind

Proverbs of Alfred (1907) 46 He that is ute bi-loken [shut out] He is inne sone foryeten [forgotten].

c 1450 tr. T. à Kempis' De Imitatione Christi (EETS) I. xxxiii. Whan Man is oute of sight, son be he passith oute of mynde.

1545 tr. Erasmus' Adages (ed. 2) D6VWhereunto also agreeeth the oure Englyshe proverbe which sayethe: Oute of syght, oute of mynde.

Italian III. ix. Old women now-a-days are not much thought of; out of sight out of mind with them.

Water Babies i. Sir John and the rest saw no more of her; and out of sight was out of mind.

This Fatal Writ 45 The brief .. was promptly concealed... He was working on the principle ‘out of sight, out of mind.’

Times 20 Jan. 37 Simply because she now lives in the States, Musgrave is out of sight, out of mind. Oh, the waste of talent...

absence ; forgetfulness

out

see also BETTER be out of the world than out of the fashion; there are as good FISH in the sea as ever came out of it; when the GORSE is out of bloom, kissing's out of fashion; don't HALLOO till you are out of the wood; out of the MOUTHS of babes—; MURDER will out; never tell TALES out of school; TRUTH will out.

outside

see there is NOTHING so good for the inside of a man as the outside of a horse.

outside

see
see the OPERA isn't over till the fat lady sings; the SHARPER the storm, the sooner it's over.

own
see the DEVIL looks after his own; when THIEVES fall out, honest men come by their own.

owner
see OBEY orders, if you break owners.

owt
see HEAR all, see all, say nowt; you don't get SOMETHING for nothing.

ox
see BETTER a dinner of herbs than a stalled ox where hate is.

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P

It is the PACE that kills

□1855 Wonderful Adventures of Captain Priest XV. The well-known sporting maxim, that ‘It is the pace that kills’.

1901 Sir H. Parkes in China xx. There is an old proverb about the pace that kills, and .. Sir Harry was killing himself by work at high pressure.

1936 Death in Ecstasy II. xvii. Don't overdo it ..This is the pace that kills.

haste ; stress

package
see the BEST things come in small packages.

pack-drill
see NO names, no pack-drill.

padlock
see WEDLOCK is a padlock.

pain
see GENIUS is an infinite capacity for taking pains; NO pain, no gain; PRIDE feels no pain.

paint
see a BLIND man's wife needs no paint.

painted
see the DEVIL is not so black as he is painted.

pan
see if IFS and ands were pots and pans, there'd be no work for tinkers' hands.

paradise
see ENGLAND is the paradise of women.

parcel
see the BEST things come in small packages.

pardon
see OFFENDERS never pardon.

Paris
see good AMERICANS when they die go to Paris.

PARSLEY seed goes nine times to the Devil

1658 in & Wit Restored 35 There is a saying in the North Riding of Yorkshire that The weed [parsley] before it's borne Nine times the devill sees.

1885 Notes & Queries 6th Ser. XI. 467 Parsley seed (when it has been sown) goes nine times to the devil.

1908 Letter 4 May (1962) I. 7 People say parsley seed goes seven times (some are moderate, discarding the holy number as unfit, and say five) to the Old Lad, it is so long a-germinating.

1981 in Dillen xiv. It's a queer plant, parsley: ‘sow on Good Friday, seven times down to Hell afore it chits [sprouts (dialectic)].’

parsnip
see FINE words butter no parsnips.

part
see (noun) DISCRETION is the better part of valour; if you're not part of the SOLUTION, you're part of the problem; (verb) the BEST of friends must part.

parted
see a FOOL and his money are soon parted.

Things PAST cannot be recalled
Cf. late 14th-cent. Fr. ce qui est passé ne poët on recouver, that which is past one cannot recall.

1500 Nature H3V A thyng don can not be called agayn.

1535 Edward V in Chronicle (1543) II. 36 Sith [since] thynges passed cannot be gaine called, muche more ought wee to bee ware.

1616 Adages 151 That that is past, cannot be recalled or helped.

1804 Popular Tales II. 130 Since a thing past can't be recalled .. we may be content.

1979 Country Life 24 May 1683 Visually, another period's realities are palpably inaccessible. Things past cannot be—perfectly—recalled.

past ; regrets

pastime
see he that would go to SEA for pleasure, would go to hell for a pastime.

paternoster
see NO penny, no paternoster.

PATIENCE is a virtue
Cf. Disticha Catonis I. xxxviii. maxima enim .. patientia virtus, patience is the greatest virtue; mid 14th-cent. Fr. patience est une grant vertu, patience is a great virtue.

1377 Piers Plowman B. XI. 370 Suffraunce [forebearance] is a souereygne vertue.

1386 Tale of Melibee l. 1517 Pacience is a greet vertu of perfeccioun.

1594 Mother Bombie V. iii. Patience is a vertue, but pinching is worse than any vice!

1754 Grandison II. xvii. Aunt Prue in Yorkshire .. will be able to instruct you, that patience is a virtue; and that you ought not to be in haste to take a first offer, for fear you should not have a second.

1858 Dr. Thorne I. xiv. That was only three days ago. Why don't you .. ferret her out?.Patience is and always was a virtue.

1979 Threat Warning Red iv. ‘I .. can't wait for you.’ .. ‘Patience is and said to be a virtue?’

patience and impatience

Paul
if SAINT Paul’s day be fair and clear, it will betide a happy year.

paved

see the ROAD to hell is paved with good intentions.

PAY beforehand was never well served

1591 Second Fruits 39 He that paieth afore hand, hath neuer his worke well done.
1721 Scottish Proverbs 278 Pay beforehand was never well serv'd. It is common to see .. Labourers, to go about a piece of Work with great Uneasiness, which is to pay a just Debt.
1786 Letter 7 Jan. in Writings (1938) XXVIII. 370 I have had some reason to remember an old adage, that one of the bad paymasters is him that pays before hand.
1819 Bride of Lammermoor iii. ‘Your honour is the bad pay-master,’ he said, ‘who pays before it is done.’
1928 Dr. Glazebrook’s Revenge xi. The old Scots adage that ‘fore-hand payments mak’ hint-hand wark.’

employers and employees ; work

He that cannot PAY, let him pray

1611 Dict. French & English s.v. Argent, He that cannot pay let him pray.
1732 Gnomologia no. 6362 He that cannot pay, Let him pray.
1954 Three Men Out v. They're quotations from things. One of them says, ‘He that cannot pay, let him pray.’

money ; poverty

If you PAY peanuts, you get monkeys

Peanuts in the sense of ‘a small sum of money’ (esp. when considered as inadequate payment) originated as mid-20th-cent. US slang.

1966 in Director Aug. 228 Shareholders want the best available businessmen to lead the companies and recognise that you get what you pay for. If you pay in peanuts, you must expect to get monkeys.
1979 Show me Hero iii. ‘That's forty thousand we're giving away. Seems an awful lot.’ ‘If you pay peanuts,’ said Ashman, ‘you get monkeys.’
1979 Guardian 11 Sept. 30 The companies' chief negotiator .. was greeted with shouts of ‘if you pay peanuts, you get monkeys.’
1994 Origin and Cause xvii. 107 ‘How much is .. this photo-enhancement going to cost my client?’ ‘A bundle... But in my experience, if you pay peanuts, you get monkeys.’

employers and employees ; money

Pay

see also (noun) NO cure, no pay; (verb) they that DANCE must pay the fiddler; DEATH pays all debts; SPEAK not of my debts unless you mean to pay them; the THIRD time pays for all.

He who PAYS the piper calls the tune

Reversing the emphasis of they that DANCE must pay the fiddler.

1895 Daily News 18 Dec. 9 Londoners had paid the piper, and should choose the tune.
1910 Spectator 22 Oct. 643 Until British electors know that the dollars have been returned they will be wise in placing little trust in Nationalist ‘loyalty’. He who pays the piper calls the tune.
1979 Daily Telegraph 7 June 2 We have to find some way of giving them a fair deal since we shall be dependent on them … He who pays the piper calls the tune.

action and consequence ; money

You PAYS your money and you takes your choice

Both pays and takes are non-standard, colloquial forms.
1846 Punch X. 16 ‘Which is the Prime Minister?’..‘Which ever you please, my little dear. You pays your money, and you takes your choice.’

1904 Collectanea IV. 205 You pays your money and you takes your choice. You pays your money and what you sees is A cow or a donkey just as you pleases.

1984 Harm’s Way xvi. ‘Penny plain or twopence coloured?’ he said. ‘You pays your money and you takes your choice.’

choices; money

If you want PEACE, you must prepare for war

Translating the 4th cent. AD Roman military writer FLAVIUS VEGETIUS Epitoma Rei Militaris III. (Introd). *qui desiderat pacem, praeparet bellum*, he who desires peace must prepare for war.

1547 Chronicle (1548) Edw. IV 209 He forgat the olde adage, saynge in tyme of peace prouyde for warre.

1593 Practice of Arms A2 He that desireth peace, he must prepare for warres.

1624 Anatomy of Melancholy (ed. 2) II. iii. The Commonwealth of Venice in their Armory haue this inscription, Happy is that Citty which in time of peace thinkes of warre, a fit Motto for euerymans priuate house.

1685 Prince Bismarck II. x. Lord Beaconsfield had acted on the maxim that ‘if you want peace, you must prepare for war.’

1929 Listener 28 Aug. 278 ‘If you want peace, prepare for peace.’ This is the reverse of the old motto, ‘If you want peace, prepare for war.’

1990 Washington Times 28 Aug. G2 As always, the success of diplomacy rests on the latent availability of force. If you seek peace, prepare for war.

peace; prudence

peanut

see if you PAY peanuts, you get monkeys.

pear

see WALNUTS and pears you plant for your heirs.

Do not throw PEARLS to swine

With allusion to MATTHEW vii. 6 (AV) Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine. Often in the phrase to cast pearls before swine.

1340 Ayenbite of Inwit (EETS) 152 Thet we ne thrawe naght oure preciouse stones touore the zuyn.

1362 Piers Plowman A. XI. Noli mittere Margeri, perles Among hogges.

1526 Pilgrimage of Perfection II. iii. The holy fathers thought it nat expedient to disclose the secrete misteryes to euery worldly person... Cast not your perles before hogges.

1550 Epigrams A3 Before suche swyne no pearles maye be caste.

1694 & Connecticut Vindicated 7 Cast not your Pearls before Swine.

1816 Letter in Memoir (1855) II. 134 Elgin has done a very useful thing in taking them [the Elgin Marbles] away from the Turks. Do not throw pearls to swine.

1925 Sam the Sudden xi. ‘Young women do not interest me.’ The proverb about casting pearls before swine occurred to Sam.

1967 Jerusalem the Golden vi. They wrote to each other, long, intimate, witty letters, the kind of letters that Clara fancied she had for years been casting before if not swine at least less than perfect readers.

gratitude and ingratitude; waste

A PECK of March dust is worth a king's ransom

The month of March is traditionally wet and blustery. A peck was a dry measure of two gallons.
One bushell of march dust is worth a kynges raunsome.

It is proverbially said in England, that a Peck of March Dust is worth a King’s Ransom: So infrequent is dry Weather, during that Month.

A spoonful of the soup to-day will be worth a king's ransom—a peck of March dust! pooh!

So infrequent is dry Weather, during that Month.

A peck of March dust is worth a king's ransom.

The flower borders .. were planted with bush roses .. stunted by the rigours of that grim March … ‘Bushel of March dust worth a king's ransom,’ Reggie murmured.

‘A peck of dust in March is worth a king's ransom,’ is still an oft-quoted proverb.

A peck of March dust is worth a king's ransom.

The pen is mightier than the sword

Cf. CICERO De Officiis I. xxii. cedant arma togae, arms give way to persuasion.

The dashe of a Pen, is more greeuous then the counter use of a Launce.

A goosequill on for weapon ty’d, Knowing by use that now and then A sword less hurt does than a pen.

Beneath the rule of men entirely great, The pen is mightier than the sword.

The man who said the pen was mightier than the sword ought to have tried reading The Mill on the Floss to Motor Mechanics.

‘I've been practising using my tongue instead of fists.’ ‘Ah yes. Like the pen, mightier than the sword?’

Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves

The ‘Mr. Lowndes’ to whom quot. 1750 attributes this saying was William Lowndes (1652–1724).

Old Mr. Lowndes, the famous Secretary of the Treasury .. used to say... Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves.

This I did to prevent expences, for .. a penny sav’d, is a penny got.

Look after the pennies, Master Mally, and the pounds will look after themselves.

Under her breath, Julia rebelliously muttered his other favourite maxim, ‘Take care of the pennies, and the pounds will take care of themselves.’

A PENNY saved is a penny earned

A penny spar'd is twice got.

By the same proportion that a penny saved is a penny gained, the preserver of books is a Mate for the Compiler of them.

This I did to prevent expences, for .. a penny sav’d, is a penny got.

A Penny saved is a Penny got.

I saved five pounds out of the brickmaker's affair... It's a very good thing to save one, let me tell you: a penny saved, is a penny got!

I can save money this way; and believe me, laddie, nowadays .. a penny saved
is a penny earned.

1979 Only Children 5 You can hear his engine saying the same dull things he said in history—A pen-ny saved is a pen-ny earned, he said, over and over again.

thrifty

PENNY wise and pound foolish

1607 Four-footed Beasts 609 If by couetousnesse or negligence, one withdraw from them their ordinary foode, he shall be penny wise, and pound foolish.

1712 Spectator 7 Feb. I think a Woman who will give up herself to a Man in Marriage, where there is the least room for such an Apprehension .. may very properly be accused .. of being Penny wise and Pound foolish.

1864 Trevlyn Hold II. xxi. He never would insure his ricks… Miss Diana has often told him he deserved to have his ricks take fire for being penny wise and pound foolish.

1973 Honorary Consul II. i. It's only a bachelor's digs… No sense of national pride. Penny wise, pound foolish.

meanness ; stupidity

penny

see also a BAD penny always turns up; IN for a penny, in for pound; NO penny, no paternoster.

Like PEOPLE, like priest

With allusion to HOSEA iv. 9 (AV) Like people, like priest.

1589 Pasquil's Return C3 Like people, like Priest begins now to be verified.

1670 English Proverbs 114 Like priest, like people… Always taken in the worse sense.

1893 English Peasant IV. iii. He had so deep a reverence for the clergy, that it never entered into his mind that perhaps, after all, it was ‘like people, like priest.’

similarity and dissimilarity

people

see also IDLE people have the least leisure; MORE people know Tom Fool than Tom Fool knows; the 

VOICE of the people is the voice of God.

perfect

see PRACTICE makes perfect.

perish

see he who LIVES by the sword dies by the sword.

perjury

see JOVE but laughs at lovers' perjury.

PHYSICIAN, heal thyself

With allusion to LUKE iv. 23 (AV) Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself. (VULGATE: medice cura teipsum.)

1400 tr. Honorius of Autun's Elucidarium (1909) 29 Blynde leches [doctors], heeleth first youre silf!

1519 Sermon to Convocation B5 if you wyll ponder and loke vpon oure mottis [motes] fyrst take awaye the blockes out of your eies. Hit is an olde Prouerbe: Phisition heale thy selfe.

1780 tr. Lucian's Works I. 320 According to the old adage, ‘physician, cure thyself.’

1875 Thrift ii. How can a man .. teach sobriety or cleanliness, if he be himself drunken or foul? ‘Physician, heal thyself,’ is the answer of his neighbours.

1979 Skeletons 150 Tell me the truth. Don't dig yourself in any deeper. Physician, heal thyself.

doctors
pick
see HAWKS will not pick out hawks' eyes; see a PIN and pick it up, all the day you'll have good luck.
pickle (small quantity):
see MANY a little makes a mickle.

One PICTURE is worth ten thousand words
There is no foundation to the ascription of Chinese origin in quot. 1927.

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example, good and bad

Every PICTURE tells a story
Quot. 1847 antedates the use of this saying as a catchphrase.

pie
see the DEVIL makes his Christmas pies of lawyers' tongues and clerks' fingers.

pie-crust
see PROMISES, like pie-crust, are made to be broken.

pig
see what can you EXPECT from a pig but a grunt?

See a PIN and pick it up, all the day you'll have good luck; see a pin and let it lie, bad luck you'll have all the day
Similarly extolling the virtues of thrift in small matters is 1668 S. PEPYS Diary 2 Jan. (1976) IX. 7 The King answered to it with great indifferency. Sir W. Coventry answered: 'I see your Majesty doth not remember the old English proverb, 'He that will not stoop for a pin will never be worth a pound'.

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luck ; thrift

pin
see also it's a SIN to steal a pin.

pint
You cannot get a QUART into a pint pot.

Piper
See he who PAYS the piper calls the tune.

Pitch
See he that TOUCHES pitch shall be defiled.

The PITCHER will go to the well once too often
A warning against pushing one's luck too far. Cf. early 14th-cent. Fr. tant va pot a eve qu'il brise, the pot goes so often to the water that it breaks.

1340 Ayenbite of Inwit (EETS) 206 Zuo longe geth thet pot to the wetere: thet hit comth to-broke hom.

1584 Dict. (rev. ed.) Bl So oft goeth the pitcher to the well, that at last it commeth broken home.

1777 Collections of New London County Hist. Society (1933) I. 223 I shall send down what I have, but dont you think the Pitcher will go to the well once too often?

1880 Church Times 30 Apr. 275 Some of Mr. Gladstone's feats in the way of sweeping obstacles out of his path have been wonderful; but the proverb tells us that the pitcher which goes oft to the well will be broken at last.

1962 Mirror Crack'd xvii. A phrase came into her mind... The pitcher goes to the well once too often. Nonsense. Nobody could suspect that it was she.

Misfortune; persistence

Pitcher
See also LITTLE pitchers have large ears.

Pitchfork
See you can DRIVE out Nature with a pitchfork, but she keeps on coming back.

Pitied
See BETTER be envied than pitied.

PITY is akin to love

1601 Twelfth Night III. i. 119 I pity you.—That's a degree to love.

1696 Oroonoko II. i. Do, pity me: Pity's a-kin to Love.

1895 My Confidences (1896) 95 They say that Pity is akin to Love, though only a Poor Relation; but Amy did not even pity me.

Love; pity

A PLACE for everything, and everything in its place

1640 Outlandish Proverbs no. 379 All things have their place, knew wee how to place them.

1842 Masterman Ready II. i. In a well-conducted man-of-war .. every thing in its place, and there is a place for everything.

1855 Nature & Human Nature I. vi. There was a place for everything, and everything was in its place.

1928 Lord Peter views Body x. ‘I thought you were rather partial to anatomical specimens.’ ‘So I am, but not on the breakfast-table. “A place for everything and everything in its place,” as my grandmother used to say.’

1968 Skin Deep vii. Do you run your whole life like that? .. A place for everything and everything in its place, and all in easy reach.

1989 Honeymoon with (Love) Murder xii. Jesse Penrick had fashioned for himself a geometric environment. A place for everything and everything in its place.

Orderliness

There's no PLACE like home
Cf. HESIOD Works & Days l. 365 o, ò, ò ὅ, ἀ, ὅ, there's no place like home.

1571 Husbandry (rev. ed.) H1 V Though home be but homely, yet huswife is taught, That home hath no fellow to such as haue aught.

1823 Clari i. i. ‘Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam, Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home.’

1939 Trouble for Lucia xi. ‘What a joy to have it back at Mallards again!’.. ‘No place like home is there, dear?’

content and discontent ; home

place
see also LIGHTNING never strikes the same place twice; there is a TIME and place for everything; a WOMAN'S place is in the home.

plague
see PLEASE your eye and plague your heart.

plant
see it is not SPRING until you can plant your foot upon twelve daisies; WALNUTS and pears you plant for your heirs.

Those who PLAY at bowls must look out for rubbers
Rubber is apparently an alteration of rub, an obstacle or impediment to the course of a bowl. Cf. 1595 SHAKESPEARE Richard II. III. iv. 4 Madam, we'll play at bowls.— 'Twill make me think the world is full of rubs.

1762 Sir Launcelot Greaves I. X. (heading) Which sheweth that he who plays at bowls, will sometimes meet with rubbers.

1824 Redgauntlet III. vi. ‘And how if it fails?’ said Darsie. ‘Thereafter as it may be—’ said Nixon; ‘they who play at bowls must meet with rubbers.’

1874 Hours in Library I. 384 De Quincey .. admits .. that the fanaticism of the rub was ‘much more reasonable’ than the fanaticism of Priestly; and that those who play at bowls must look out for rubbers.

1907 Old English Sports xi. Another term used in common speech and derived from this game [bowls] is ‘rub’; as when we say .. ‘he who plays at bowls must look out for rubs’—that is, he must consider the inequalities of the ground, and .. make due allowance for them.

caution ; foresight and hindsight ; trouble

If you PLAY with fire you get burnt
The metaphorical phrase to play with fire, to tinker with something potentially dangerous, is also commonly found. Cf. 1655 H. VAUGHAN Silex Scintillans II. 15 I played with fire, did counsell spurn,.. But never thought that fire would burn, Or that a soul could ake.

1884 Fenton Family xiv. If people will play with fire, they must expect to be burned by it some time. If I had not learned the game, and thought myself a good player, I'd never have lost Mother's money.

1980 Vatchman Switch xxiv. If you play with fire you get burnt. Shouldn't mess around in Crown Colonies.

action and consequence ; peril

play
see also (noun) FAIR play's a jewel; GIVE and take is fair play; TURN about is fair play; all WORK and no play makes Jack a dull boy; (verb) when the CAT'S away, the mice will play.

You can't PLEASE everyone

1472 Letters 16 May in Paston Letters (1971) I. 635 I am in serteyn the contrary is true—yt is nomore
but that he can not plese all partys.

1616 Adages 45 One can hardly please all men.

1844 Journal 30 Apr. in Diaries 1835–47 (1956) 274 At Ward's about window—nothing done. Gastineau came up and don't like mine: can't please everybody.

1981 Daily Telegraph 16 May 18 The old adage, ‘you can't please everyone’, holds good.

PLEASE your eye and plague your heart

☐ c 1617 Lovesick King (1655) III. E3 She may please your eye a little .. but vex your heart.

1748 Roderick Random II. xi. Many a substantial farmer .. would be glad to marry her; but she was resolved to please her eye, if she should plague her heart.

1829 Advice to Young Men III. cxxic. ‘Please your eye and plague your heart’ is an adage that want of beauty invented, I dare say, more than a thousand years ago.

1876 Manchester Man III. vi. But I will marry him, mamma—I'll please my eye, if I plague my heart.

An old POACHER makes the best gamekeeper

☐ c 1390 Physician's Tale l. 83 A thief of venysoun, that hath forlaft His likerousnesse [depravity] and al his olde craft, Kan kepe a forest best of any man.

1695 Church Hist. Britain IX. iii. Always set a—to catch a —; and the greatest dear-stealers, make the best Parke-keepers.

1878 Gamekeeper at Home ix. There is a saying that an old poacher makes the best gamekeeper, on the principle of setting a thief to catch a thief.

1970 Great Affair iii. What the Church needed, possibly, was a good leavening of sinners in its ministry, on the principle that poachers make the best gamekeepers.

1978 Throwback i. 5 ‘You'll have heard the saying that a poacher makes the best gamekeeper?..Well, Dodd's the reverse. He's a gamekeeper who would have made the best poacher …’

SHROUDS have no pockets.

POSSESSION is nine points of the law.

one man's MEAT is another man's poison.

you should KNOW a man seven years before you stir his fire.

HONESTY is the best policy.
CIVILITY costs nothing; PUNCTUALITY is the politeness of princes.

POLITICS makes strange bedfellows

Politics has long been considered a plural noun; its use with a singular verb is comparatively recent. A well-established variant of ADVERSITY makes strange bedfellows.

1839 Diary 9 July (1927) I. 404 Party politics, like poverty, bring men ‘acquainted with strange bedfellows.’

1870 My Summer in Garden (1871) 187 The Doolittle raspberries have sprawled all over the strawberry-beds: so true is it that politics makes strange bed-fellows.

1936 Gone with Wind lviii. Ashley Wilkes and I are mainly responsible. Platitudinously but truly, politics make strange bedfellows.

1980 Dissident vii. Even enemies have something in common. Statecraft produces strange bedfellows.

1995 Washington Times 31 Mar. A4 Politics makes strange bedfellows, if Mr. Hyde will forgive the unforgivable but irresistible metaphor.

It is a POOR dog that's not worth whistling for

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs i. xi. It is, as I haue learned in lystnyng, A poore dogge, that is not worth the whistlyng.

1614 Remains concerning Britain (ed. 2) 303 A poore dog that is not worth the whystling.

1738 Polite Conversation i. 41 Because, Miss, you never ask'd me; and 'tis an ill Dog that's not worth whistling for.

1952 Alias Simon Suggs i. It was a poor dog indeed that wasn't worth whistling for.

It is a POOR heart that never rejoices

1834 Peter Simple i. v. ‘Well,’ continued he, ‘it's a poor heart that never rejoiceth.’ He then poured out half a tumbler of rum.

1841 Barnaby Rudge iv. What happened when I reached home you may guess… Ah! Well, it's a poor heart that never rejoices.

1935 Lucia’s Progress viii. They were all men together, he said, and it was a sad heart that never rejoiced.

1979 Clutch of Vipers iv. ‘It's a poor heart’, Frankie told him, ‘that never rejoices.’

It is a POOR man that never pays his debt

1835 Clutch of Vipers iv. ‘It's a poor man that has a dry bed,’ Agatha told him.

1925 The Imitation of Christ ii. 7. It is a poor man has a dry bed.

One LAW for the rich and another for the poor; the RICH man has his ice in the summer and the poor man gets his in the winter.

Pope

see it is ill SITTING at Rome and striving with the Pope.

port

see ANY port in a storm.

POSSSESSION is nine points of the law

There is no specific legal ruling which supports this proverb—though the concept is widely acknowledged—but in early use the satisfaction of ten (sometimes twelve) points was commonly asserted to attest full entitlement or ownership. Possession, represented by nine (or eleven) points, is therefore the closest substitute for this. Cf. 1595 Edward III E3 Tis you are in possession of the Crowne, And thats the surest poyn of all the Law.
Possession is nine points in the Law.

Oration 5 This Rascally-devill .. denys to pay a farthing of rent. Tis true, possession is nine points of the Law, Yet give Gentlemen, right's right.

English Proverbs Possession is a mighty Matter indeed; and we commonly say, 'tis eleven Points of the Law. It goes a great Way to the giving of Security, but not any Right.

Maid Marian v. In those days possession was considerably more than eleven points of the Law. The baron was therefore convinced that the earl's outlawry was infallible.

In Chancery II. xiv. We're the backbone of the country. They [Leftists] won't upset us easily. Possession's nine points of the Law.

Queue here for Murder xviii. I'm in the Penthouse Suite and I'm staying there. 'Possession', he added .. 'is nine points of the law.' 'Eleven,' Belva Barrie said automatically.

property
possible
see ALL things are possible with God; all's for the BEST in the best of all possible worlds.

post
see the post of HONOUR is the post of danger.

A POSTERN door makes a thief
Similar to OPPORTUNITY makes a thief.

c 1450 Proverbs of Good Counsel in Book of Precedence (EETS) 69 A nyse wyfe, and a back dore, Makyth often tymus A ryche man pore.

1573 Garden of Pleasure 107 The posterne dore [back door] destroyeth the house.

1611 Scourge of Folly 146 The Posterne doore makes theefe and whore. But, were that dam'd with Stone, or Clay, Whoores and Theeues would find a way.

1732 Gnomologia no. 6176 The Postern Door Makes Thief and Whore.

1977 Five-Minute Marriage xi. 'I shall never be able to sleep securely in this room, if thieves are to be always breaking in and waking me up!' 'A postern door do always make a thief.'

honesty and dishonesty ; opportunity, taken
pot
see if IFS and ands were pots and pans, there'd be no work for tinkers' hands; a LITTLE pot is soon hot; you cannot get a QUART into a pint pot; a WATCHED pot never boils.

pound
see IN for a penny, in for a pound; an OUNCE of practice is worth a pound of precept; take care of the PENCE and the pounds will take care of themselves; PENNY wise and pound foolish.

pour
see it never RAINS but it pours.

When POVERTY comes in at the door, love flies out of the window
Similar in sentiment to 1474 CAXTON Game of Chess III. iii. Herof men saye a comyn prouerbe in englond that loue lastest as longe as the money endurith.

1631 English Gentlewoman vi. It hath been an old Maxime; that as pouerty goes in at one doore, loue goes out at the other.

1639 Parœmiologia Anglo-Latina 25 When povertie comes in at doores, love leapes out at windowes.

1790 Universal Asylum Aug. 84 I hope, ladies, none of you may ever experience, that 'when poverty comes in at the door, love flies out at the windows.'

1894 Use of Life iii. It is a mean proverb that, 'When poverty comes in at the door, love flies out of the window.'
Besides, there would be plenty of money, so that if there had been love, .. it would have been less likely to fly out of the window, as he had been told it did when poverty came in at the door.

**love, blighted:** poverty

POVERTY is no disgrace, but it is a great inconvenience

- 1591 Second Fruits 105 Neuer be ashamed of thy calling, for Pouertie is no vice, though it be an inconvenience.

- 1721 Scottish Proverbs 278 Poortha [poverty] is a Pain, but no Disgrace. Unless it be the Effects of Laziness, and Luxury.

- 1945 Lark Rise i. ‘Poverty's no disgrace, but 'tis a great inconvenience’ was a common saying among the Lark Rise people; but .. their poverty was no less than a hampering drag upon them.

- 1973 Spy who died of Boredom 50 The English say: poverty is not a sin but something much worse.

POVERTY

POVERTY is not a crime

- 1591 Second Fruits 105 Pouertie is no vice.

- 1640 Outlandish Proverbs no. 844 Poverty is no sinne.

- 1785 Man of World IV. 56 Her Poverty is not her crime, Sir, but her misfortune.

- 1839 Nicholas Nickleby lv. ‘Remember how poor we are.’ Mrs. Nickleby .. said through her tears that poverty was not a crime.

- 1945 Lark Rise ii. There's nothing the matter with Lark Rise folks but poverty, and that's no crime. If it was, we should likely be hung ourselves.

- 1973 Spy who died of Boredom 50 The English say: poverty is not a sin but something much worse.

POVERTY

see also ADVERSITY makes strange bedfellows.

powder

see put your TRUST in God, and keep your powder dry.

POWER corrupts

The proverb is now commonly used in allusion to quot. 1887.

- 1876 Prime Minister IV. viii. We know that power does corrupt, and that we cannot trust kings to have loving hearts.

- 1887 Letter in Life & Letters of Mandel Creighton (1904) I. xiii. Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority.

- 1957 Testament of Experience II. ix. The processes by which ‘power corrupts’ are perhaps inevitable.

- 1979 Better Angels IV. xii. He doesn't know that power corrupts; there's nothing dark in him.

- 1997 Washington Times 2 June A15 And we know from the case of the conservatives that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

POWER

power

see also KNOWLEDGE is power; MONEY is power.

PRACTICE makes perfect

- 1553 Art of Rhetoric 3 Eloquence was vsed, and through practise made parfect.

- 1599 Two Angry Women of Abington I. 913 Forsooth as vse makes perfectnes, so seldome seene is soone
forgotten.

1761 Diary (1961) I. 192 Practice makes perfect.

1863 Hard Cash III. iv. He lighted seven fires, skillfully on the whole, for practice makes perfect.

1979 Shikasta 185 It is like playing the piano or riding a bicycle. Practice makes perfect.

1998 Washington Times 13 Jan. E2 Practice makes perfect. How many times have parents uttered those words to encourage their children …?

DIAGRAM
diligence
practice
see also an OUNCE of practice is worth a pound of precept.

PRACTISE what you preach

1377 Piers Plowman B. XIII. 79 This goddes gloton .. Hath no pyte on vs pore. He perforneth yuel [does evil], That he precheth he preueth [demonstrates] nought.

1639 Holy War I. xxiii. The Levites .. had 48 cities .. being better provided for then many English ministers, who may preach of hospitalitie to their people, but cannot go to the cost to practice their own doctrine.

1678 Seneca's Morals II. ii. We must practise what we preach.

1725 Universal Passion III. 48 Ye doctors sage, who thro' Parnassus teach, Or quit the tub, or practise what you preach.

1854 Newcomes I. xiv. Take counsel by an old soldier, who fully practises what he preaches, and beseeches you to beware of the bottle.

1945 Lark Rise iv. Songs of a high moral tone, such as: .. practise what you preach.

1970 Deadly Pattern iv. He was more than scornful of drink know-alls who practised what they preached even against their own palates.

WORDS AND DEEDS

PRAISE the child, and you make love to the mother

1829 Advice to Young Men IV. clxxi. It is an old saying, ‘Praise the child, and you make love to the mother’; and it is surprising how far this will go.

1885 How to be Happy though Married xix. ‘Praise the child, and you make love to the mother,’ and it is a thing that no husband ought to overlook.

CHILDREN AND PARENTS

PRAISE

see also (noun) SELF-praise is no recommendation.

PRAY

see the FAMILY that prays together stays together; he that cannot PAY, let him pray.

PRECEPT

see EXAMPLE is better than precept; an OUNCE of practice is worth a pound of precept.

PREPARE

see HOPE for the best and prepare for the worst; if you want PEACE, you must prepare for war.

PRESENT

see no TIME like the present.

PRESERVATION

see SELF-preservation is the first law of nature.

PRESSED
see one VOLUNTEER is worth two pressed men.

**PREVENTION is better than cure**

Cf. c 1240 BRACTON De Legibus V. x. melius & utilius [est] in tempore occurrere, quam post causam vulneratam quaerere remedium, it is better and more useful to meet a problem in time than to seek a remedy after the damage is done.

1618 Happiness of Church 146 Prevention is so much better then healing, because it saues the labour of being sicke.

1732 Gnomologia no. 3962 Prevention is much preferable to Cure.

1826 Letter 19 Apr. (1940) II. 257 Prevention is better than cure …With perseverance we shall save numbers of little Devils from becoming big ones.

1954 Journal of Edwin Carp 148 ‘Why do you wear those old galoshes when the sun's shining?’ .. ‘Prevention's better than Cure.’

1981 From Eternity to Here vi. Coates .. addressed a meeting of private detectives and tried to convince us that prevention was better than cure.

enate foresight and hindsight ; prudence

price

see EVERY man has his price.

**PRIDE feels no pain**

1614 Devil's Banquet II. 73 Pride is neuer without her own paine, though shee will not feele it: be her garments what they will, yet she will neuer be too hot, nor too colde.

1631 New Inn II. i. Thou must make shift with it. Pride feele no pain. Girt thee hard, Pru.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 277 Pride finds no cold. Spoken .. to Beaus [fops] with their open Breasts, and Ladies with their extravagant Hoops [hooped skirts].

1865 Facey Romford's Hounds xxxii. It was hard upon the old boy, who .. was not at all adapted for the sport; but pride feels no pain, and he went at it like a man.

1981 Radio Times 28 Feb.–6 Mar. 43 (advertisement), Pride feels no pain, the saying goes. Thankfully, with Clarks [shoes] it doesn't have to.

**pride**

PRIDE goes before a fall

Pride precedes disaster, an elliptical version of PROVERBS xvi. 18 (AV) Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

1390 Confessio Amantis i. 3062 Pride .. schal doun falle.

1509 Ship of Fools 195 First or last foule pryde wyll haue a fall.

1784 Letter 2 Aug. (1952) III. 191 I am now reduced to think .. of the weather. Pride must have a fall.

1856 Piazza Tales 431 The bell's main weakness was where man's blood had flawed it. And so pride went before the fall.

1930 Cakes & Ale v. I suppose he thinks he'd be mayor himself… Pride goeth before a fall.

1980 in K. J. Dover Ancient Greek Literature iii. The spectacle of Xerxes' defeat tremendously reinforced the traditional conviction that pride goes before a fall.

1997 Times 9 Aug. 10 The Government has got off to quite a good start, but it is euphoric and arrogant. Pride comes before a fall.

**pride ; retribution**

priest

see ONCE a priest, always a priest; like PEOPLE, like priest.

prince
Whosoever draws his sword against the prince must throw the scabbard away; punctuality is the politeness of princes.

Problem

If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem.

Procrastination is the thief of time

- 1742 Night Thoughts I. 18 Procrastination is the Thief of Time; Year after year it steals, till all are fled.
- 1850 David Copperfield xii. Never do to-morrow what you can do to-day. Procrastination is the thief of time.
- 1935 Primrose Path 100 Far from being the thief of time, procrastination is the king of it.
- 1982 Goosefoot vii. He told them that Death tried to rival procrastination as the thief of time.

Promises, like pie-crust, are made to be broken

- 1681 Heracleitus Ridens 16 Aug. He makes no more of breaking Acts of Parliaments, than if they were like Promises and Pie-crust made to be broken.
- 1871 Ralph the Heir II. iv. ‘Promises like that are mere pie-crust,’ said Ralph.
- 1948 Still glides Stream v. Ain’t you larned yet that a gal’s promises be but piecrust, made to be broke?
- 1981 Family Circle Feb. 66 Promises, like pie-crusts, they say, are made to be broken. Not at Sainsbury’s. Every single pie they sell lives up to the promise of its famous name.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating

Proof means ‘test’ rather than the more normal ‘verification, proving to be true’.

- 1300 King Alisaunder (EETS) l. 4038 It is ywrite that every thing Hymself sheweth in the tastyng.
- 1623 Remains concerning Britain (ed. 3) 266 All the proofe of a pudding, is in the eating.
- 1666 Italian Proverbs 100 (note) As they say at the winding up, or the proof of the pudding is in the eating.
- 1738 Polite Conversation II. 132 The Proof of the Pudden is in the Eating.
- 1842 Ingoldsby Legends 2nd Ser. 25 With respect to the scheme .. I've known soldiers adopt a worse stratagem .. There's a proverb however, I've always thought clever .. The proof of the Pudding is found in the eating.
- 1924 White Monkey III. xii. Let us .. look at the thing more widely. The proof of the pudding is in the eating.
- 1979 Daily Telegraph 27 Oct. 3 The proof of the pudding is in the eating. The villagers eat their own vegetables and suffer no illness.
- 1997 New Scientist 19 July 41 Lindzen for one argues that if the models get the detail wrong, they will get the big picture wrong, too. But modellers say the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

A prophet is not without honour save in his own country

With allusion to Matthew xiii. 57 (AV) A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.

- 1485 in Malory Works (1967) I. p. cxxlv. The word of God .. sayth that no man is accept for a prophete in his owne contrey.
- 1603 tr. Montaigne’s Essays III. ii. No man hath beene a Prophet .. in his owne country, saith the experience of histories.
- 1771 Humphry Clinker III. 92 The captain, like the prophets of old, is but little honoured in his own
country.

1946 Then & Now xxx. In Florence .. they had no great confidence in his judgment and never followed his advice. ‘A prophet is not without honour save in his own country.’

1984 English Companion 167 The BBC Orchestra .. is conducted by a wide range of foreign visitors. Meantime, excellent conductors like Andrew Davis and Sir Colin Davis flourish abroad. It was truly said that a prophet is not without honour save in his own country.

—familiarity ; honour

—propose
see MAN proposes, God disposes.

—prosper
see CHEATS never prosper.

—protect
see HEAVEN protects children, sailors, and drunken men.

—prove
see the EXCEPTION proves the rule.

—provide
see TAKE the goods the gods provide.

PROVIDENCE is always on the side of the big battalions

Cf. 1673 MME DE SÉVIGNÉ Letter 22 Dec. la fortune est toujours, comme disait le pauvre M. de Turenne, pour les gros bataillons, fortune is always, as poor Mr. de Turenne used to say, for the big battalions.

□1822 Memoirs v. Heaven was ever found favourable to strong battalions.

1842 Hist. Europe X. lxxxviii. Providence was always on the side of dense battalions.

1904 Reginald 63 Someone has observed that Providence is always on the side of the big dividends.

1943 Corpse by any Other Name iii. Our statesmen .. ought to have learned years ago that Providence is always on the side of the big battalions.

1979 Guardian 9 July 9 Many thousands more voices now are raised in the name of sanity. But I dare say God is still on the side of the big battalions.

—great and small ; providence

—public
see one does not WASH one’s dirty linen in public.

Any PUBLICITY is good publicity

□1933 in Black Mask Dec. 26 Rhonda Farr said: ‘Publicity, darling. Just publicity. Any kind is better than none at all.’

1974 Dirtiest Picture Postcard xiv. Haven’t you ever heard the old adman’s adage .. ‘any publicity is good publicity’?

1986 Dead Liberty xii. Bill wasn’t too worried. Like the old trouper he is, he insisted that all publicity is good publicity.

1997 Washington Post 23 Feb. D5 A lot of people probably think that this was a publicity stunt … Certainly, boxers live by the motto that any publicity is good publicity …

—public relations

—pudding

see the PROOF of the pudding is in the eating.

puddle
see the SUN loses nothing by shining into a puddle.
It is easier to PULL down than to build up

- 1577 Hist. Ireland in Holinshed Chronicles 89 It is easie to raze, but hard to buylde.
- 1587 Defence of Government in Church of England VI. 518 We may quicklier pull downe with one hande, than wee can easilie builde againe with both.
- 1644 Dodona's Grove 134 In politicall affaires, as well as mechanicall, it is farre easier to pull downe, then build up.
- 1909 Times 29 Apr. 9 Turkey and her new .. rulers .. have astonished those who thought they knew the Turks best by .. the vigour .. with which the great change has been conducted … But it is easier always and everywhere to pull down than to build up.

PUNCTUALITY is the politeness of princes
Fr. l'exactitude est la politesse des rois, punctuality is the politeness of kings (attributed to Louis XVIII, 1755–1824).
- 1834 Helen II. ix. ‘Punctuality is the virtue of princes.’ .. Mr. Harley .. would have ridiculed so antiquated a notion.
- 1854 Handley Cross (ed. 2) xli. Punctuality is the purlitness o' princes, and I doesn't like keepin' people waitin'.
- 1981 Shard calls Tune xv. One should never keep people waiting; punctuality was the politeness of princes.

politeness; punctuality

PUNCTUALITY is the soul of business

- 1853 Wise Saws I. iii. ‘Punctuality,’ sais I, ‘my lord, is the soul of business.’
- 1911 Folk Rhymes of Devon 16 Punctuality is the soul of business, and in these days of cheap watches there can be no excuse for anybody failing to cultivate the habit.
- 1940 And so to Murder 181 Punctuality .. has been called the politeness of kings. It's more than that: it's plain good business.

business; punctuality

punished
see CORPORATIONS have neither bodies to be punished nor souls to be damned.

To the PURE all things are pure
With allusion to TITUS i. 15 (AV) Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure.
- 1854 Early Engagements ii. Would that our earth were more frequently brightened and purified by such spirits … ‘To the pure all things are pure.’
- 1895 Woman who Did vii. Herminia, for her part, never discovered she was talked about. To the pure all things are pure.
- 1941 Death in Ecstasy xvi. How dare you suggest such a thing? .. Maurice Pringle burst out laughing … Look. To the pure all things are pure.
- 1979 Leaven of Malice iv. Perhaps I had been oversensitive … To the pure, after all, all things are pure.

virtue

purgatory
see ENGLAND is the paradise of women.

purpose
see the DEVIL can quote Scripture for his own ends.
purse

see you can't make a SILK purse out of a sow's ear.

Never PUT off till tomorrow what you can do today

The proverb is often humorously reversed (see quotas. 1869 and 1980). Cf. mid 14th-cent. Fr. *le bien que tu peux faire au matin, n'attens pas le soir ne l'endemain*, do not wait for the evening or the next day (to do) the good which you can do in the morning.

\[c\] 1386 *Tale of Melibee* I. 1793 An olde proverbe .. seith that ‘the goodnesse that thou mayst do this day, do it, and abide nat ne delaye it nat til to-morwe.’

1616 *Adages* 42 Deferre not vntill to morrow, if thou canst do it to day.

1633 *Familiar Letters* 5 Sept. (1903) II. 140 Secretary Cecil .. would oftentimes speak of himself, ‘It shall never be said of me that I will defer till to-morrow what I can do to-day.’

1749 *Letter* 26 Dec. (1932) IV. 1478 No procrastination; never put off til to-morrow what you can do today.

1869 *John Ploughman's Talk* vii. *These slow coaches think that to-morrow is better than to-day, and take for their rule an old proverb turned topsy-turvy—‘Never do to-day what you can put off till tomorrow.’*

1980 *Harold Nicolson* xv. *Lord Sackville was .. a lovable, easy-going but indolent peer whose philosophy is best summarized in one of his pet sayings: ‘Never do today what you can possibly put off until tomorrow.’*


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**efficiency and inefficiency ; procrastination**

put

see also *don't put all your EGGS in one basket; you can't put NEW wine in old bottles; you cannot put an OLD head on young shoulders; put a STOUT heart to a stey brae; put your TRUST in God, and keep your power dry.*

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**Q**

The QUARREL of lovers is the renewal of love

Cf. *TERENCE* *Andria* l. 555 *amantium irae amoris integratiost*, lovers' quarrels are a strengthening of love.

\[c\] 1520 *Terence in English* C1 *The angers of louers renew love agayn.*

1576 *Paradise of Dainty Devises* 42 *Now haue I founde, the proverbe true to proue, The fallyng out of faithfull frends, is the renuyng of love.*

1624 *Anatomy of Melancholy* (ed. 2) III. ii. *She would .. picke quarrells vpon no occasion, because she would be reconciled to him againe … The falling out of lovers is the renuing of loue.*

1754 *Grandison* III. xviii. *The falling out of Lovers .. is the renewal of Love. Are we not now better friends than if we had never differed?*

1874 *Phineas Redux* II. xxix. *She knew that ‘the quarrel of lovers is the renewal of love’. At any rate, the woman always desires that it may be so, and endeavours to reconcile the parted ones.*

1905 *Graphic* (Christmas) 14 (caption) *The quarrel of lovers is the renewal of love.*

1980 *Death of Favourite Girl* ii. *Bear in mind, ladies, that a lovers' quarrel sometimes signifies the
rebirth of love.

love

quarrel
see also (noun) it takes TWO to make a quarrel; (verb) a BAD workman blames his tools.

You cannot get a QUART into a pint pot
A quart is an imperial measure of two pints. The metaphorical phrase to get (or put) a quart into a pint pot is also used.

1896 Daily News 23 July 4 They had been too ambitious. They had attempted what he might describe in homely phrase as putting a quart into a pint pot.

1934 Execution of Diamond Deutsch xi. He whistled thoughtfully. ‘You can’t get a quart into a pint pot— is that it?’ asked the South African officer, quick to see the reason.

1948 Embroidery Mary xi. When they .. got down to .. packing it was found to be a case of ‘quarts into pint pots will not go.’

1974 Child in Forest i. 101 A quart may not go into a pint pot, but my feet had to go into those boots.

great and small; possibility and impossibility

queer
see there's NOWT so queer as folk.

quench
see DIRTY water will quench fire.

question
see ASK a silly question and you get a silly answer; ASK no questions and hear no lies; a CIVIL question deserves a civil answer; FOOLS ask questions that wise men cannot answer; there are TWO sides to every question.

QUICKLY come, quickly go
Similar to EASY come, easy go.

1583 Philotimus 151 Quickly spent, thats easely gotten.

1631 tr. F. de Roja's Celestina i. 8 Quickly be wonne, and quickly be lost.

1869 English Proverbs 322 Quickly come, quickly go.

1947 Whisky Galore iii. Quick come, quick go. The wind got up in a moment and it will drop just as suddenly.

1979 Tomorrow's Silence iv. ‘Was he alright when you came home?’ .. ‘Yes, what comes quickly must go quickly, that's what I say.’

getting and spending

quickly
see also he GIVES twice who gives quickly.

quiet
see the best DOCTORS are Dr Diet, Dr Quiet, and Dr Merryman.

quote
see the DEVIL can quote Scripture for his own ends.
The RACE is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong
With allusion to ECCLESIASTES ix. 11 (AV) The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.

1632 Anatomy of Melancholy (ed. 4) II. iii. It is not honesty, learning, worth, wisdome, that preferres men, The race is not to the swift, nor the battell to the stronger [1638 strong].

1873 Pillars of House III. xxxii. Poor child! she .. lay trying to work out .. why the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.

1901 Caesar & Cleopatra in Three Plays for Puritans 96 The descendants of the gods did not stay to be butchered, cousin. The battle was not to the strong; but the race was to the swift.

1976 Wilt xix. The race was not to the swift after all, it was to the indefatigably inconsequential and life was random.

success

ragged

see there's many a GOOD cock come out of a tattered bag.

RAIN before seven, fine before eleven

1853 Notes & Queries 1st Ser. VIII. 218 Weather Proverbs … Rain before seven, fine before eleven.

1909 Spectator 20 Mar. 452 ‘Rain before seven, shine before eleven,’ is one of the most trustworthy of all country saws.

1940 (title) Rain before seven.

1961 Three Score & Ten vii. The morning of the Agricultural dawned fair and bright. Naturally there were wisebeards who shook their heads over this and said Ar, that were a bad sign for certain sure, rain before seven, fine before eleven, and stands to reason the contrairy [sic] holds.

weather lore

rain

see also blessed are the DEAD that the rain rains on; if in FEBRUARY there be no rain, 'tis neither good for hay nor grain; SAINT Swithun's day if thou be fair for forty days it will remain.

It never RAINS but it pours

An archaic use of but to introduce an inevitable accompanying circumstance.

1726 (title) It cannot rain but it pours.

1771 Letter 2 Feb. (1971) III. 1164 It never rains, but it pours, my dear Doctor … Mr. Br: has added to his Mastership .. a living hard by Cambridge.

1857 Barchester Towers III. xii. A wife with a large fortune too. It never rains but it pours, does it, Mr. Thorne?

1979 Reported Missing vii. I listened to the radio. Ben Gurion had suffered a stroke… It never rains but it pours.

1996 Washington Times 6 June A16 Here's a homey adage for Bill Clinton, who claims a fondness for them: It never rains but it pours.

misfortune

It is easier to RAISE the Devil than to lay him

1655 Church Hist. Britain x. iv. The Boy having gotten a habit of counterfeiting .. would not be undeviled by all their Exorcisms, so that the Priests raised up a Spirit which they could not allay.

1725 tr. Erasmus' Colloquies 202 ‘Tis an old Saying and a true, 'Tis an easier Matter to raise the Devil, than 'tis to lay him.

1845 Works (1898) XII. 136 Did you think, when, to serve your turn, you called the Devil up, that it was as easy to lay him as to raise him?
good and evil : prudence
ransom
see a peck of March dust is worth a king's ransom.
rat
see the cat, the rat, and Lovell the dog, rule all England under the hog.
reach
see stretch your arm no further than your sleeve will reach.
reap
see as you sow, so you reap; they that sow the wind shall reap the whirlwind.

There is reason in the roasting of eggs
There is reason behind every action, however odd it may seem.

1659 Proverbs (English) 12 Ther's reason in roasting of Eggs.
1785 Journal of Tour of Hebrides 24 (note) Every man whatever is more or less a cook, in seasoning what he himself eats.—Your definition is good, said Mr. Burke, and I now see the full force of the common proverb, ‘There is reason in roasting of eggs.’
1867 Last Chronicle of Barset II. lxxv. But there's reason in the roasting of eggs, and .. money is not so plentiful .. that your uncle can afford to throw it into the Barchester gutters.
1915 In Mr. Knox's Country ix. I seemed to myself merely an imbecile, sitting in heavy rain, staring at a stone wall. Half an hour, or more, passed. 'I'm going out of this,' I said to myself defiantly; 'there's reason in the roasting of eggs.' (Cf. 1949 I capture Castle iii. Mother said: 'There's reason in everything and Thomas ought to be in bed.')

idiosyncrasy
recalled
see things past cannot be recalled.
receive
see it is better to give than to receive.

If there were no receivers, there would be no thieves

1390 Cook's Tale l. 4415 There is no thief with-oute a lowke [accomplice], That helpeth hym to wasten and to sowke [cheat].
1546 Dialogue of Proverbs i. xii. F1 This prouerbe preeues, Where be no receuyers, there be no theeues.
1614 Devil's Banquet II. 67 The Calumniator is a wretched Thiefe, and robs man of the best thing he hath... But if there were no receiuer, there would be no Thiefe.
1884 Red Deer v. No one would buy a stolen deer, knowing the inevitable consequences, and as there are no receivers .. there are no thieves.
1926 Times 22 Nov. 11 It had often been said in those Courts that if there were no receivers there would be no thieves.

associates ; wrong-doers
reckoning
see short reckonings make long friends.
recommendation
see self-praise is no recommendation.

red sky at night, shepherd's delight; red sky in the morning, shepherd's warning
One of the most persistent of the weather sayings, used by sailors as well as shepherds (see quot. 1893 and 1996). With allusion to MATTHEW xvi. 2 (AV) When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and louring.
c 1395 Bible Matthew xvi. 2 The eeuennyng maad, ye seien, It shal be cleer, for the heuene is lijk to reed; and the morwe, To day tempest, for heuen shyneth heu, or sorwful.

Follower to Donet (EETS) 54 We trowen [believe] that this day schal be a reyny day for that his morownyng was reed, or that to morow schal be a fayre day for that his euentide is reed.

1592–3 Venus & Adonis l. 453 Like a red morn, that ever yet betoken’d Wreck to the seaman .. Sorrow to shepherds.

1893 Weather Lore 53 Sky red in the morning Is a sailor's sure warning; Sky red at night Is the sailor's delight.

1920 Punch 14 July 36 Red sky at night shepherd's delight ...Red sky in the morning shepherd's warning.

1979 Show me Hero xxv. ‘Going to be a fine day,’ he said at last. ‘Red sky in the morning, shepherd's warning.’ Ashman said.

1995 And Hope to Die ii. 15 The next morning it was raining steadily, this in spite of the flush of sunset the evening before... Red sky at night, shepherds' delight. Well all right, perhaps so, if they'd been praying for rain.

1996 Murder on Girls' Night Out xii. 137 The sun was reddish orange and the sky was hazy. Red sky at morning, sailor take warning? Red sky at night, sailor's delight? I thought that was right.

weather lore

redressed
see a FAULT confessed is half redressed.

A REED before the wind lives on, while mighty oaks do fall

c 1385 Troilus & Criseyde II. 1387 And reed that boweth down for every blast, Ful lightly, cesse wynd, it wol aryse.

1621 Anatomy of Melancholy II. iii. Though I liue obscure, yet I liue cleane and honest, and when as the lofty oake is blowne downe, the silly [frail] reed may stand.

1732 Gnomologia no. 3692 Oaks may fall, when Reeds stand the Storm.

1954 Journal of Edwin Carp 20 Remembering that ‘a reed before the wind lives on—while mighty oaks do fall,’ I attempted to remove the pencil marks with my pocket eraser.

great and small ; strength and weakness

refuse
see the SEA refuses no river.

regulated
see ACCIDENTS will happen (in the best-regulated families).

rejoice
see it is a POOR heart that never rejoices.

There is a REMEDY for everything except death
Cf. medieval L. contra malum mortis, non est medicamen in hortis, against the evil of death there is no remedy in the garden.

c 1430 Dance of Machabree (EETS) l. 432 Agens deeth is worth [useful] no medicine.

1573 Garden of Pleasure 52 There is a remedie for all things, sauing for death.

1620 tr. Cervantes' Don Quixote II. lxiv. There is a remedy for everything but death, said Don Quixote; for tis but hauing a Barke ready at the Sea side, and in spite of all the world we may embarke our selues.

a 1895 My Confidences (1896) 95 There is a remedy for everything except Death .. so the bitterness of
this disappointment has long passed away.

- death: finality
remedy
see also DESPERATE diseases must have desperate remedies.
removal
see THREE removals are as bad as a fire.
renewal
see the QUARREL of lovers is the renewal of love.
repair
see a WOMAN and a ship ever want mending.
repeat
see HISTORY repeats itself.
repent
see MARRY in haste and repent at leisure.
rest
see (noun) a CHANGE is as good as a rest; (verb) AFTER dinner rest a while, after supper walk a mile.
return
see a BAD penny always turns up; the DOG returns to his vomit; the TONGUE always returns to the sore tooth.

REVENGE is a dish that can be eaten cold
Vengeance need not be exacted immediately; but cf. 1620 T. SHELTON tr. Cervantes' Don Quixote II. lxiii. Reuenge is not good in cold bloud.
□1885 Prince Bismarck I. iv. He had defended Olmütz, it is true, but .. with a secret resolution to 'eat the dish of his revenge cold instead of hot.'
1895 In Market Overt xvii. Invective can be used at any time; like vengeance, it is a dish that can be eaten cold.
1975 Women in Wall iii. Revenge .. is a meal that's as tasty cold as hot. Tastier cold sometimes.
1997 Washington Post 6 Nov. E6 Revenge is a dish best served cold. Let's see what happens one of these cold Octobers.

- patience and impatience; revenge
REVENGE is sweet
Cf. HOMER Iliad XVIII. 109 ὁ ὃς ἐν τῇ ἀργῇ ἐλεήτορ κατάλευκος ἐν παντὶ ἐπιτήρησεν, ἐν τῇ ἀργῇ οὐ, anger .. that far sweeter than trickling honey wells up like smoke in the breasts of men.
□1566 Palace of Pleasure 300 Vengeance is sweete vnto him, which in place of killing his enemy, giueth life to a perfect frende.
1609 Silent Woman IV. V. O reuenge, how sweet art thou!
1658 Whole Duty of Man XVI. 346 'Tis a devilish phrase in the mouth of men, that revenge is sweet... Is it possible there can be any such sweetnesse in it?
1775 St. Patrick's Day II. 22 'Revenge is sweet'..and though disappointed of my designs upon your daughter,..I'm revenged on her unnatural father.
1861 Ravenshoe II. X. Revenge is sweet—to some. Not to him.
1980 Dover beats Band xv. He came to the conclusion that though revenge may be sweet, knowledge .. is better than money in the bank.
revenge

see **THRIFT is a great revenue.**

**REVOLUTIONS are not made with rose-water**

With reference to 1789 CHAMFORT in Marmontel *Works* (1818) II. 294 *voulez-vous qu'on vous fasse des révolutions à l'eau rose*, do you require that revolutions be made with rose-water?

- **1819** Letter 3 Oct. (1976) VI. 226 *On either side harm must be done before good can accrue—revolutions are not to be made with rose water.*

- **1894** *Use of Life* xi. *It is sometimes said that Revolutions are not made with rose-water. Greater changes, however, have been made in the constitution of the world by argument than by arms.*

**politics : rulers and ruled ; ways and means**

**reward**

see **VIRTUE is its own reward.**

The **RICH man has his ice in the summer and the poor man gets his in the winter**

- **1921** in *Morning Telegraph* (NY) 27 Oct. 7 *There are those who argue that everything breaks even in this old dump of a world of ours ... These ginks who argue that way hold that because the rich man gets ice in the Summer and the poor man gets it in the winter things are breaking even for both.*

- **1957** *First Four Years* (1971) ii. *Everything evens up in the end ... The rich man has his ice in the summer and the poor man gets his in the winter.*

- **1986** *Jersey Tomatoes* xi. *The rich get ice in the summer and the poor get it in the winter, so some people figure everyone gets an even break.*

**equality ; poverty ; riches**

**rich**

see also **it is BETTER to be born lucky than rich; one LAW for the rich and another for the poor.**

**If you can't RIDE two horses at once, you shouldn't be in the circus**

James Maxton, to whom this saying is attributed (quot. 1935), was a British Independent Labour Party MP (1932–46).

- **1935** James Maxton xiv. *Maxton made a brief intervention in the debate to say .. that he did not believe it was necessary to pass a resolution for disaffiliation [of the I.L.P. from the Labour Party]. He had been told that he could not ride two horses. ‘My reply to that is’, he said .. ‘that if my friend cannot ride two horses—what's he doing in the bloody circus?’*

- **1979** *Daily Telegraph* 15 Mar. 15 *A producer who ‘can't ride two horses at the same time shouldn't be in the circus.’ .. Current affairs television should be both serious and entertaining.*

- **1979** *New Society* 27 Sept. 666 *If you can't ride two horses at once, you shouldn't be in the bloody circus.*

**efficiency and inefficiency ; stress**

**ride**

see also **set a BEGGAR on horseback, and he'll ride to the Devil; if TWO ride on a horse one must ride behind; if WISHES were horses beggars would ride.**

**He who RIDES a tiger is afraid to dismount**

Once a dangerous or troublesome venture is begun, the safest course is to carry it through to the end.

- **1875** *Collection of Chinese Proverbs* no. 2082 *He who rides a tiger is afraid to dismount... Ch'i 'hu nan hsia pei.*

- **1902** *Mastery of Pacific* xvi. *These colonies are .. for her [France] the tiger which she has mounted (to use the Chinese phrase) and which she can neither manage nor get rid of.*

- **1983** *Bay Psalm Book Murder* x. *'But no doubt about it, I've got a tiger by the tail now.' ‘And there's an
Oriental saying that the man who rides the tiger is afraid to get off. Watch your step.’

ridiculous
see from the SUBLIME to the ridiculous is only a step.

right
see the CUSTOMER is always right; DO right and fear no man; GOD'S in his heaven, all's right with the world; MIGHT is right; TWO wrongs don't make a right.

ring
see GIVE a thing, and take a thing, to wear the Devil's gold ring.

ripe
see SOON ripe, soon rotten.

rise
see EARLY to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise; a STREAM cannot rise above its source.

A RISING tide lifts all boats
Principally known in the United States; one of several proverbs popularized by the Kennedy family. It is generally used in economic contexts, the tide being that of prosperity.

1963 Address 25 June in Public papers of Presidents of U.S. (1964) 519 As they say on my own Cape Cod, a rising tide lifts all the boats. And a partnership, by definition, serves both partners, without domination or unfair advantage.

1988 Washington Post 7 Mar. A12 The theory used to be that all Americans had a stake in prosperity. The comforting notion was that the rising tide would lift all boats. Now, however, both the theory and some of the boats have holes in them.

1990 Washington Times 6 Mar. C2 The country was in a sharp economic expansion coming out of '82. This made everybody look smart—you know, the rising tide lifts all boats.


good fortune
river
see the SEA refuses no river

The ROAD to hell is paved with good intentions
Earlier forms of the proverb omit the first three words. Cf. ST. FRANCIS DE SALES, Letter lxxiv. le proverbe tiré de notre saint Bernard, ‘L'enfer est plein de bonnes volontés ou désirs’, the proverb taken from our St. Bernard, ‘Hell is full of good intentions or desires.’

1574 tr. Guevara's Epistles 205 Hell is full of good desires.

1654 Observations on Manners of English 203 It is a saying among Divines, that Hell is full of good Intentions, and Meanings.

1736 Journal 10 July (1910) I. 1. 246 It is a true saying, ‘Hell is paved with good intentions.’

1847 Shadows of Clouds ix. I shall have nothing to hand in, except intentions,—what they say the road to the wrong place is paved with.

1855 Hand-Book of Proverbs 514 The road to hell is paved with good intentions.

1886 Death for Adonis viii. His first marriage .. was the result of my interference. Good intentions do pave the way to hell.

action and inaction ; intentions
road
see also there is no ROYAL road to learning.

All ROADS lead to Rome

Cf. medieval L. *mille vie ducunt hominem per secula Romam*, a thousand roads lead man for ever towards Rome. c 1391 CHAUCER *Astrolabe* Prologue 1. 40 Right as diverse pathes leden diverse folk the righte way to Rome.

1806 tr. *La Fontaine's Fables* IV. XII. xxiv. All roads alike conduct to Rome.

1872 Strange Adventures of Phaeton vi. You know all roads lead to Rome, and they say that Oxford is half-way to Rome.

1912 Individual in *Animal Kingdom* vi. All roads lead to Rome: and even animal individuality throws a ray on human problems.

1936 *South Riding* I. V. Her official ‘subjects’ were History and Civics, but all roads led her to Rome—an inexhaustible curiosity about the contemporary world and its inhabitants.

1980 Godric (1981) 60 All roads lead to Rome, they say, and ours leads us a crooked way.

beginnings and endings; ways and means

roasting

see there is REASON in the roasting of eggs.

robbery

see A fair EXCHANGE is no robbery.

The ROBIN and the wren are God's cock and hen; the martin and the swallow are God's mate and marrow

*Marrow* is an obsolete word (except in dialect), meaning ‘something that makes a pair with another’. The rhyme is found in a variety of forms, as in a 1508 J. SKELTON *Poems* (1969) 45 The pretty wren .. is our Ladys hen.

1787 *Provincial Glossary* (Popular Superstitions) 64 There is a particular distich in favour of the robin and wren: A robin and wren Are God Almighty's cock and hen. Persons killing [them] .. or destroying their nests, will infallibly, within the course of a year, break a bone, or meet with some other dreadful misfortune. On the contrary, it is deemed lucky to have martins and swallows build their nests in the eaves of a house.

1826 *Cheshire Glossary* (ed. 2) 105 The following metrical adage is common in Cheshire: The Robin and the Wren Are God's cock and hen, The Martin and the Swallow are God's mate and marrow.

1945 Lark Rise ix. No boy would rob a robin's or a wren's nest .. for they believe that: The robin and the wrens Be God Almighty's friends. And the martin and the swallow Be God Almighty's birds to follow.

bird lore

ROBIN Hood could brave all weathers but a thaw wind

A *thaw wind* is ‘a cold piercing wind from the S. or SE. which often accompanies the breaking up of a long frost’ (J. Bridge, *Cheshire Proverbs*).

1855 *Life & Exploits of Robin Hood* ii. Every one, at least every Yorkshireman, is familiar with the observation that Robin Hood could brave all weathers but a thaw wind.

1931 Blanket of Dark xii. I dread the melting wind which makes seas of rivers and lakes of valleys. Robin Hood feared little above ground, but he feared the thaw-wind.

weather lore

rock

see (noun) who won't be RULED by the rudder must be ruled by the rock; (verb) the HAND that rocks the cradle rules the world.

Up like a ROCKET, down like a stick

www.EnglishPro.ir
The origin of this is Thomas Paine’s gibe about Edmund Burke’s oratory in a House of Commons debate on the subject of the French Revolution (see quot. 1792).

1792 Letter to Addressers on Late Proclamation
4 As he rose like a rocket, he fell like the stick.

1922 Ulysses 364 Up like a rocket, down like a stick.

1974 Fonthill (1975) 53 I believe he died loaded with debts. Well, up like a rocket and down like the stick, I always say.

ambition; pride

rod

see SPARE the rod and spoil the child.

A ROLLING stone gathers no moss

Cf. ERASMUS Adages III. iv. 1 o σκληρὸν ὅποτε σκληρὸν, a rolling stone does not gather sea-weed; musco lapis volutus haud obductit, a rolling stone is not covered with moss.

1362 Piers Plowman A. x. 101 Selden Moseth [becomes mossy] the Marbelston that men ofte treden.

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs I. xi. D2 The rolling stone neuer gatherth moss.

1579 Ephemerides of Phialo 5V A rowling stone gathers no mosse, and a running hed wil neuer thriue.

1710 Pastorals II. 8 A Rolling Stone is ever bare of Moss.

1841 Old Curiosity Shop II. xlviii. Your popular rumour, unlike the rolling stone of the proverb, is one which gathers a deal of moss in its wanderings up and down.

1979 Listener 5 July 16 A roadside notice .. said in one long line: Loose stones travel slowly. Well, I dare say they do: rolling stones, we know, gather no moss.

constancy and inconstancy; human nature

When in ROME, do as the Romans do

Cf. ST. AMBROSE, quoted in ST. AUGUSTINE Letters xxxvi. 32 (Migne), quando hic sum, non ieiuno sabbato; quando Romae sum, ieiuno sabbato, when I am here [i.e. Milan], I do not fast on Saturday; when I am in Rome, I fast on Saturday; 1660 quoted in verse form in JEREMY TAYLOR, Ductor Dubitantium (1851) I. i. 5. 5 cum fueris Romae, Romano vivito more, cum fueris alibi, vivito sicut ibi, when you're in Rome, then live in Roman fashion; when you're elsewhere, then live as there they live.

1475 in Modern Philology (1940) XXXVIII. 122 Whan tho herd hat Rome Do so of ther the dome [when you are at Rome do as they do there].

1552 tr. Erasmus’Adages (ed.3) 51V That which is commonly in euery mans mouth in England Whan you art at Rome, do as they do at Rome.

1766 in et al. Adams Family Correspondence (1963) I. 55 My advice to you is among the Romans, do as the romans do.

1836 Rattlin the Reefer I. xxii. ‘Do at Roma as the Romans do,’ is the essence of all politeness.

1960 Don’t tell Alfred viii. ‘I thought the English never bothered about protocol?’ ‘When in Rome, however, we do as the Romans do.’

1986 Saying what you Mean 151 In short, when in Rome, by all means do as the Romans do, or did, but don’t feel compelled to do it elsewhere.

circumstances; conduct

ROME was not built in a day

Cf. medieval Fr. Rome ne fut pas faite toute en un jour, Rome was not made in one day.

1545 tr. Erasmus’Adages (ed. 2) D1V Rome was not bylt in one daie.

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs I. xi. D4 Rome was not bylt on a daie (quoth he) and yet stood Tyll it was fynysht.

1646 in Publications of Prince Society (1865) I. 236 Rome was not built in a day … Let them produce any
colonie .. where more hath been done in 16 yeares.

1849 Shirley I. vi. As Rome .. had not been built in a day, so neither had Mademoiselle Gerard Moore's education been completed in a week.

1941 Trap for Bellamy iv. Life is what you make it. Rome wasn't built in a day.

1979 Daily Telegraph 16 Nov. 18 Rome was not built in a day and artistic enterprise must for the moment remain the privilege of those who live in major centres.

haste ; patience and impatience

Rome

see also all ROADS lead to Rome; it is ill SITTING at Rome and striving with the Pope.

There is always ROOM at the top

The remark is popularly attributed to the American politician Daniel Webster (1782–1852); it was his riposte after he had been advised against joining the legal profession on the grounds that it was already overcrowded.

1900 Letter 2 Apr. (1920) II. 121 Verily there is room at the top. S—seems to be the only Britisher worth thinking of.

1914 Price of Love vii. The Imperial had set out to be the most gorgeous cinema in the five Towns; and it simply was. Its advertisements read; ‘There is always room at the top.’

1933 Sheppey III. 89 You have to be pretty smart with all the competition there is nowadays ... There's always room at the top.

1957 Room at Top xxviii. You're the sort of young man we want. There's always room at the top.

1980 Middle Ground 140 There's room at the top, maybe, but only for the clever ones.

ambition

roost

see CURSES, like chickens, come home to roost.

root

see IDLENESSE is the root of all evil; MONEY is the root of all evil.

Give a man ROPE enough and he will hang himself

Rope is used both literally, and figuratively—‘licence, freedom’.

1639 Holy War v. vii. they were suffered to have rope enough, till they had halted themselves.

1670 English Proverbs 148 Give a thief rope enough, and he'll hang himself.

1698 in William & Mary College Quarterly (1950) VII. 106 The Kings prerogative .. will be hard for his Successor to retrieve, though there's a saying give Men Rope enough, they will hang themselves.

1876 Prime Minister II. xvii. Give Sir Orlando rope enough and he'll hang himself.

1941 Red is for Killing x. ‘I like to build a pretty complete case before making an arrest.’ .. ‘If you give a man enough rope he hangs himself.’

1968 No Fear or Favour xvi. ‘Judges always give a lot of rope to prisoners when they're defending themselves, don't they, sir?’ ‘That's true,’ said Stokes. ‘Let's hope he hangs himself with it,’ said the superintendent.

ways and means ; wrong-doers

Never mention ROPE in the house of a man who has been hanged.

1599 Spanish Dialogues i. A man ought not to make mention of a halter in the house of a man that was hanged.

1620 tr. Don Quixote III. xi. why doe I name an Asse with my mouth, seeing one should not make mention of a rope in ones house that was hanged?

1890 Burnt Million xxxii. Miss Grace, whom he pictured .. as sensitive upon the matters as though if her
parent had been hung she would have been to an allusion to a rope.

1958 Night of Reckoning viii. Never mention rope in the house of a man who has been hanged.

1995 Washington Times 14 July A4 Whenever he hears the very word 'Vietnam' shame could compel Mr. Clinton to excuse himself … He should remember FDR's famous admonition to avoid speaking of rope in the house of a man recently hanged.

No ROSE without a thorn

Cf. CLAUDIAN In Nuptias Honorii .. Fescennina iv. 10 Armat spina rosas, mella tegunt apes, a thorn arms roses, bees conceal their honey.

1430–40 Bochas Prol. ix There is no rose .. in garden, but there be sum thorne.

1579 Euphues i. 184 The sweetest Rose hath his prickel.

1603 tr. Montaigne's Essays III. iii. 68 But no good without paines; no Roses without prickles.

1670 English Proverbs 138 No rose without a thorn.

1922 Ulysses Queer the number of pins they always have. No roses without thorns.

1965 Old Lamps 218 'But everything depends on the baby. What a bore.' ‘No rose without a thorn. eh?’

good and evil

rose-water

see REVOLUTIONS are not made with rose-water.

rot

see ONE for the mouse, one for the crow; WINTER never rots in the sky.

The ROTTEN apple injures its neighbour

The proverb is also found in a number of variant forms, some of which are illustrated below. Cf. L. pomum compunctum cito corrumpit sibi junctum, a rotten apple quickly infects its neighbour.

1340 Ayenbite of Inwit (EETS) 205 A roted eppel amang the holen [whole ones], maketh rotie the yzounde [sound].

1577 Treatise against Dicing 95 A peny naughtily [dishonestly] gotten, sayth Chrysostome, is like a rotten apple layd among sounde apples, which will rot all the rest.

1736 Poor Richard's Almanack (July) The rotten apple spoils his companion.

1855 Hand-Book of Proverbs 514 The rotten apple injures its neighbour.

1979 Raven feathers his Nest 19 The police .. have a deserved reputation for uprightness… But one bad apple can spoil the whole barrel.

associates ; example, good and bad

rotten

see also SMALL choice in rotten apples; SOON ripe, soon rotten.

roundabout

see what you LOSE on the swings you gain on the roundabouts.

There is no ROYAL road to learning

Cf. PROCLUS Commentary on Euclid (Friedlein) 68, μείναι ασιλικήν ταπευμένης Υε ως τον αιώνα, there is no royal short cut to geometry (quoting Euclid). 1745 E. STONE tr. Euclid's Elements (ed. 2) II. A2V There is no other Royal Way or Path to Geometry.

1824 Journal (1961) II. 268 There is no royal road to Learning.

1857 Barchester Towers II. i. There is no royal road to Learning; no short cut to the acquirment of any valuable art.

1941 You can't be too Careful II. vi. ‘There's no Royal Road to Learning,’ said Mr. Myame. ‘No. “Thorough” has always been my motto.’
diligence; learning; ways and means
rubber
see those who PLAY at bowls must look out for rubbers.
rudder
see who won't be RULED by the rudder must be ruled by the rock.
rue
see MARRY in May, rue for aye.
rule
see (noun) the EXCEPTION Proves the rule; there is an EXCEPTION to every rule; (verb) DIVIDE and rule; the HAND that rocks the cradle rules the world.
Who won't be RULED by the rudder must be ruled by the rock

1666 Italian Proverbs 286 That ship which will have no rudder, must have a rock.
1823 Curiosities of Literature 2nd Ser. I. 459 There is a Cornish proverb. ‘Those who will not be ruled by the rudder must be ruled by the rock’—the strands of Cornwall, so often covered with wrecks, could not fail to impress on the imaginations of its inhabitants the two objects from whence they drew this salutary proverb.
1867 Beyond Mississippi xxxix. Let Brigham ponder the lesson. ‘He who will not be ruled by the rudder must be ruled by the rock.’
1911 Secret of Quiet Mind 79 Jesus .. is weeping because the spiritual blindness of the people made .. the destruction of Jerusalem .. inevitable. ‘He who will not be ruled by the rudder must be ruled by the rock,’ but ruled he must be.
1984 Salty Words 165 The nautical saying Who won't be ruled by the rudder must be ruled by the rock .. means ‘those who won't listen to reason must bear the consequences.’

action and consequence; discipline
RULES are made to be broken

1942 Gift Horse (1972) v. 38 ‘That's the rule,’ added Happy, unnecessarily. ‘Rules are made to be broken,’ Johnny said with forced heartiness.
1954 Expedition to Earth 58 It is a fundamental rule of space-flight that .. the minimum crew on a long journey shall consist of not less than three men. But rules are made to be broken …
1978 Libertines i. 20 ‘.. it's an unwritten law that the Libertines don't use the house.’ ‘Rules are made to be broken.
1997 Washington Post 15 Feb. D4 And if he should feel like betting on a baseball game or two, why not? There's a rule against it? Well, rules are made to be broken, right?

rules, general
If you RUN after two hares you will catch neither
Cf. ERASMUS Adages III. ccxxxvii. duos insequens lepores, neutrum capit, he who chases two hares catches neither.
1509 Ship of Fools H5 A fole is he .. Whiche with one haunde tendyth [intends] to take two harys in one instant.
1580 Euphues & his England II. 157 I am redie to take potions .. yet one thing maketh to feare, that in running after two Hares, I catch neither.
1732 Gnomologia no. 2782 If you run after two Hares, you will catch neither.
1880 John Ploughman's Pictures 24 If we please one we are sure to get another grumbling. We shall be like the man who hunted many hares at once and caught none.
Let's take things a step at a time. You know what they say. If you run after two hares you will catch neither. **Decision and indecision; wanting and having**

**You cannot run with the hare and hunt with the hounds**

Also used in the metaphorical phrase to *run with the hare and hunt with the hounds*. In quot. 1546 *tytifils* comes from Titivil, formerly a common name for a demon.

*Minor Poems* (EETS) 821 *He .. holdeth bothe with hounde and hare.*

1546 *Dialogue of Proverbs* I. x. C3 *There is no mo [more] suche tytifils [scoundrels] in Englands grounde, To holde with the hare, and run with the hounde.*

1694 *Trimmer's Confession of Faith* I *I can hold with the Hare, and run with the Hound: Which no Body can deny.*

1896 *Courtships of Queen Elizabeth* xii. *Leicester, as usual, tried to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, to retain French bribes and yet to stand in the way of French objects.*

1975 *Women in Wall* v. *Clotair's henchmen say: 'You cannot run with the hare and hunt with the hounds.' The peasants have an even clearer way of putting this: 'You cannot', they say, 'side with the cow and the clover.'*

**Choices**

*Run*

see also *he who fights and runs away, may live to fight another day; the last drop makes the cup run over; still waters run deep; while two dogs are fighting for a bone, a third runs away with it; we must learn to walk before we can run.*

*rush*

see *fools rush in where angels fear to tread.*

**Russian**

see *scratch a russian and you find a tartar.*

**Rust**

see *better to wear out than to rust out.*

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**S**

**Sabbath**

see *Monday's child is fair of face.*

**Sack**

see *empty sacks will never stand upright.*

**Safe bind, safe find**

1546 *Dialogue of Proverbs* I. iii. A4 *Than catche and hold while I may, fast bind, fast fynde.*

1573 *Husbandry* (rev. ed) II. 8 *Drie sunne, drie winde, safe bind, safe finde.*

1655 *Church Hist. Britain* IV. iv *Because sure binde, sure finde, he [Richard III] is said, and his Queen, to be Crowned again in York with great solemnity.*

1890 *John Vale's Guard* I. vi. *'Safe bind, safe find,' said Uncle Robert, locking the door and pocketing the key.*
1937 Busman's Honeymoon xx. As I says to Frank Crutchley, safe bind, safe find, I says.
1947 Close Quarters viii. ‘A careful man, the late head verger,’ remarked Hazlerigg. ‘Careful of his own and his master's property. Fast bind, fast find.’

**gains and losses ; security**

see also it is BEST to be on the safe side; BETTER be safe than sorry.

**SAFETY in numbers**

Now much more general in its application than its possible biblical source: PROVERBS xi.14 (AV) In the multitude of counsellors there is safety.

1680 Mr. Badman 133 I verily think, (since in the multitude of Counsellors there is safety) that if she had acquainted the Congregation with it, .. she had had more peace.

1816 Emma II. i. She determined to call upon them and seek safety in numbers.

1914 Titan xvii. He was beginning to run around with other women. There was safety in numbers.

1979 This Fatal Writ 82 Julian isn't married ... As far as women are concerned he seems to believe there's safety in numbers.

1997 Old Gang of Mine xiii. 168 If Ardley was able to bring them all together in one room, and introduce them, he might get them all to testify. Safety in numbers, you know.

**associates ; security**

said

see LEAST said, soonest mended; what the SOLDIER said isn't evidence.

**sailor**

see HEAVEN protects children, sailors, and drunken men.

If SAINT Paul's day be fair and clear, it will betide a happy year

The Conversion of St. Paul is traditionally celebrated on 25 January Cf. c 1340 ROBERT OF AVESBURY Hist. (1720) 266 clara dies Pauli bona tempora denotat anni, a clear St. Paul's day denotes good times for the year.

1584 Discovery of Witchcraft XI. XV. If Paule th'apostles daie be cleare, it dooth foreshew a luckie yeare.

1687 Gentilism & Judaism (1881) 94 The old verse so much observed by Countrey-people: ‘If Paul's day be faire and cleare It will betyde a happy yeare.’

1846 Proverbs relating to Seasons, & c. 24 If St. Paul's day be fine and clear, It doth betide a happy year; But if by chance it then should rain, It will make dear all kinds of grain.

1975 Folklore of Isle of Man xiii. In January the testing day was .. the 25th: St. Paul's Day stormy and windy, Famine in the world and great death of mankind, Paul's day fair and clear, Plenty of corn and meal in the world.

**weather lore**

SAINT Swithin's day, if thou be fair, for forty days it will remain; Saint Swithin's day, if thou bring rain, for forty days it will remain

St. Swithin (or Swithin) was a bishop of Winchester. He died in 862 and his feast-day is 15 July. The form of the rhyme varies.

1600 Every man out of Humour 1. iii. O, here, S. Swithin's the xv day, variable weather, for the most part raine ... Why, it should raine fortie daies after, now, more or lesse, it was a rule held afore I was able to hold a plough.

1697 Poor Robin's Almanack July B2 In this month is St. Swithin's day; On which, if that it rain, they say, Full forty days after it will, Or more or less some rain distill.

1846 Proverbs relating to Seasons, & c. 52 St. Swithin's day, if thou dost rain, For forty days it will...
remain: St. Swithin's day, if thou be fair, For forty days't will rain na mair.
1892 Old Woman's Outlook 169 St. Swithin's promise is by no means infallible, whether for wet or fair weather. In Gloucestershire, they prefer a shower on his day, and call it christening the apples; but Hampshire . . hold[s] that—if Swithun's day be fair and clear, It betides a happy year; If Swithun's day be dark with rain, Then will be dear all sorts of grain.
1978 Calender of Country Customs viii. Even today innumerable people take note of the weather on St. Swithin's Day, 15 July ... St. Swithin's Day, if thou be fair, For forty days it will remain. St. Swithin's Day, if thou bring rain, For forty days it will remain.

weather lore
On SAINT Thomas the Divine kill all turkeys, geese, and swine.
The feast-day of St. Thomas the Apostle has been traditionally celebrated on 21 December in the West.

calendar lore
saint
see also the DEVIL was sick, the Devil a saint would be; the GREATER the sinner, the greater the saint; YOUNG saint, old devil.
Help you to SALT, help you to sorrow

misfortune ; superstition
Saturday
see Monday's CHILD is fair of face.
What's SAUCE for the goose is sauce for the gander
What is suitable for a woman is suitable for a man. The proverb is also occasionally used in non-sexist contexts.

men and women
HUNGER is the best sauce.

SAVE us from our friends

Now often used in this abbreviated form (see also earlier quotations).

1477 Dicts of Philosophers 127 Ther was one that praied god to kepe him from the daunger of his friendis.

1585 in Elizabeth I & her Parliament (1957) iv. There is an Italian proverb which saith, From my enemy let me defend myself; but from a pretensed friend, good Lord deliver me.

1604 Malcontent IV. ii. Now, God deliver me from my friends .. for from mine enemies I'll deliver myself.

1884 Railway Engineer V. 265 The old proverb, ‘Save us from our friends’, may be well applied to the diligent gentlemen who .. toiled through labyrinths of reports since 1877, to dress up a few exaggerated cases against the brake.

1979 Proceed to Judgement 140 Heaven save us from our friends!

a STITCH in time saves nine.

a PENNY saved is a penny earned.

DO as I say, not as I do; when in DOUBT, do nowt; what EVERYBODY says must be true; HEAR all, see all, say nowt; what MANCHESTER says today, the rest of England says tomorrow; NEVER say never; also SAID.

Who SAYS A must say B

Only recorded in English from North American sources. Cf. Du. wie a zegt, moet ook b zeggen.

1838 Charcoal Sketches 190 Not so easy as you think ... If you say A, they'll make you say B.

1988 Washington Times 16 Sept. F3 But who says ‘A’ must say ‘B’, Mr. McCarthy. You can't talk about victims and caring and knowing cows individually while, at the same time, you treat carrots as nobodies!

1996 National Review 2 Sept. 103 Yet who says A, the adage goes, must say B. If you are going to deny something, you may find yourself having to deny it ardently.

whosoever DRAWS his sword against the prince must throw the scabbard away.

GOOD men are scarce.

an APE'S an ape, a varlet's varlet, though they be clad in silk or scarlet.

the BEST-laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley.

EXPERIENCE keeps a dear school; never tell TALES out of school.

HELL hath no fury like a woman scorned.

You SCRATCH my back, I'll scratch yours

Similar in sentiment to one HAND washes the other (see quot. 1961).
All Men Mad 18 Scratch me, says one, and I'll scratch thee.

Letter 27 Jan. in Maine: Guide ‘down East’ (1937) III. 363 You scratch my back and I will scratch your back.

Manchester Guardian Wekly 10 Aug. 104/1 He goes on to spoil the effect by accusing Liberals of hypocrisy and being false to the principle of justice embodied in the phrase ‘Scratch me and I'll scratch you.’

Catch-22 (1962) iv. 33 A little grease is what makes this world go round. One hand washes the other. Know what I mean? You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours.

Times 27 Jan. 43/1 In theory, racing's addiction to the thin drip of a levy on betting turnover should mean that bookmakers and the sport's administrators approach each other in a mutual spirit of: 'You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours.'

reciprocity

SCRATCH a Russian and you find a Tartar

The proverb is also used allusively, especially of other nationalities. Cf. Fr. grattez le Russe et vous trouverez le Tartare, scratch the Russian and you will find the Tartar (attributed to Napoleon).

Very true the saying is, ‘Scratch the Russian and find the Tartar.’

They say, if you scratch a Russian you always find the Tartar beneath.

Scratch a Puerto Rican and you find a Spaniard underneath, so the language and home customs of Spain prevail here.

Until a short time ago the aphorism, ‘Scratch a Russian and you find a Tartar,’ was the sum of British comprehension of the Russian character.

Scratch a Pole and you find a Pole, even if he is Communist.

Mao .. discovered many years ago that you only had to scratch a Russian Communist to find a Tatar.

human nature, national characteristics

Scripture

see the DEVIL can quote Scripture for his own ends.

He that would go to sea for pleasure, would go to hell for a pastime

A sailors' proverb.

Shentlemens vot goes to sea for pleasure woulde go to hell for pastime.

He gave a half-laugh and muttered the old formula about 'the man who would go to sea for pleasure, going to hell for a pastime!'

‘He who would go to sea for pleasure, would go to hell for a pastime’ is an attempt at heavy satire.

What made you come to sea anyway?’ 'Search me … To amuse myself, I suppose. 'Well, a man who'd go to sea for fun'd go to hell for a pastime … It's an old sailor expression.'

Just before Steven Callahan set out to sail alone from Penzance to Martinique, a Cornish seaman warned him that ‘a fella who’d go to sea for pleasure’d sure go to hell for pastime.’

The SEA refuses no river


Trip to New England 4 It often puts me in mind of the old Proverb, The Sea and the Gallows refuses
1850 White Jacket II. xliii. ‘The gallows and the sea refuse nothing,’ is a very old sea saying.
1969 Tales I told my Mother 124 The sea refuses no river.

sea
see also there are as good FISH in the sea as ever came out of it.

sea-maws
see KEEP your own fish-guts for your own sea-maws.

search
see on the FIRST of March, the crows begin to search.

SECOND thoughts are best
Cf. EURIPIDES Hippolytus l. 436 αὐτά όν τοπία χαίρουν τα ἀφράτα, the second thoughts are invariably wiser.

 Chronicles 438 Oftentimes it chanceth, that latter thoughts are better advised than the first.

1581 tr. S. Guazzo's Civil Conversation i. 23 I finde verified that Prouerbe, That the second thoughts are euer the best.

1681 Spanish Friar II. 22 Second thoughts, they say, are best: I'll consider of it once again.

1813 Letter 11 Dec. (1974) III. 196 In composition I do not think second thoughts are best, though second expressions may improve the first ideas.

1908 Beau Brummel I. i. Second thoughts seem to be always the best.

1981 Xanadu Talisman v. That was my first thought … But second thoughts are always best.

prudence

secret
see THREE may keep a secret, if two of them are dead.

What you SEE is what you get
Of American origin: often shortened to the acronym wysiwyg (especially in computing) of a system capable of reproducing the screen format of text on a printout.

1971 New York Times 14 Nov. 17 ‘What you see, is what you get’ .. is one of those recurring gag lines from the Flip Wilson Show that has quickly drifted into the language, all but become a household expression.

1983 To die in Beverly Hills vii. The teleprinter raced as it printed the names of arrestees nicknamed Bones. ‘What you see is what you get,’ she said, squirming to point her breasts. ‘I mean the printout of course.’

1990 Washington Post 10 Sept. (Business Section) 59 The lenders who would lend to anyone who said ‘real estate’ aren't lending now. So we aren't going to build any more product. What you see is what you get.

1997 Spectator 19 July 20 I am an old woman .. and this is how I look. What you see is what you get.

appearance, significant

SEE no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil
The proverb is conventionally represented by three monkeys covering their eyes, ears, and mouth respectively with their hands.

1926 Army & Navy Stores Catalogue 197 The three wise monkeys. ‘Speak no evil, see no evil, hear no evil.’

1939 Man who didn't Answer viii. ‘Hear no evil, see no evil and speak no evil’ was all right in its place, but Matt knew .. they gossiped as much there as in any other smallish town.
It's the sort of thing they want done but do not want to know about. See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil.

But they were as useless as the three proverbial monkeys: hear no, see no, and speak no evil.

Good SEED makes a good crop
The obverse is found earlier in 1492 Dialogue of Salomon & Marcolphus (1892) 5 He that sowyth chaf shall porely mowe.

To be a good man it is also expedient Of good Parents to be begotten and borne ... Commonly of good Seed procedeth good Corne.

If the Seed he Sowes be good .. his Crop is according; .. If he Sows Tares .. will he expect Wheat?

Seed-time's pretty sure to come around ... And good seed makes a good crop.

The BLOOD of the martyrs is the seed of the Church; PARSLEY seed goes nine times to the Devil.

ONE year's seeding makes seven years' weeding.

SEEING is believing

Seeing is leeving.

Seeing is beleeving.

Seeing is Believing.

Seeing is believing, says the proverb ... Though, of all our senses, the eyes are the most easily deceived, we believe them in preference to any other evidence.

Seek and you shall find' does not, it seems, always extend to that [health] of the body.

There is danger in the saying, 'Seek and ye shall find.'
SEEM
see BE what you would seem to be.

SEEN
see CHILDREN should be seen and not heard.

SELF-praise is no recommendation
Cf. L. laus in proprio ore sordescit, praise in one's own mouth is offensive.

1826 Weekly Register 17 June 743 In general it is a good rule .. that self-praise is no commendation.
1853 Bleak House lv. Self-praise is no recommendation, but I may say for myself that I am not so bad a man of business.

1967 & English Proverbs Explained 137 ‘I admit I didn't score any of the goals, but it was largely due to me that we won the game.’ ‘Self-praise is no recommendation.’

boasting
SELF-preservation is the first law of nature
Cf. CICERO De Finibus IV. x. 25 primamque ex natura hanc habere appetitionem, ut conservemus nosmet ipsos, by nature our first impulse is to preserve ourselves.

1631 Biathanatos (1646) I. ii. It is onely upon this reason, that selfe-preservation is of Naturall Law.
1681 Spanish Friar IV. ii. Self-preservation is the first of Laws: .. When Subjects are oppress'd by Kings, They justifie Rebellion by that Law.

1821 Pirate I. v. Triptolemus .. had a reasonable share of that wisdom which looks towards self-preservation as the first law of nature.

1952 Top of Heap xvii. Loyalty is a fine thing .. but self-preservation is the first law of nature.

1975 Black Tower vii. What it amounted to was that he'd do a great deal for dear Maggie but that self-preservation was the first law of nature.

sell
see BUY in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest.

seller
see the BUYER has need of a hundred eyes, the seller of but one.

send
see never send a BOY to do a man's job; GOD never sends mouths but He sends meat; GOD sends meat, but the Devil sends cooks.

SEPTEMBER blow soft, till the fruit's in the loft

1571 Husbandry (rev. ed.) F2 September blowe soft, Till fruite be in loft.
1732 Gnomologia no. 6214 September, blow soft, Till the Fruit's in the Loft.
1906 Country Diary of Edwardian Lady (1977) 121 September blow soft,—Till the fruit's in the loft.
1928 Daily Mail 3 Sept. 10 ‘September blow soft till the apple's in the loft’ is what we desire of this traditionally beautiful month.

weather lore

servant
see ENGLAND is the paradise of women; FIRE is a good servant but a bad master.

serve
see you cannot serve GOD and Mammon; NO man can serve two masters.

If you would be well SERVED, serve yourself
Very similar to if you WANT a thing done well, do it yourself.

1659 English & Italian Dict. 39 Who hath a mind to any thing let him go himself.

1706 Spanish & English Dict. s.v. Querer. If you would be well serv'd, serve your self.

1871 Memoir of Jane Austen (ed. 2) ii. ‘If you would be well served, serve yourself.’ Some gentlemen took pleasure in being their own gardeners.

1981 Times 28 Apr. 15 Absurd that the important things in one's life should be made by another person—‘One is never so well served as by oneself.’

**efficiency and inefficiency ; self-help**

**served**

see also FIRST come, first served; PAY beforehand was never well served; YOUTH must be served.

**session**

see HOME is home, as the Devil said when he found himself in the Court of Session.

**set**

see set a BEGGAR on horseback, and he'll ride to the Devil; SOW dry and set wet; set a THIEF to catch a thief.

**seven**

see KEEP a thing seven years and you'll always find a use for it; you should KNOW a man seven years before you stir his fire; ONE year's seeding makes seven years' weeding; PARSLEY seed goes nine times to the Devil; RAIN before seven, fine before eleven; SIX hours' sleep for a man, seven for a woman, and eight for a fool.

**shadow**

see COMING events cast their shadows before; OLD sins cast long shadows.

**shame**

see (noun) FOOL me once, shame on you; (verb) TELL the truth and shame the Devil.

**shared**

see a TROUBLE shared is a trouble halved.

**The SHARPER the storm, the sooner it's over**

Cf. SENECA Natural Questions VII. ix. procellae, quanto plus habent virium, tanto minus temporis, the harder storms are, the shorter they last.

1872 Diary 9 June (1977) II. 207 Mrs. Vaughan will have a good family soon. Her children come fast. But the harder the storm the sooner 'tis over.

1913 Folk-Lore XXIV. 76 The sharper the storm, the sooner it's over.

**weather lore**

**sheep**

see a BLEATING sheep loses a bite; one might as well be HANGED for a sheep as a lamb.

**shepherd**

see RED sky at night shepherd's delight.

**You cannot SHIFT an old tree without it dying**

1518 tr. Mancinus' Mirror of Good Manners G4 V An old tre transposed shall fynde smal auaantage.

1670 English Proverbs 22 Remove an old Tree, and it will wither to death.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 284 Remove an old Tree, and it will wither. Spoken by a Man who is loth to leave a Place in his advanc'd years, in which he has long lived.

1831 Political & Occasional Poems (1888) 166 I'm near three-score; you ought to know You can't transplant so old a tree.
‘You’ve cleaved to your own parts pretty middlin’ close, Ralph.’ ‘Can’t shift an old tree ‘thout it dyin’.

**habit ; old age**

see *happy is the BRIDE that the sun shines on; MAKE hay while the sun shines.*

**shining**

see *the SUN loses nothing by shining into a puddle.*

**Do not spoil the SHIP for a ha'porth of tar**

*Ship* is a dialectal pronunciation of *sheep*, and the original literal sense of the proverb was ‘do not allow sheep to die for the lack of a trifling amount of tar’, tar being used to protect sores an wounds on sheep from flies. *Hog* (quotls. 1623 and 1670) seems to have been understood by Ray (quot. 1670 note) as a swine, but it was also a widely used dialect term for a young sheep older than a lamb but before its first shearing. The current form of this proverb was standard by the mid-nineteenth century. The metaphorical phrase *to spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar* is also found.

- **1623** *Remains concerning Britain* (ed. 3) 265 *A man will not lose a hog, for a ha'porth [halfpennyworth] of tarre.*
- **1631** *Advertisements for Planters* XIII. 30 *Rather .. lose ten sheepe, than be at the charge of halfe penny worth of Tarre.*
- **1670** *English Proverbs* 103 *Ne’re lose a hog for a half-penny-worth of tarre [(ed. 2) 154 Some have it, lose not a sheep, &c. Indeed tarr is more used about sheep than swine].*
- **1861** *Cloister & Hearth* I. i. *Never tyn [lose] the ship for want of a bit of tar.*
- **1869** *English Proverbs* 432 *To spoil the ship for a halfpennyworth of tar. In Cornwall, I heard a different version, which appeared to me to be more consistent with probability: ‘Don't spoil the sheep for a ha'porth of tar.’*
- **1910** *Spectator* 19 Feb. 289 *The ratepayers .. are accused of .. cheeseparing, of spoiling the ship for a ha'p'orth of tar.*
- **1980** *Marsh Blood* iii. *Well, he says, don't want to spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar and could come in useful having the extra private bath.

**meanness**

*ship*

see also *one HAND for oneself and one for the ship; LITTLE leaks sink the ship; a WOMAN and a ship ever want mending.*

*shirt*

see *NEAR is my shirt, but nearer is my skin.*

**From SHIRTSLEEVES to shirtsleeves in three generations**

Shirtsleeves denote the need to work hard for one’s living. This saying has been attributed to A. Carnegie (1835–1919), manufacturer and philanthropist, but is not found in his published writings. *From CLOGS to clogs is only three generations expresses the same idea.*

- **1907** *True & False Democracy* ii. *No artificial class distinctions can long prevail in a society like ours [in the US] of which it is truly said to be often but three generations ‘from shirt-sleeves to shirt-sleeves.’*
- **1957** in *Psychological Review* LXIV. 125 *From shirtsleeves to shirtsleeves in three generations: we are back with the founding and founded content of the pre-Gestalt Gestalters.*

**family ; poverty**

If the SHOE fits, wear it
A predominantly US variant of *if the CAP fits, wear it.*

1773 *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury* 17 May Why should Mr. Vanderbeek apply a general comparison to himself? Let those whom the shoe fits wear it.

1876 *Century of Gossip* 125 *If the shoe fits you, you can wear it a little while, Jack; but we won't quarrel about that.*

1934 *Emerald Murder Trap* 260 Some one, devilishly inspired, had made a noose in the end and the knot was what is so widely known as a Hangman's knot … ‘There's an old saying, you know; if the shoe fits, wear it. The words might be made to apply to knots, I suppose!’

1980 *No Country for Young Men* vi. *I was talking in a general way, Judith, but of course if the shoe fits.*

The SHOEMAKER'S son always goes barefoot

A skilled or knowledgeable person commonly neglects to give his own family the benefit of his expertise. Also used in wider contexts.

1546 *Dialogue of Proverbs* I. xi. E1V *But who is wurs shod, than the shoemakers wyfe, With shops full of newe shapen shoes all hir lyfe?*

1773 *Spiritual Quixote* I. III. ii. *The Shoe-maker's wife often goes in ragged shoes … Although there had been a [Methodist] Society begun here by Mr. Whitfield, yet .. the people of Gloucester are not much the better for having had so great a Prophet born amongst them.*

1876 *Life of Scotch Naturalist* xvii. *His large family .. were all .. well shod, notwithstanding the Scottish proverb to the contrary. ‘The Smith's meer [mare] and the shoemaker's bairns are aye the worst shod.’*

1981 *Saint Peter's Fair* 30 *Spruce in his dress, but down at heel, Cadfael noticed—proof of the old saying that the shoemaker's son is always the one who goes barefoot!*


shoemaker

see also *let the COBBLER stick to his last.*

shop

see *KEEP your shop and your shop will keep you.*

shopkeeper

see *the ENGLISH are a nation of shopkeepers.*

shorn

see *GOD tempers the wind to the shorn lamb; many go out for WOOL and come home shorn.*

A SHORT horse is soon curried

A slight task is soon completed. *Curried* here means ‘groomed with a curry-comb.’

c 1350 *Douce MS* 52 no. 17 *Short hors is son j-curried.*

a 1530 *Commonplace Book* (EETS) 128 *A shorte hors is son curried.*

1732 *Gnomologia* no. 395 *A short Horse is soon curried.*

1820 *Abbot* I. xi. *A short tale is soon told—and a short horse soon curried.*

1939 *By Shores of Silver Lake* xxx. *A short horse is soon curried. This is our tightest squeeze yet, .. but it's only a beginning.*

1948 *Dinner at Antoine's* xx. *That's a short horse and soon curried. Let's go see this Captain Murphy and put an end to it.*
SHORT reckonings make long friends
A short reckoning is the speedy settlement of an account.

1530 Work for Householders A4 The commune prouerbe is that ofte rekenynge holdest lange felawship.

1641 Scottish Proverbs (STS) no. 668 Oft compenting makes good friends.
1673 Counsellor Manners xciii. Short reckonings (we say) make long friends.
1842 Handy Andy viii. There must be no nonsense about the wedding … Just marry her off, and take her home. Short reckonings make long friends.
1918 Man in Grey 15 Short reckonings make long friends. I'll have a couple of hundred francs now.

business ; punctuality

short
see also ART is long and life is short; LONG foretold, long last.

shortest
see BARNABY bright, Barnaby bright, the longest day and the shortest night; the LONGEST way round is the shortest way home.

shoulder
see you cannot put an OLD head on young shoulders.

show
see TIME will tell.

shower
see APRIL showers bring forth May flowers.

SHROUDS have no pockets

1854 On Lessons in Proverbs (ed. 2) v. With an image Dantesque in its vigour, that ‘a man shall carry nothing away with him when he dieth’, take this Italian, Our last robe, that is our winding sheet, is made without pockets.
1909 Epistle to Ephesians 41 There is nothing that is truly our wealth which remains outside of us, and can be separated from us. ‘Shrouds have no pockets.’
1961 Spoilt Kill II. 20 ‘He had a win on the pools and it's burning him.’ ‘Shrouds don't need pockets, love,’ he said with a grin.
1983 Sleepers of Erin xxviii. I remembered the ugly thunk of Gerald's arrows as they hit the castle rider. I might even win the torc back, but there's no pockets in shrouds.

death ; money

A SHUT mouth catches no flies

1599 Spanish Grammar 83 In a closed vp mouth a flie cannot get in.
1640 Outlandish Proverbs no. 219 Into a mouth shut flies flie not.
1659 Appeal of Injured Innocence I. 12 The Spanish Proverb .. is necessary in dangerous .. Times, Where the mouth is shut no Fly doth enter.
1742 Poor Richard's Almanack (Feb.) Speak and speed: the close mouth catches no flies.
1897 In Kedar's Tents xxiii. Concha, remembering .. that no flies enter a shut mouth, was silent.
1926 City of Sacred Well xv. Tell each of them that a shut mouth catches no flies. We may find .. nothing .. and .. we do not want the other men laughing at us behind our backs.
1970 Brendan Behan i. A shut mouth will catch no flies.

discretion ; speech and silence
shut
see also a DOOR must either be shut or open; when ONE door shuts, another opens; it is too late to shut the STABLE-door after the horse has bolted.

shy
see ONCE bitten, twice shy.

sick
see the DEVIL was sick, the Devil a saint would be; HOPE deferred makes the heart sick.

side
see it is BEST to be on the safe side; the BREAD never falls but on its buttered side; the GRASS is always greener on the other side of the fence; PROVIDENCE is always on the side of the big battalions; there are TWO sides to every question.

sight
see in vain the NET is spread in the sight of the bird; OUT of sight, out of mind.

SILENCE is a woman's best garment
Cf. SOPHOCLES Ajax l. 293 ἔνας μο Διόνυσος, silence is a woman's ornament. The passage of St. Paul alluded to in quot. 1539 is I CORINTHIANS xiv. 34 (AV) Let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak.

1539 tr. Erasmus' Adages 50 Mulierem ornat silentium. Silence garnysheth a woman .. whych thynge also the Apostle Paule requyreth.

1659 Proverbs (English) 11 Silence the best ornament of a woman.

1732 Gnomologia no. 4166 Silence is a fine Jewel for a Woman; but it's little worn.

1977 Five-Minute Marriage iv. Quiet, miss! Silence is a woman's best garment.

SILENCE is golden
Sometimes in the fuller version SPEECH is silver, but silence is golden.

1865 Eastern England II. ix. Silence is golden, says the proverb. We apprehend the full significance .. in some lone hamlet situate amid a ‘thousand fields.’

1980 Spy Game xxv. ‘I'll tell you the rest .. on the way back.’ He sealed her lips with a finger. ‘Meanwhile, silence is golden.’

SILENCE means consent
This is not a principle accepted in modern English law. However, Sir Thomas More (1478–1535) is said to have riposted with the Latin maxim when asked at his trial why he kept silent when asked to acknowledge the King's supremacy over the Church. Cf. L. que tacet consentire videtur, he who is silent seems to consent.

1380 Select English Works (1871) III. 349 Oo [one] maner of consent is, whanne a man is stille and tellith not.

1591 Endymion v. iii. Silence, Madame, consents.

1616–30 Partial Law (1908) v. iv. ‘I will nothing say’ .. ‘Then silence gives consent.’

1847 Friends in Council ix. I have known a man .. bear patiently .. a serious charge which a few lines would have entirely answered.’ .. ‘Silence does not give consent in these cases.’

1914 Wise Virgins v. He .. did not speak. ‘I assume that silence means consent,’ said Arthur.
1986 Dead Liberty ii. ‘Silence is consent,’ said the superintendent. His knowledge of law had a magpie quality about it and he had picked up the phrase from somewhere.

**speech and silence**

silence

see also **SPEECH is silver, but silence is golden.**

You can't make a SILK purse out of a sow's ear

☐1518 Eclogues (EETS) v. 360 None can .. make goodly silke of a gotes flece.

1579 Ephemerides of Phialo 62\(^\text{v}\)Seekinge .. too make a silke purse of a Sowes eare, that when it shoulde close, will not come togetheer.

1672 English & Latin Proverbs 44 You cannot make a .. silk purse of a sows ear; a scholar of a blockhead.

1834 Peter Simple I. xii. The master .. having been brought up in a collier, he could not be expected to be very refined .. ‘It was impossible to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.’

1915 Rainbow i. You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, as he told his mother very early, with regard to himself.

1959 Eating People is Wrong ii. For the mass of men there is not too much to be said or done; you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.

**possibility and impossibility**

silk

see also **an APE'S an ape, a varlet's a varlet, though they be clad in silk or scarlet.**

silly

see **ASK a silly question and you get a silly answer.**

silver

see **every CLOUD has a silver lining; SPEECH is silver, but silence is golden.**

It's a SIN to steal a pin

☐1875 Proverbial Folk-Lore 129 It is a sin To steal a pin, as we, all of us, used to be informed in the nursery.

1945 Lark Rise xiii. Children were taught to ‘know it's a sin to steal a pin’ .. when they brought home some doubtful finding.

1956 Unappointed Rounds xvii. I brought that boy up .. and I taught him to be honest… I used to say to him. ‘Tis a sin to steal a penny or a pin,’ and he'd say it after me.

**honesty and dishonesty ; theft**

sin

see also **CHARITY covers a multitude of sins; OLD sins cast long shadows.**

sincerest

see **IMITATION is the sincerest form of flattery.**

**SING before breakfast, cry before night**

Also occurs in reverse form; see quot. 1954.

☐1530 L'éclaircissement de la Langue Française 404 You waxe mery this morning god gyue grace you wepe nat or [before] nyght.

1611 Dict. French & English s.v. Soir, Some laugh amornings who ere night shed teares.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 332 They that laugh in the Morning may greet [weep] e'er Night.

1940 Our First Murder xii. ‘You remember the saying. “Sing before breakfast—”’ ‘Oh dear—“cry before night.”’
Cry before breakfast, sing before supper.

see also little BIRDS that can sing and won't sing must be made to sing; the OPERA isn't over till the fat lady sings.

BEAUTY draws with a single hair; the LONGEST journey begins with a single step.

MISFORTUNES never come singly.

LITTLE leaks sink the ship.

the GREATER the sinner, the greater the saint.

where MACGREGOR sits is the head of the table.

It is ill SITTING at Rome and striving with the Pope

Ye may not sit in Rome and strive with the Pape. It is hard to sit in Rome, and strive against the Pope. It is foolish to strive with our Governours, Landlords, or those under whose Distress we are. Nebuchadnezzar's palace was not precisely the place to dispute with Nebuchadnezzar.

it is as CHEAP sitting as standing.

DESPERATE diseases must have desperate remedies.

SIX hours' sleep for a man, seven for a woman, and eight for a fool.

The Student sleepe six Houres, the Traueller seuen; the Workeman eight, and all Laizie Bodies sleepe nine houres and more.

John Wesley .. considered that five hours' sleep was enough for him or any man .. The old English proverb, so often in the mouth of George III, was ‘six hours for a man, seven for a woman, and eight for a fool.’

Is there not a proverb that a man requires six hours' sleep, a woman seven, a child eight and only a fool more? If this be true, thousands of great men were, and are, fools.

NEAR is my shirt, but nearer is my skin.

BEAUTY is only skin-deep.

LIFE isn't all beer and skittles.

If the SKY falls we shall catch larks

‘In ridicule of those who talk of doing many things, if certain other things, not likely, were to happen’:

1445 Peter Idley's *Instructions to his Son* (1935) I. 178 We shall kacche many larkis whan heuene doith falle.

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs I. iv. B1v*When the sky faith we shal haue larks.*

1670 English Proverbs 143 *If the sky falls we shall catch larks.*

1721 Scottish Proverbs 343 *What if the Lift [sky] fall, you may gather Laverocks [larks].*

1914 Misalliance p. xxx. *I cannot be put off by the news that our system would be perfect if it were worked by angels .. just as I do not admit that if the sky fell we should all catch larks.*

1950 in Month Oct. 234 *If .. the total content of time were spread out before me .. I could do what the Historicist says he is doing …Yes; and if the sky fell we should all catch larks.*

### impossibility

**sky**

see also *RED sky at night shepherd's delight; WINTER never rots in the sky.*

**slave**

see *BETTER be an old man's darling, than a young man's slave.*

**sleep**

see *one HOUR'S sleep before midnight is worth two after; SIX hours' sleep for a man, seven for a woman, and eight for a fool.*

**Let SLEEPING dogs lie**

Cf. early 14th-cent. Fr. *n'esveillez pas lou chien qui dort*, wake not the sleeping dog.

1385 Troilus & Criseyde III. 764 *It is nought good a slepyng hound to wake.*

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs I. x. D1v*It is euill wakyng of a slepyng dog.*

1681 Whigs' Supplication II. 27 *It's best To let a sleeping mastiff rest.*

1824 Redgauntlet I. xi. *Take my advice, and speer [ask] as little about him as he does about you. Best to let sleeping dogs lie.*

1976 Wilt xx. *He would be better off sticking to indifference and undisclosed affection. ‘Let sleeping dogs lie,’ he muttered.*

1996 Death's Autograph ix. 98 *‘They don't have to prove it! He's dead. It can't do him any harm now.’ She said distinctly, ‘Let sleeping dogs lie, then.’*

### action and inaction; busybodies

**sleeve**

see *STRETCH your arm no further than your sleeve will reach.*

**A SLICE off a cut loaf isn't missed**

1592 Titus Andronicus II. i. 87 *More water glideth by the mill Than wots [knows] the miller of; and easy it is Of a cut loaf to steal a shive [slice].*

1639 Paræmiologia Anglo-Latina 118 *'Tis safe taking a shive of a cut loafe.*

1732 Gnomologia no. 3012 *It is safe taking a slice off a Cut Loaf.*

1901 Wit & Wisdom of South Lancashire Dialect 11 A *shoive off a cut loaf's never miss't. (A satirical remark.)*

1981 Old Priory v. iii. *I went into this with my eyes open and a slice off a cut loaf ain't missed.*

### gains and losses

**slip**

see *there's MANY a slip between cup and lip.*

**SLOW but sure**

www.EnglishPro.ir
Sure means properly ‘sure-footed, deliberate’ and is frequently contrasted with slow as in 1562 G. LEGH Accidence of Armoury 97 Although the Asse be slowe, yet is he sure. The related saying slow and steady wins the race is also illustrated here.

1692 Fables of Aesop ccclxix. Slow and sure in these cases, is good counsel.

1762 Poems 38 You may deride my awkward pace, But slow and steady wins the race.

1859 Self-Help xi. Provided the dunce has persistency and application, he will inevitably head the cleverer fellow without these qualities. Slow but sure, wins the race.

1894 Folk-Phrases 22 Slow and steady wins the race.

1947 Manchester Fourteen Miles xvii. No dressmaker .. ever learnt her trade in a hurry. ‘Slow but sure’ was the beginner's motto.

1985 Death & Blintzes xxi. But you know how we work, slow but sure. Getting the facts first and then narrowing things down.

patience and impatience; ways and means

slowly

see make HASTE slowly; the MILLS of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small.

SMALL choice in rotten apples

1593 Taming of Shrew 1. i. 129 Faith, as you say, there's small choice in rotten apples.

1931 Umbrella Murder iv. ‘I'm going upstairs, and you can come with me, or stay behind, as you choose.’ ‘Small choice in rotten apples.’

1958 Dishonor among Thieves xxiii. It's a choice of rotten apples.

choices; necessity

SMALL is beautiful

1973 (title) Small is beautiful.


1991 Washington Post 13 Jan. G8 In the 19th century, some classical composers forgot (if they had ever known) the principle that ‘small is beautiful.’

1997 Washington Post 11 May H1 Small is beautiful—at least, it may be beautiful again in the near future. Lately, small stocks have been pretty ugly.

great and small

small

see also the BEST things come in small packages; LITTLE things please little minds; there's no great LOSS without some gain; the MILLS of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small.

smell

see MONEY has no smell.

smock

see NEAR is my kirtle, but nearer is my smock.

No SMOKE without fire

Cf. late 13th-cent. Fr. nul feu est sens fumee ne fumee sens feu, no fire is without smoke, nor smoke without fire; c 1375 J. BARBOUR Bruce (EETS) IV. 81 And thair may no man fire sa covir, [Bot] low or reyk [flame or smoke] sall it discovir.

c 1422 Works (EETS) I. 134 Wher no fyr maad is may no smoke arys.

1592 French Alphabet ii. 39 No smoke without fire.

1655 Church Hist. Britain ii. x. There was no Smoak but some Fire: either he was dishonest, or indiscreet.
He knew He was Right. He considered that Emily Trevelyan had behaved badly. He constantly repeated the old adage, that there was no smoke without fire.

Night of Errors iv. ‘Chimneys! Who the deuce cares whether there’s smoke from every chimney in the house.’ ‘I do. No smoke without fire.’

Dead Liberty v. ‘No smoke without fire.’ said the detective-constable largely. ‘Smoke signals can be misread,’ countered Sloan.

public opinion; rumour
smooth
see the COURSE of true love never did run smooth.
so
see so many MEN, so many opinions.
sober
see WANTON kittens make sober cats.

A SOFT answer turneth away wrath
With allusion to PROVERBS xv. 1 (AV) A soft answer turneth away wrath. Cf. c 1395 WYCLIF Bible (1850) Proverbs xv. 1 A soft answere brekith ire.
□ c 1445 Peter Idley's Instructions to his Son (1935) I. 84 A softe worde swageth [assuages] Ire.
1693 Wonders of Invisible World 60 We would use to one another none but the Soft Answers, which Turn away Wrath.

Letter 19 July (1912) 414 A soft answer turneth away wrath. There is no shield against wrongs so effectual as an unresisting temper.

Ulysses 597 A soft answer turns away wrath.

Clutch of Vipers vi. ‘Yes, sir!’ Soft answer, no wrath.

SOFTLY, softly, catchee monkey

□ 1907 Cassell's Book of Quotations 849 (Proverbs), ‘Softly, softly,’ caught the monkey—(Negro).
1939 Veron Mystery xx. ‘Softly talkee, catchee monkey,’ Hopley summed up the method thus prescribed to him.
1941 Death of Mr. Lomas iv. 80 ‘Managed to dig out a suitable motive for Steadfall?’ the Chief Constable asked slyly. ‘I haven’t done with him yet,’ came the slow reply. ‘Softly, softly, catchee monkee ...
1942 Darkness falls from Air x. Softly catch monkey… That’s the answer.
1962 Deadline xiii. I didn't pursue it any further then. Softly, softly, catchee monkey—and I hated that phrase.
1978 One Policeman's Story vii. They took with them the unique motto of the Lancashire Constabulary Training School, ‘Softly, softly, Catchee Monkey’ which inspired the new programme's title, ‘Softly, Softly.’

guile; patience and impatience; ways and means
softly
see also FAIR and softly goes far in a day.

What the SOLDIER said isn't evidence

□ 1837 Pickwick Papers III. xxxiii. ‘You must not tell us what the soldier .. said, sir,’ interposed the
judge; ‘it's not evidence.’

1931 Red Stain xii. ‘It was true!’ .. ‘True to you, .. but you have no means of proving it to us. What the soldier said is not evidence.’

1971 Season of Snows & Sins ix. ‘There is an English mot about a poilu—no? .. What le poilu say cannot be in Court—is that it?’ Henry grinned. ‘What the soldier said isn't evidence.’

rumour; soldiers; truth

soldier

see also the FIRST duty of a soldier is obedience; OLD soldiers never die.

If you're not part of the SOLUTION, you're part of the problem

1968 Speech (in , Eldridge Cleaver (1969) 32) What we're saying today is that you're either part of the solution or you're part of the problem.

1975 History Man v. ‘If you're not the solution,’ says Peter Madden, ‘you're part of the problem.’ ‘It would be terribly arrogant of me to believe I was the solution to anything.’

1977 Serial xxvi. Listen, don’t you realize if you're not part of the solution you're part of the problem.

1985 National Review (US) 22 Feb. 15 We must fight ‘hunger’, but never Communism, even when Communism itself is the direct cause of hunger. Well, as our redicals used to say, if you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem.

assistance; trouble

some

see you WIN a few, you lose a few.

You don't get SOMETHING for nothing

A variant of this, originally from the north country, runs you don't get owt [anything] for nowt [nothing]. Cf. 1845 DISRAELI Sybil I. i. V. To do nothing and get something formed a boy's ideal of a manly career.

1870 Struggles & Triumphs viii. When people expect to get ‘something for nothing’ they are sure to be cheated.

1947 Manchester Fourteen Miles xiii. No stranger, she declared emphatically, ever sent to another stranger ‘summat for nowt’. It would .. be against nature.

1952 Double Jeopardy i. You don't get something for nothing, even in medicine. Perizone has a peculiar secondary effect. It releases all inhibitions.

1979 Guardian 18 June 10 Stravinsky and Auden .. [are] saying ‘You don't get something for nothing.’ If you want the lovely things .. you can't have them unless you're prepared to pay for them.

1979 Church Times 29 June 13 You don't get owt for nowt.

reciprocity

SOMETHING is better than nothing

Similar in sentiment to HALF a loaf is better than no bread. Cf. early 15th-cent. Fr. mieulx vault aucun bien que neant, something is better than nothing.

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs I. ix. D1 And by this proverbe appereth this o [one] thyng, That alwaie somwhat is better than nothyng.

1612 tr. Cervantes' Don Quixote III. vii. I will weare it as I may: for something is better then nothing.

1842 Attorney xvii. Something is better than nothing—nothing is better than starving.

1980 Country Life 24 Apr. 1283 Mrs Smith worked out her own charitable rules: give what can be given in kind (for something is better than nothing) but never give money.
see also if **ANYTHING** can go wrong, it will.

**My SON is my son till he gets him a wife, but my daughter's my daughter all the days of her life**

**1670 English Proverbs** 53 *My son's my son, till he hath got him a wife, But my daughter's my daughter all days of her life.*

**1863 Hard Cash I. v.* ‘Oh, mamma,’ said Julia warmly, 'and do you think all the marriage in the world .. can make me lukewarm to my .. mother? .. It's a son who is a son only till he gets him a wife: but your daughter's your daughter, all-the-days-of her life."

**1943 Growing Up** iii. *She doesn't hear from him for months at a time now of course and then it's only a wire as often as not, but your son's your son till he gets him a wife, as the saying is.*

**1981 Listener** 27 Aug 206 *There's a very old-fashioned sort of saying we have in the North which goes, ‘My son is my son till he finds him a wife, but my daughter is my daughter the rest of her life.’*

- **children and parents**
- **son**

see also **CLERGYMEN’S sons always turn out badly;** the **DEVIL’S children have the Devil's luck; like FATHER, like son; the SHOEMAKER'S son always goes barefoot.**

**SOON ripe, soon rotten**

Cf. L. *cito maturum cito putridum*, quickly ripe, quickly rotten.

**1393 Piers Plowman** C. XIII. 233 *And that that rathes [earliest] rypeth, roteth most saunest.*

**1546 Dialogue of Proverbs** I. X. C4†In youth she was towarede [promising] and without euill. But soone rype sone rotten.

**1642 Naaman** x. Some indeed .. are moved to .. disdaine by their inferiours forwardnesse, called them hastings, soone ripe, soone rotten.

**1887 Life & Labour** vi. Very few prize boys and girls stand the test of wear. Prodigies are almost always uncertain; they illustrate the proverb of ‘soon ripe, soon rotten.’

**1976 O KAPLAN! My KAPLAN!** II. iii. ‘Parkhill,’ Mr. Robinson steelily murmured, ‘we may all profit from the ancient adage: “Presto maturo, presto marcio?!” Yes: “The sooner ripe, the sooner rotten!” That applies to pupils no less than fruit!’

- **youth**

The **SOONER begun, the sooner done**

**1578 Most Virtuous Susanna** (1937) l. 948 *The sooner that we do begin, the sooner is it done.*

**1872 Golden Lion** XX. ‘I suppose I might as well go to him alone,’ said Michel, groaning. ‘Well, yes … Soonest begun, soonest over.’

**1955 Queen's Knight** 46 *Sooner task's begun, sooner task is done—so it's said.*

**1987 Voyage of Chianti** vii. ‘Would you like Viola and me to begin on her book tomorrow?’ Amy asked him. ‘The sooner begun, the sooner done.’

- **beginnings and endings ; efficiency and inefficiency**
- **sore**

see the **TONGUE always returns to the sore tooth.**

- **sorrow**

see **ONE for sorrow, two for mirth; help you to SALT, help you to sorrow.**

- **sorrowing**

see he that **GOES a-borrowing goes a-sorrowing.**

- **sorry**
BETTER be safe than sorry.

sort
it takes ALL sorts to make a world.
soul
BREVITY is the soul of wit; CONFESSION is good for the soul; CORPORATIONS have neither bodies to be punished nor souls to be damned; the EYES are the window of the soul; PUNCTUALITY is the soul of business.
sound
EMPTY vessels make the most sound.

If something SOUNDS too good to be true, it probably is

1997 Washington Times 3 June B7 I'm sure you've heard the expression, ‘If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.’ Well, in the investment world, I say, ‘If something sounds too good to be true, it definitely is.’

reality and illusion
source
a STREAM cannot rise above its source.

SOW dry and set wet
Seed put into wet soil will rot before it germinates: 1580 T. TUSSER Husbandry (rev. ed.) XXXV. 38V By sowing in wet, Is little to get.
1660 Riders: 1660 British Merlin [observation on Apr.] In gardening never this rule forget To sowe dry, and set wet.
1846 Proverbs relating to Seasons, &c. 11 This rule in gardening never forget—Sow dry and plant wet.
1985 Observer 3 Mar. 51 There is an adage for March which says ‘This rule in gardening ne'er forget: Sow dry and set wet.’ March is the month when most people’s gardening year starts.

garden lore
A SOW may whistle, though it has an ill mouth for it
The ‘Lord Granard’ mentioned in quot. 1802 was George Forbes (1760–1837), sixth Earl and first Baron Granard.
1802 Letter 19 Oct in Maria Edgeworth in France & Switzerland (1979) 10 He waddles on dragging his boots along in a way that would make a pig laugh. As Lord Granard says, a pig may whistle though he has a bad mouth for it.
1846 Romance of War I. xii. ‘I dare say the Spanish sounds very singular to your ear.’ ‘Ay, sir; it puts me in mind o’an auld saying o’ my faither the piper. “A soo may whussle, but its mouth is no made for’t.”’
1927 Witch Wood xvii. Ye say he has the speech o’ a guid Christian? Weel-a-weel, a soo may whistle, though it has an ill mouth for it.

possibility and impossibility
As you SOW, so you reap
With allusion to GALATIANS vi. 7 (AV) Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.
900 Christ in Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records (1936) III. 5 Swa eal manna bearn sorgum sawath, swa eft ripath [just as each son of man sows in grief, so he also reaps].
1470 Mankind in Macro Plays (1962) I. 180 Such as thei haue sowyn, such xall thei repe.
1664 Hudibras II. ii. And look before you ere you leap; For as you sow, you are like to reap.
1871 Short Studies 2nd Ser. 10 As men have sown they must still reap. The profligate .. may recover .. peace of mind .. but no miracle takes away his paralysis.
The proverb is also used as a metaphorical phrase to sow the wind (and reap the whirlwind). With allusion to Hosea viii. 7 (AV) They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.

1583 Fruitful & Brief Discourse II. 203 They who sowed a winde, shall reap a whirlewind, but they that sowed in justice shall reape mercie.

1853 in Putnam's Magazine Apr. 386 Ask the Rev. Cream Cheese to .. preach from this text: ‘They that sow the wind shall reap the whirlwind.’

1923 Icebound III. 98 Well—what's passed is passed. Folks that plant the wind reap the whirlwind!

1981 Ironmaster xvii. I know that he who sows the wind shall reap the whirlwind. I dislodge a clod of earth, and start a landslide.

action and consequence

sow

see also (noun) you can't make a SILK purse out of a sow's ear.

span

see when ADAM delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?

SPARE at the spigot, and let out at the bunghole

The meaning is explained in quot. 1721. The spigot is the peg or pin used to regulate the flow of liquid through the tap on a cask, while the bung-hole is the (much larger) opening through which a cask is filled or emptied and which is closed by a plug (the bung).

1642 Select Italian Proverbs 50 He holdeth in at the spicket, but letteth out at the bung-hole.

1670 English Proverbs 193 Spare at the spigget, and let it out at the bung-hole.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 299 Spare at the Spigot, and let out at the Bung Hole. Spoken to them who are careful and penurious in some trifling Things, but neglective in the main Chance.

1885 How to be Happy though Married xiii. People are often saving at the wrong place ... They spare at the spigot, and let all run away at the bunghole.

1935 Rats, Lice & History xvi. It is all a part of the strange contradictions between idealism and savagery that characterize the most curious of all mammals. It leads to the extraordinary practice of what is spoken of as ‘saving at the spigot and wasting at the bung.’

1966 Wild Apples & North Wind xxviï. That might fix it now, but next summer you’d be in as bad a squeeze ... If you save at the spigot you lose at the bung.

getting and spending ; waste

SPARE the rod and spoil the child

And introduces a consequence. With allusion to Proverbs xiii. 24(AV) He that spareth his rod, hateth his son.

1000 Homilies (1843) II. 324 Se the sparath his gyrde [stick], he hatath his cild.

1377 Piers Plowman B. v. 41 Salamon seide .. Qui parcit virge, odit filium. The Englich of this latyn is .. Who-so spareth the sprynge [switch], spilleth [ruins] his children.

1560 Nice Wanton A1VHe that spareth the rod, the chyld doth hate.

1639 Paremiologia Anglo-Latina 161 Spare the rod and spoyle the child.

1876 Manchester Man II. vii. ‘Spare the rod and spoil the child’ had not been abolished from the educational code fifty-five years back.

1907 Father & Son ii. This action [caning] was justified, as everything he did was justified, by reference to Scripture—‘Spare the rod and spoil the child.’

1985 Death in Blue Folders xix. ‘I'm afraid my sister wasn't much on discipline,’ said Miss Elsner.
‘Spare the rod and spoil the child.’

1997 Washington Times 29 Dec. A2 The spare-the-rod, spoil-the-child debate has been stoked by the recent arrests of two Michigan mothers for slapping their wayward daughters.

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**children ; discipline**

SPARE well and have to spend

1541 tr. H. Bullinger's Christian State of Matrimony xix. Spare as though thou never shuldest dye and yet as mortal spend mesurably. To spare that thou mayest haue to spend in honestye for goodes sake.

1635 Way to Well-doing 25 A good sparer makes a good spender.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 297 Spare when you're young, and spend when you're old... He that saveth his Dinner will have the more for his Supper.

1832 Scottish Proverbs 16 Spare weel and hae weel.

1977 Five-Minute Marriage x. I've given them a polish and they've come up real tip-top! Spare weel and have to spend, I allus say.

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**thrift**

Never SPEAK ill of the dead

Cf. Gr. τρεθειν μοί μη κακόλυειν, speak no evil of the dead (attributed to the Spartan ephor [civil magistrate] Chilon, 6th cent. BC); L. de mortuis nil nisi bonum, say nothing of the dead but what is good.

1540 tr. Erasmus' Flores Sententiarum A6 Rayle not vpon him that is deade.

1609 MS (Trinity College, Cambridge) 81VSpeake not evill of the dead.

1682 No Cross, No Crown (ed. 2) xix. Speake well of the dead.

1783 Lives of Poets (rev. ed.) IV. 381 He that has too much feeling to speak ill of the dead .. will not hesitate .. to destroy .. the reputation .. of the living.

1945 Lark Rise xiv. ‘Never speak ill of the dead’ was one of their maxims.

1984 San Andreas xii. And speaking of the dead—and one should speak no ill of the dead—they were a couple of moderately useless characters.

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**reputation ; slander**

SPEAK not of my debts unless you mean to pay them

1640 Outlandish Proverbs no. 998 Speake not of my debts, unlesse you meane to pay them.

1875 Proverbial Folk-Lore 88 Special proverbs supply us with some excellent admonitions... Don't talk of my debts unless you mean to pay them.

1981 Times 2 Jan. 10 An old proverb recommends you not to speak of my debts unless you mean to pay them.

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**money ; tact**

speak

see also ACTIONS speak louder than words; out of the FULLNESS of the heart the mouth speaks; who KNOWS most, speaks least; SEE no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil; THINK first and speak afterwards; also SPOKEN.

speaking

see it's ill speaking between a FULL man and a fasting.

Everyone SPEAKS well of the bridge which carries him over

1678 English Proverbs (ed. 2) 106 Let every man praise the bridge he goes over. i.e. Speak not ill of...
him who hath done you a courtesie, or whom you have made use of to your benefit; or do commonly make use of.

1797 Journal 11 May (1856) 279 Let every one speak well of the bridge which carries him safe over.

1850 Alton Locke I. x. Every one speaks well of the bridge which carries him over. Every one fancies the laws which fill his pockets to be God's laws.

1886 Biographical Lectures i. Our love of compromise .. has also been our great strength ... We speak well of the bridge that carries us over.

assistance ; public opinion

species

see the FEMALE of the species is more deadly than the male.

If you don't SPECULATE, you can't accumulate

1941 Death & Taxes xxiii. Krebs took out his billfold. ‘Can you give me any assurance that you have useful information?’ ‘Nope.’ .. ‘You never accumulate if you don’t speculate.’

1957 Something Fishy iv. Don’t spoil the ship for a ha’porth of tar, or, putting it another way, if you don’t speculate, you can't accumulate.

1984 All pretty People ix. ‘Bloody liquor’s becoming an expense.’ ‘Won't be for long. You have to speculate to accumulate, if we kept her sober we couldn't do it our way.’

SPEECH is silver, but silence is golden
See also the abbreviated form SILENCE is golden.

1834 in Fraser’s Magazine June 668 As the Swiss Inscription says: Sprechen ist silbern, Schweigen ist golden (Speech is silvern, Silence is golden).

1865 Secret Service ii. A taciturn but edified listener, I pondered upon .. ‘speech is silver, while silence is golden.’

1936 South Riding 1. iv. She will give a pound note to the collection if I would cut my eloquence short, so in this case, though speech is silver, silence is certainly golden.

1961 Prime of Miss Jean Brodie i. Speech is silver but silence is golden. Mary, are you listening?

speech and silence

speed

see more HASTE, less speed.

What you SPEND, you have

c 1300 in Catalogue of Library Pembroke College (1905) 35 That ich et [I ate] that ich hadde. That ich gaf that ich habbe. That ich ay held that i nabbe [do not have].

1579 Shepherd’s Calendar (May) 56 (Glossary) Ho, ho, who lies here? I the good Earle of Deuonshere, And Maulde my wife, that was ful deare … That we spent, we had: That we gaue, we haue: That we lefte we lost.

1773 Letter 12 Aug. (1952) I. 338 The monument of Robert of Doncaster .. says .. something like this. What I gave, that I have; what I spent, that I had; what I left that I lost.

1862 Times 15 Dec. 8 The most common maxim of the rank and file of British industry is that what you spend you have for it alone cannot be taken away from you.

getting and spending

spend

see also SPARE well and have to spend.

spent
what is GOT over the Devil's back is spent under his belly.

sphere
see a WOMAN'S place is in the home.

spice
see VARIETY is the spice of life.

spider
see if you want to LIVE and thrive, let the spider run alive.

spigot
see SPARE at the spigot, and let out at the bung-hole.

spilt
see it is no use CRYING over spilt milk.

spite
see don't CUT off your nose to spite your face.

splash
see when the OAK is before the ash then you will only get a splash.

spoil
see do not spoil the SHIP for a ha'porth of tar; SPARE the rod and spoil the child; TOO many cooks spoil the broth.

spoiled
see BETTER one house spoiled than two.

spoken
see many a TRUE word is spoken in jest.

spoon
see he who SUPS with the Devil should have a long spoon.

spot
see the LEOPARD does not change his spots.

spread
see in vain the NET is spread in the sight of the bird.

It is not SPRING until you can plant your foot upon twelve daisies

1863 Book of Days 1. 312 We can now plant our 'foot upon nine daisies' and not until that can be done do the old-fashioned country people believe that spring is really come.

1878 English Folk-Lore i. 'It ain't spring until you can plant your foot upon twelve daisies,' is a proverb still very prevalent.

1910 Spectator 26 Mar. 499 Spring is here when you can tread on nine daisies at once on the village green; so goes one of the country proverbs.

1972 & Nanny Says 52 When you can step on six daisies at once, summer has come.

spring lore

spring
see (verb) HOPE springs eternal.

The SQUEAKING wheel gets the grease
Attention is only given to a troublesome person or thing.

1937 in Familiar Quotations 518 The wheel that squeaks the loudest Is the one that gets the grease.

1948 in Home Book of Proverbs 2483 I hate to be a kicker, I always long for peace, But the wheel that
does the squeaking is the one that gets the grease.

1967 in Olson & Burgess Pollution & Marine Ecology vi. 293 It is a tragedy that we devote more study effort to disturbed areas than to reasonably natural ones. This .. is simply a matter of the ‘squeaking wheel getting the grease’.

1974 (Commons) 17 Oct. 502 It is the old story: the squeaky wheel gets the grease.

1990 Washington Post 6 Dec. D10 Do as others have done—put heat on your state legislature and urge your friends to do the same. The wheel that squeaks gets the oil.

trouble
see an APPLE-PIE without some cheese is like a kiss without a squeeze.

stable
see because a MAN is born in a stable that does not make him a horse.

It is too late to shut the STABLE-door after the horse has bolted

In early use the proverb referred to horse-stealing; has bolted is a modern substitution for the traditional is stolen. Cf. medieval Fr. a tart ferme on l'estable, quant li chevaux est perdu, the stable is shut too late, when the horse is lost.

1350 Douce MS 52 no. 22 When the hors is stole, steke [lock] the stabull-dore.
1490 in Anglia (1918) XLII. 204 Whan the stede ys stole, than shytte the stable-dorze.
1578 Euphues I. 188 It is to late to shutte the stable doore when the steede is stolen: The Trojans repented to late when their towne was spoiled.

1719 Robinson Crusoe II. 92 A dead Bush was cram'd in [the hedge] to stop them [the Spaniards] out for the present, but it was only shutting the Stable-door after the Stead was stolen.

1886 Kidnapped xiv. A guinea-piece .. fell .. into the sea .. I now saw there must be a hole, and clapped my hand to the place .. But this was to lock the stable door after the steed was stolen.

1940 Death of Peer x. The horse having apparently bolted, I shall be glad to assist at the ceremony of closing the stable-door.

1979–80 Verbatim Winter 2 It is too late .. to shut the stable door after the horse has bolted.

1997 Evans Above iii. 33 The Home Secretary is livid. Heads are going to roll, .. but it's too late to lock the stable when the horse has already bolted.

foresight and hindsight ; futility ; lateness

stalled
see BETTER a dinner of herbs than a stalled ox where hate is.

stand
see EMPTY sacks will never stand upright; if you don't like the HEAT, get out of the kitchen; a HOUSE divided cannot stand; every TUB must stand on its own bottom; UNITED we stand, divided we fall.

standing
see it is as CHEAP sitting as standing.

starve
see FEED a cold and starve a fever; while the GRASS grows, the steed starves.

stay
see the FAMILY that prays together stays together.

steady
see FULL cup, steady hand; SLOW but sure.

One man may STEAL a horse, while another may not look over a hedge

People may take different degrees of liberty depending on our opinion of them.
Dialogue of Proverbs II. ix. K4 This proverb .. saith, that some man maie steale a hors better, Than some other maie stande and loke vpone.

Endymion III. iii. Some man may better steale a horse, then another looke ouer the hedge.

English Proverbs 128 One man may better steal a horse, then another look over the hedge. If we once conceive a good opinion of a man, we will not be perswaded he doth any thing amiss; but him whom we have a prejudice against, we are ready to suspect on the sleightest occasion.

Use of Life ii. ‘One man may steal a horse, while another may not look over a hedge.’ .. because the one does things pleasantly, the other disagreeably.

Things that have interested Me 315 Strange how one artist may steal a horse while another may not look over a hedge.

Fountain Overflows xi. Fancy him caring for her after all these years. Particularly when she treated him the way she did. But there, some people can steal a horse, and others aren't allowed to look over the gate.

One man may better steal a horse, then another look over the hedge.

One STEP at a time

Heir of Redclyffe II. i. One step at a time is all one wants.

Kim vi. It's beyond me. We can only walk one step at a time in this world.

Mr. Standfast xvi. I did not allow myself to think of ultimate escape … One step at a time was enough.

Satan Sampler ix. The stuff he had found .. took precedence over everything. One step at a time.

One step at a time is all one wants.

A stern chase is a long chase

A stern chase is one in which the pursuing ship follows directly in the wake of the pursued.

If we can once get him in our wake I have no fears of dropping them all.’ ‘A stern chace is a long chace.’

Victorian Recollections xiv. English poetry has had a start of some centuries, and a stern chase is proverbially a long one.

Mystery of Papyrus vii. 52 Followed again to-day by shabby native, but threw him off with complete success by getting rapidly into a taxi and driving round about. A stern chase is a long chase.

It is easy to find a STICK to beat a dog

An excuse to justify a harsh action or opinion is easy to find.

Works I. C5^V Howe easye a thyng it is to fynde a staffe if a man be mynded to beate a dogge.

tr. S. Guazzo's Civil Conversation III. 50 It is an easie matter to finde a staffe to beate a dog.

Miscellaneous Essays I. 266 A proverb .. naturally occurs on this occasion: It is easy to find a stick...
to beat a dog.

1875 Thrift xiv. Excuses were abundant … It is easy to find a stick to beat a sick dog.

1908 Times Literary Supplement 6 Nov. 391 The reviewer seems .. predisposed to the view that any stick is good enough to beat a dog with.

1987 Washington Times 30 Apr. 11A When you want to beat a dog, any stick will do.

excuses

stick

see (noun) up like a ROCKET, down like a stick.

stick

see (verb) let the COBBLER stick to his last; throw DIRT enough, and some will stick.

STICKS and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me

Similar to HARD words break no bones.

1894 Folk-Phrases 23 Sticks and stones will break my bones, but names will never hurt me! Said by one youngster to another calling names.

1980 Cosmopolitan Dec. 137 ‘Sticks and stones may break my bones,’ goes the children's rhyme, ‘but words will never hurt me.’ One wonders whether the people on the receiving end .. would agree.

1995 Washington Post 11 Feb. B1 I try to put things into perspective by recalling what our parents used to tell us when we were kids: Sticks and stones may break your bones, but words will never hurt you.

malice ; words and deeds

A STILL tongue makes a wise head

1562 Works Dd3V Hauyng a styll toung he had a besy head.

1776 John Buncle, Junior I. 238 Mum's the word … A quiet tongue makes a wise head, says I.

1869 English Proverbs 35 A still tongue makes a wise head.

1892 I saw Three Ships vii. A still tongue makes a wise head.

1937 Other Half iv. ‘I believe in the old saying “A still tongue keeps a wise head”.’ ‘I guess you're right … It's no business of mine.’

speech and silence ; wisdom

STILL waters run deep

Now commonly used to assert that a placid exterior hides a passionate or subtle nature. Cf. Q. CURTIUS De Rebus Gestis Alexandri Magni VII. iv. 13 altissima quaeque flumina minimo sono labi, the deepest rivers flow with least sound [said there to be a Bactrian saying].

1400 Cato's Morals in Cursor Mundi (EETS) 1672 There the flode is deppist the water standis stillist.

1410 Minor Poems (EETS) 476 Smothe waters ben ofte sithes [oftentimes] depe.

1616 Adages 178 Where riuers runne most stilly, they are the deepest.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 287 Smooth Waters run deep.

1858 Woman's Thoughts about Women xii. In maturer age .. the fullest, tenderest tide of which the loving heart is capable may be described by those 'still waters' which 'run deep.'

1979 Victim of Circumstances II. 86 As for her, still waters run deep, it seems. She always looked so solemn … Fancy her shooting him!

appearance, deceptive ; speech and silence

sting

see if you gently touch a NETTLE it'll sting you for your pains.

stink

see the FISH always stinks from the head downwards; FISH and guests stink after three days; the more
you STIR it the worse it stinks.
The more you STIR it the worse it stinks

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs II. vi. The more we stur a tourde, the wours it will stynke.
1639 Parœmiologia Anglo-Latina 200 The more you stirre it the worse it stinkes.
1706 tr. Cervantes' Don Quixote II. xii. The more ye stir, the more 'twill stink.
1929 Crime without Clue xx. The more we stir the worse it stinks, inspector. One would never imagine there were so many shady histories in this harmless-looking village.
1971 Dead Piano iv. I could tell you ... But like my mama always used to say, 'The more you stir shit, the more it stinks.'

'action and consequence ; busybodies
stir
see also you should KNOW a man seven years before you stir his fire.

A STITCH in time saves nine
The proverb was originally a couplet. The number nine was apparently introduced fancifully for the sake of assonance.

1732 Gnomologia no. 6291 A Stitch in Time May save nine.
1797 Journal 30 Apr. (1856) 268 After a little while we acquired a method of keeping her [a boat] in the middle of the stream, by watching the moment she began to vary, and thereby verifying the vulgar proverb, ‘A stitch in time saves nine.’
1868 & Foul Play I. ix. Repairing the ship. Found a crack or two in her inner skin ... A stitch in time saves nine.
1979 Homes & Gardens June 105 Looking after oneself is like looking after a house: a stitch in time ...

STOLEN fruit is sweet
The proverb is used in a variety of forms, principally in allusion to the temptation of Eve (Genesis iii. 6): e.g. c 1390 CHAUCER Parson's Tale l. 332 The fleesh hadde delit in the beautee of the fruyt defended [forbidden]. See also the next entry.

1614 Devil's Banquet III. 98 But as the Proverbe hath it .. Apples are sweet, when they are plucked in the Gardiners absence. Eve liked no Apple in the Garden so well as the forbidden.
1668 English Rogue II. B1V So eager are these sort of people to buy any thing that is unlicensed, following the Proverb, that stollen meat is sweetest.
1855 North & South II. vi. I can remember .. your being in some disgrace .. for stealing apples ... Some one had told you that stolen fruit tasted sweetest.
1935 Rachel Rosing xxiv. He knew that he did not love her ... What else, then? .. He was not going to pretend that this stolen fruit was not sweet.
1961 House at Old Vine II. 137 Old men are like children, of whom they say ‘Stolen apples are sweetest.’
1971 Mademoiselle Libertine iii. The truth was that at the Minimes the show was better than in the Place Royale, perhaps because stolen fruits are sweeter.

'theft
STOLEN waters are sweet
With allusion to PROVERBS ix. 17 (AV) Stolen waters are sweet. Cf. c 1395 WYCLIF Bible Proverbs ix. 17 Stoln wattris ben swetttere. See also the preceding entry.

c 1548 Will of Devil (1863) 9 This saiying of the retcheles [reckless] woman in Salomon (Stollen waters ar sweete).
1614 Devil's Banquet I. 3 Sinne shewes you a faire Picture—Stollen waters are sweet.
1721 Scottish Proverbs 298 Stoln Waters are sweet. People take great Delight in that which they can get
privately.

1976 Pour Hemlock ii. Lucarelli, fond of quoting scripture, ended the memo with ‘Stolen waters are sweet.’

theft

stomach

see an ARMY marches on its stomach; the WAY to a man's heart is through his stomach.

stone

see you cannot get BLOOD from a stone; you BUY land, you buy stones; CONSTANT dropping wears away a stone; DRIVE gently over the stones; those who live in GLASS houses shouldn't throw stones; a ROLLING stone gathers no moss; STICKS and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.

STONE-dead hath no fellow

Predominantly used by advocates of the death penalty. Fellow here means ‘equal’ or ‘counterpart.’

□ 1633 Soddered Citizen (1936) I. 2618 ‘Is your father dead?’.. ‘Laid with both Leggs Sir, in one lynn men bootehose That has noe fellowe, stone dead.

c 1641 Hist. Rebellion (1702) I. III. 191 The Earl of Essex .. answer'd, ‘Stone Dead hath no Fellow.’

1828 Essays (1843) I. 144 Stonedead hath no fellow.

1926 Times 27 Aug. 11 The execution of the death sentence had been postponed for a week, an unusual period in a country where the adage ‘stone-dead hath no fellow’ wins general support.

1980 Woburn & Russells v. Bedford, who was against the death penalty for Stratford, sought to moderate the violent opinions of some of his fellow peers, the Earl of Essex being heard to declare vehemently: ‘stone dead hath no fellow.’

death : finality

stool

see BETWEEN two stools one falls to the ground.

stop

see when you are in a HOLE, stop digging.

storm

see AFTER a storm comes a calm; ANY port in a storm; the SHARPER the storm, the sooner it's over.

One STORY is good till another is told

□ 1593 Mamillia II. 222 One tale is always good vntil another is heard.

a 1661 Worthies (Kent) 65 One story is good till another is heard.

1769 Boston Gazette 24 Apr. 2 The proverb, however homely it may be, will be allow'd by impartial men to be just, that ‘one story is good, till another is told.’

1831 in Edinburgh Review Jan. 515 A theory is not proved .. because the evidence in its favour looks well at first sight … ‘One story is good till another is told’

1922 Ulysses 121 One story good till you hear the next.

good things ; novelty

story

see also every PICTURE tells a story.

Put a STOUT heart to a stey brae

A Scottish proverb also used as a metaphorical phrase. A stey brae is a 'steep slope.'

□ a 1585 Cherry & Sloe (1821) xxxvi. So gets ay, that sets ay, Stout stomackis to the brae.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 287 Set a stout Heart to a stay Brea. Set about a difficult Business with Courage
and Constancy.
1821 Annals of Parish i. I began a round of visitations; but oh, it was a steep brae that I had to climb, and it needed a stout heart. For I found the doors .. barred against me.
1916 Greenmantle xii. He .. shouted to me .. to ‘pit a stoot hert tae a stey brae.’
1937 Crazy Murder Show v. Like the walls of Jericho, their resistance will eventually crumble if you peg away long enough. A stout heart to a stey brae, as my Inverness grandmother used to say.

- **boldness ; perservance**

**strange**
see ADVERSITY makes strange bedfellows; POLITICS makes strange bed-fellows.

**stranger**
see FACT is stranger than fiction; TRUTH is stranger than fiction.

**straw**
see you cannot make BRICKS without straw; a DROWNING man will clutch at a straw; it is the LAST straw that breaks the camel's back.

**STRAWS tell which way the wind blows**
The phrase ‘a straw in the wind,’ a sign of the prevailing opinion, action, etc., is also found.

- a 1654 Table-Talk (1689) 31 Take a straw and throw it up into the Air, you shall see by that which way the Wind is… More solid things do not shew the Complexion of the times so well, as Ballads and Libels.

1799 Porcupine's Works (1801) X. 161 ‘Straws’ (to make use of Callender's old hackneyed proverb).. ‘served to show which way the wind blows.’

1927 Ranch on Beaver vii. As straws tell which way the wind blows .. this day's work gives us a clean line on these company cattle.

1968 Shoplifter vii. You must remember that I was present at the contretemps which occurred at your house two days ago. Straws show which way the wind blows, Mrs. Pride!

- **hints ; omens**

**A STREAM cannot rise above its source**

- 1663 Adventures of Five Hours (Prologue), He would be ever w'you, but wants force; The Stream will rise no higher than the Source.

1732 Gnomologia no. 4771 The Stream can never rise above the Spring-head.

1905 Hill 84 Clever chap … But one is reminded that a stream can’t rise higher than its source.

1921 Pilgrim 125 It is held that a stream cannot rise above its source; but .. [a] river may have many tributaries, and one of them may change the character of what we call the main stream.

1952 Hidden Stream iv. Because after all the stream doesn’t rise higher than its source, and God, however we conceive him, must be higher in the scale of being than anything he has created.

- **beginnings and endings**

**stream**
see also don't CHANGE horses in mid-stream.

**strength**
see UNION is strength.

**strengthen**
see as the DAY lengthens, so the cold strengthens.

**STRETCH your arm no further than your sleeve will reach**
Do not spend more than you can afford. Similar to CUT your coat according to your cloth.

- 1541 tr. H. Bullinger's Christian State of Matrimony xix. Strecth out thine arme no farther then thy sleve
wyll retche.
1639 Parœmiologia Anglo-Latina 211 Stretch your arme no further than your sleeve will reach.
1721 Scottish Proverbs 277 Put your Hand no farther than your Sleeve will reach. That is, spend no more than your Estate will bear.
1881 Old Factory II. ii. It would leave me short of working capital, and .. I mustn’t stretch my arm further than th’coat-sleeve will reach.

**circumstances ; poverty ; prudence**

Everyone STRETCHES his legs according to the length of his coverlet

□a 1300 Husbandry (1890) 4 Wo that stretchet fortherre than his wytel [blanket] wyle reche, in the straue [straw] his fet he mot streche.
1550 Market D5V Then must many a man .. stretche out his legges accordynge to the length of his coverlet.
1640 Outlandish Proverbs no. 147 Everyone stretcheth his legges according to his coverlet.
1897 In Kedar's Tents iv. ‘The English .. travel for pleasure.’ .. ‘Every one stretches his legs according to the length of his coverlet,’ he said.

**circumstances ; prudence**

STRIKE while the iron is hot
A proverb originally alluding to the blacksmith’s art. Cf. Late 13th-cent. Fr. *len doit batre le fer tandis cum il est chaud*, one must strike the iron while it is hot.
□c 1386 Tale of Melibee 1. 1035 Whil that iren is hoot, men sholden smyte.
1546 Dialogue of Proverbs I. iii. A4 And one good lesson to this purpose I pyke [pick] From the smiths forge, whan thyron is hote stryke.
1576 Petit Palace 181 I think it wisdome to strike while the iron is hot.
1682 Holy War 18 Finding .. the affections of the people warmly inclining to him, he, as thinking 'twas best striking while the iron is hot, made this .. speech.
1771 Humphry Clinker III. 242 If so be as how his regard be the same, why stand shilly shally? Why not strike while the iron is hot, and speak to the 'squire without loss of time?
1848 Vanity Fair xxì. Let George cut in directly and win her .. Strike while the iron's hot.
1974 Porterhouse Blue xx. ‘It seems an inopportune moment,’ said the Senior Tutor doubtfully… ‘We must strike while the iron is hot,’ said the Dean.
1985 Shadow Kills xi. Just think about it quick, all we ask. It’s very important we strike while the iron is hot.
1997 Washington Post 13 Nov. C21 It's good to strike while the iron is hot; it's even better to make it hot by striking.

**opportunity**

strike
see also LIGHTNING never strikes the same place twice.

striving
see it is ill SITTING at Rome and striving with the Pope.

stroke
see DIFFERENT strokes for different folks; LITTLE strokes fell great oaks; beware of an OAK it draws the stroke.

strong
see GOOD fences make good neighbours; the RACE is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong;
stronger
see a CHAIN is no stronger than its weakest link.

stubborn
see FACTS are stubborn things.

The STYLE is the man
Cf. L. stylus virum arguit, the style shows the man; G. L. LE CLERC, CONTE DE BUFFON in Histoire Naturelle (1753) VII. p. xvii. Le style est l'homme même, the style is the man himself.

1901 Bible Characters V. civ. If the style is the man in Holy Scripture also .. we feel a very great liking for Luke.

1942 Reply Paid ix. Usually I don't like to have my style modified. ‘The style is the man.’

human nature; idiosyncrasy
From the SUBLIME to the ridiculous is only a step
In this form, from a remark made by Napoleon to the Polish ambassador De Pradt (D. G. De Pradt Histoire de l'Embassade.. (1815) 215), following the retreat from Moscow in 1812: Du sublime au ridicule il n'y a qu'un pas, there is only one step from the sublime to the ridiculous. The idea, however, was not original to Napoleon: 1795 T. Paine Age of Reason II. 20 The sublime and the ridiculous are often so nearly related, that it is difficult to class them separately. One step above the sublime, makes the ridiculous; and one step above the ridiculous, makes the sublime again.

1879 Milton 116 The Hague tittle-tattle .. is set forth in the pomp of Milton's loftiest Latin ... The sublime and the ridiculous are here blended without the step between.

1909 Times Literary Supplement 17 Dec. 492 In the case of Louis XVIII, indeed, the ridiculous was, as it is commonly said to be, only a step removed from the sublime.

1940 tr. L. Feuchtwanger's Paris Gazette II. xxxviii. From the sublime to the ridiculous is only a step, but there's no road that leads back from the ridiculous to the sublime.

1983 Appleby & Honeybath iii. ‘At least,’ he said, ‘we can now go next door. Architecturally speaking, it's to move from the sublime to the ridiculous.’

great and small
If at first you don't SUCCEED, try, try, try again
The short poem Try (try) again was often quoted in nineteenth-century children's literature, especially in the United States (see quot. 1840). It is popularly attributed to W. E. Hickson, who quoted it (with three try's) in his Moral Songs (1857) p. 8, but Palmer's use is earlier. The saying was soon used independently as a proverb.

1840 Teacher's Manual 223 'Tis a lesson you should heed, Try, try again. If at first you do n't succeed, Try, try again.

1915 Freudian Wish iii. The child is frustrated, but not instructed; and it is in the situation where, later on in life, we say to ourselves, ‘If at first you don't succeed, Try, try, try again!’

1979 Miss Marple's Final Cases 39 You mustn’t give up, Mr. Rossiter, ‘If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again.’

1997 Washington Times 19 Oct B1 Growing up, I remember my parents telling me, ‘You can do anything you set your mind to,’ and ‘If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.’

perseverance; success
succeed
see also NOTHING succeeds like success.

SUCCESS has many fathers, while failure is an orphan
Cf. 1942 G. CIANO Diary 9 Sept. (1946) II. 196 La vittoria trova cento padri, e nessuno vuole
riconoscere l’insuccesso. Victory has a hundred fathers, and no one acknowledges a failure.

1961 News Conference 21 Apr. in Public Papers of Presidents of U.S. (1962) 312 There's an old saying that victory has 100 fathers and defeat is an orphan.

1991 Washington Times 29 Jan. G1 In the aftermath of the impeccably executed aerial attack that initiated the war with Iraq, the old saw that success has many fathers while failure is an orphan comes to mind.

success
suck

see don't TEACH your grandmother to suck eggs.

Never give a SUCKER an even break
This saying has been attributed to various people, including E. F. Albee and W. C. Fields. It was popularized by Fields, who is said to have used it in the musical comedy Poppy (1923), though it does not occur in the libretto. Poppy was made into a silent film in 1925 and called Sally of the Sawdust. This was in turn remade as a ‘talkie’ in 1936 (see quot. 1936). The proverb means that one should not allow a fair chance to a fool, or one who may be easily deceived.

1925 Collier's 28 Nov. 26 ‘That line of mine that brings down the house always was true, wasn't it?’ ‘Which line?’ I asked. ‘Never give a sucker an even break’ he [W. C. Fields] answered.

1936 N. Y. Herald Tribune 15 Mar. v. 1 Wasn't it ‘Poppy’ that provided him with his immortal motto, ‘Never give a sucker an even break’?

1940 Eggs, Beans & Crumpets 158 Never give a sucker an even break ... But your sermon has made me see that there is something higher and nobler than a code of business ethics.

1979 Daily Telegraph 3 Nov. 24 The basic American business philosophy of ‘never give a sucker an even break’ runs rampant in those [money] markets.

fair dealing ; fools

suckling

see out of the MOUTHS of babes—.

sudden

see hasty CLIMBERS have sudden falls.

SUE a beggar and catch a louse

1639 Paræmiologia Anglo-Latina 72 Sue a beggar and get a louse.

1659 Proverbs (English) 2 Goe to Law with a beggar, thou shalt gett a lowse.

1732 Gnomologia no. 4285 Sue a Beggar, and catch a Louse.

1819 Bride of Lammermoor iii. I guess it is some law phrase—but sue a beggar, and—your honour knows what follows.

1937 It's a Far Cry xi. Such suit would have been useless as he was insolvent. The case indeed would have been the old one of suing a beggar and catching a louse!

futility ; law and lawyers

SUfFICIENT unto the day is the evil thereof
With allusion to MATTHEW vi. 34 (AV) Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

1766 in et al. Adams Family Correspondence (1963) I. 56 Sufficient to the Day is the Evil thereof.

1836 Letter 1 Apr. in Letters & Memorials (1893) I. 57 In the meanwhile there were no sense in worrying over schemes for a future, which we may not live to see. ‘Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.’

1979 So soon done For vii. ‘I'll deal with these [bills] later.’ .. ‘Sufficient unto the day,’ Kay agreed.

good and evil

Sufficient
see also a WORD to the wise is enough.

summer
see also the RICH man has his ice in the summer and the poor man gets his in the winter; one SWALLOW does not make a summer.

Never let the SUN go down on your anger
With allusion to EPHESIANS iv. 26 (AV) Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.

1642 Holy State III. viii. S. Paul saith, Let not the Sunne go down on your wrath; to carry news of the Antipodes in another world of thy revengefull nature.

1709 English Proverbs 189 We ought not to let the Sun go down upon our Wrath, or our Impenitence; neither ought we to let it conclude our Sluggishness.

1972 & Nanny Says 37 Never let the sun go down on your anger.

1981 Other Shoe ù. Never let the sun go down on your anger, Clare's grandmother Herne used to say.

Never let the sun go down on your anger; forgiveness; malice

The SUN loses nothing by shining into a puddle

Cf. DIOMEDES LAERTIUS VI. lxiii. ó, the sun shines into dung but is not tainted (attributed to Diogenes); TERTULLIAN De Spectaculis xx. sol et in cloacam radios suos desfert nec inquinatur, the sun spreads his rays even into the sewer, and is not stained.

1303 Handlyng Synne (EETS) l. 2299 The sunne, hys feyrnes neuer he tynes [loses], Thogh hyt on the muk hepe shynes.

c 1390 Parson's Tale 1. 911 Though that hooly writ speke of horrible synne, certes hooly writ may nat been defouled, namoore than the sonne that shyneth on the mixne [midden].

1578 Euphues I. 193 The Sun shineth vppon the duneghill and is not corrupted.

1732 Gnomologia no. 4776 The Sun is never the worse for shining on a Dunghill.

1943 Frossia iv. Dreadful words did fly about then, but the sun loses nothing by shining into a puddle.

associates; great and small

sun
see also happy is the BRIDE that the sun shines on; MAKE hay while the sun shines; there is NOTHING new under the sun.

sunny
see if CANDLEMAS day be sunny and bright, winter will have another flight.

supper
see AFTER dinner rest a while, after supper walk a mile; HOPE is a good breakfast but a bad supper.

He who SUPS with the Devil should have a long spoon
A proverb advocating caution when dealing with dangerous or malevolent persons.

1390 Squire's Tale l. 602 Therfore bhoueth hire a ful long spoon That shal eate with a feend.

1545 tr. Erasmus' Adages (ed. 2) 9VHe had nede to haue a longe spone that shuld eate with the deuyl.

1590 Comedy of Errors IV. iii. 59 He must have a long spoon that must eat with the devil.—What tell'st thou me of supping?

1641 Scottish Proverbs (STS) no. 350 He should have a long shafted spoon that sups kail [vegetable broth] with the devil.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 147 He had need of a long Spoon that sups Kail with the Dee'l. He that has to do with wicked .. Men, had need to be cautious.

1840 Ingoldsby Legends 1st Ser. 270 Who suppes with the Deville sholde have a longe spoone!

1920 Berry & Co. v. I'd rather watch from the stalk than assist him ... Remember ‘Who sups with the
devil should hold a long spoon.'

1979 Grave of Truth viii. Hindenburg and the army thought they could use [Hitler]... Who sups with the devil needs a long spoon.

■ associates ; caution ; peril

■ sure

see SLOW but sure.

■ suspicion

see CAESAR'S wife must be above suspicion.

■ SUSSEX won't be druv

A local proverb which asserts that Sussex people have minds of their own, and cannot be forced against their will. Druv is a dialect variant of drove (standard English driven).

1910 in Sussex Garland (1979) i. (postcard) Have got as fat as a Sussex [pig]—and ‘wunt be druv’ from Brighton.

1924 Cricket Match vi. ‘Well, we'd better be going, I suppose,’ Gauvinier announced .. well aware that ‘Sussex won't be druv.’

1939 Pinkerton at Old Angel vi. The sudden weariness in her frail face testified to years of patient leading. Mr. Pinkerton thought of the boast of the men of Sussex. They too couldn't be druv, they said.

1979 Sussex Garland i. There ant no place like Sussex, Until ye goos above, For Sussex will be Sussex, And Sussex won't be druv!

■ obstinacy

One SWALLOW does not make a summer

Cf. Gr. αὐξηλίδων ἐπικίνδυνον, one swallow does not make a spring; ERASMUS Adages i. vii. una hirundo non facit ver.

1539 tr. Erasmus' Adages 25 It is not one swalowe that bryngeth in somer. It is not one good qualitie that maketh a man good.


1659 Proverbs (English) 11 One Swallow doth not make a Summer.

1844 Martin Chuzzlewit xlii. One foul wind no more makes a winter, than one swallow makes a summer.

1973 Way to Dusty Death vii. The first driver past the pits was Harlow ... ‘One swallow does not make a summer.’

■ omens

It is idle to SWALLOW the cow and choke on the tail

It is silly to give up when a task or enterprise is almost completed.

1659 Proverbs (English) 13 To swallow an Ox, and be choaked with the tail.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 190 It is a Shame to eat the Cow, and worry [choke] on the Tail. It is a Shame to perform a great Task all but a little, and then give over.

1915 Salute to Adventurers xviii. We had gone too far to turn back, and as our proverb says, ‘It is idle to swallow the cow and choke on the tail.’

1935 Murder at Old Stone House xvi. I'm not one to swallow a cow and choke on the tail.

■ perseverance

swallow

see also (noun) the ROBIN and the wren are God's cock and hen.

swap

see don't CHANGE horses in mid-stream.

A SWARM in May is worth a load of hay; a swarm in June is worth a silver spoon; but a swarm in
July is not worth a fly

1655 Reformed Commonwealth of Bees 26 It being a Proverb, that a Swarm of Bees in May is worth a Cow and a Bottle [bundle] of Hay, whereas a Swarm in July is not worth a Fly.

1710 Tusser Redivivus May 11 The Proverb says, ‘A Swarm in May is worth a Load of Hay.’

1879 Wild Life in Southern County vii. ‘A swarm in May is worth a load of hay; a swarm in June is worth a silver spoon; but a swarm in July is not worth a fly’—for it is then too late .. to store up .. honey before the flowers begin to fade.

1945 Lark Rise v. As she reminded the children: A swarm in May’s worth a rick of hay; And a swarm in June’s worth a silver spoon; while A swarm in July isn’t worth a fly.

1985 Dog Rock ii. A swarm of bees in May is worth a load of hay, A swarm of bees in June is worth a silver spoon, A swarm of bees in July is worth not a fly. On that basis, a swarm of bees now would be worth a milking cow, but I won’t be joining it to one of my colonies.

calendar lore

If every man would SWEEP his own doorstep the city would soon be clean

1624 Temple 65 When we would haue the street cleansed, let euery man sweep his owne doore, and it is quickly done.

1666 Italian Proverbs 41 If every one will sweep his own house, the City will be clean.

1856 Bacon's Essays: with Annotations 235 [We] ought to engage in the important work of self-reformation … ‘If each would sweep before his own door, we should have a clean street.’

1930 Times 25 Mar. 10 It appears to be hard to draw a clear distinction between deciding a question of right and wrong for one's self and deciding it for others … ‘If every man would sweep his own doorstep the city would soon be clean.’

cleanliness; society

SWEEP the house with broom in May, you sweep the head of the house away

There was a widespread folk belief associating broom with witches and magic; hence, flowering broom was considered unlucky and a harbinger of death in any house into which it was brought.

1873 Folk-Lore Record I. 52 The old gentleman .. strictly forbade green brooms being used in his house during the month of May, and, as a reason for the prohibition, used to quote the adage—‘If you sweep the house with broom in May, You'll sweep the head of that house away.’

1943 Mr. Fortune Finds Pig (1948) xvi. 64 ‘What hadn’t you thought of?’ Rosen demanded sharply. ‘“Sweep the house with broom in May”,’ Reggie murmured, ‘“You sweep the head of the house away.”’

calendar lore; superstition

sweep

see also NEW brooms sweep clean.

sweet

see LITTLE fish are sweet; REVENGE is sweet; STOLEN fruit is sweet; STOLEN waters are sweet.

sweeter

see the NEARER the bone, the sweeter the meat.

From the SWEETEST wine, the tartest vinegar

1578 Euphues I. 197 As the best wine doth make the sharpest vinaigar, so the deepest loue tourneth to the deadliest hate.

1637 Familiar Letters 3 Feb. (1903) II. 140 He swears he had rather see a basilisk than her [his former love]. The sweetest wines may turn to the tartest vinegar.
‘It is .. the sweetest wine that makes the sharpest vinegar,’ says an old proverb.
The juxtaposition silently signals the cautionary maxim ‘From the sweetest wine, the tartest vinegar.’

**opposites**

**swift**
see the RACE is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.

**swim**
see don't go near the WATER until you learn how to swim.

**swine**
see do not throw PEARLS to swine; on SAINT Thomas the Divine kill all turkeys, geese, and swine.

**swing**
see what you LOSE on the swings you gain on the roundabouts.

**Swithun**
see SAINT Swithun's day if thou be fair for forty days it will remain.

**sword**
see whosoever DRAWS his sword against the prince must throw the scabbard away; he who LIVES by the sword dies by the sword; the PEN is mightier than the sword.

**TAKE the goods the gods provide**

Cf. PLAUTUS *Rudens* l. 1229 habeas quod di dant boni, you may keep what good the gods give.

Alexander's Feast 5 Lovely Thais sits beside thee, Take the good the gods provide thee.

‘It is only because I am the governor's son,’ Silverbridge pleaded... ‘What of that? Take the goods the gods provide you.’

*Something of Night* viii. Take the goods the gods provide, and don’t .. sulk when they are snatched away.

**good fortune ; opportunity**

**take**
see also it takes ALL sorts to make a world; you can take the BOY out of the country but you can't take the country out of the boy; GIVE a thing, and take a thing, to wear the Devil's gold ring; GIVE and take is fair play; you can take a HORSE to the water, but you can't make him drink; you PAYS your money and you takes your choice; take care of the PENCE and the pounds will take care of themselves; it takes TWO to make a bargain; it takes TWO to make a quarrel; it takes TWO to tango.
It TAKES one to know one

1977 National Journal 9 July 1090 In the it-takes-one-to-know-one category. Lester L. Kinsolving, among other jobs, is serving as national editor for the Panax Corp. newspapers.

1988 Christian Science Monitor 15 Apr. 19 The extraordinarily sociable person might not even recognize a shy person on sight—it takes one to know one, or even notice one.

1997 Buffalo News 27 Aug. 9D We hear that a local dude discourages his wife from buying antiques by saying, ‘It takes one to know one.’

similarity and dissimilarity

A TALE never loses in the telling
Also used in the phrase to lose (or grow) in the telling: frequently implying exaggeration. 1541 Schoolhouse of Women A4V What soeuer commeth to memorye Shall not be loste, for the tellinge. 1581 Stationers' Register (1875) II. 388 A good tale cannot to[o] often be Tolde.

1609 MS (Trinity College, Cambridge) 121 Tales lose nothing by the cariadge.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 44 A Tale never loses in the telling. Fame or Report .. commonly receives an Addition as it goes from hand to Hand.

1907 Spectator 16 Nov. 773 A story never loses in the telling in the mouth of an Egyptian.

1954 White Wand 15 No doubt Antonio was telling the story to his fellow-gondoliers and it would lose nothing in the telling.

1979 Last Enchantment 19 Like all strange tales, it will grow with the telling.

rumour
tale
see DEAD men tell no tales.

Never tell TALES out of school
The phrase to tell tales out of school is also used.

1530 Practice of Prelates B1V So that what cometh once in may never out for feare of tellinge tales out of scole.

1616 Dict. (rev.ed.) 573 You must not tel tales out of the Tauerne.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 303 Tell no School Tales. Do not blab abroad what is said in drink, or among Companions.

1876 Manchester Man I. xv. All attempts to make known school troubles and grievances were met with ‘Never tell tales out of school.’

1963 Clocks xxiv. ‘Well—.’ .. ‘I understand. Mustn’t tell tales out of school.’

malice

TALK is cheap
Cf. c 1600 A. MUNDAY et al. Sir T. More (1911) 23 Woords are but wordes, and payes not what men owe; 1639 CHAPMAN & SHIRLEY Ball v. i. You may heare talke; but give me the man that has measur’d 'em: talkes but talke.

1668 Adagia Scotica 47 Seying goes good cheap.

1843 Attaché I. ii. Talk is cheap, it don't cost nothin' but breath.

1929 Footprints i. Talk's cheap. You could never make me believe that.

1996 Washington Times 30 Apr. A4 Talk, as those of us in the pews have been taught all our lives, is cheap, and faith without works is dead.

boasting ; words and deeds

TALK of the Devil, and he is bound to appear
Also abbreviated to talk of the Devil!, and used when a person just spoken of is seen.
1666 Italian Proverbs 134 the English say, Talk of the Devil, and he's presently at your elbow.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 299 Speak of the Dee'l, and he'll appear. Spoken when they, of whom we are speaking, come in by Chance.

1773 Spiritual Quixote II. VIII. V. ‘How free he had made with the Devil's name.’ .. ‘Talk of the Devil, and he will appear.’

1830 King's Own II. V. The unexpected appearance of Mrs. Rainscourt made him involuntarily exclaim, ‘Talk of the devil—’ ‘And she appears, Sir,’ replied the lady.


巧合
talk
see also MONEY talks.
tango
see it takes TWO to tango.
tar
see do not spoil the SHIP for a ha'porth of tar.
Tar
see SCRATCH a Russian and you find a Tartar.
tartest
see from the SWEETEST wine, the tartest vinegar.
taste
see there is no ACCOUNTING for tastes; EVERY man to his taste.

TASTES differ

1803 Travels in USA ii. Tastes sometimes differ.
1868 Moonstone I. xv. Tastes differ ... I never saw a marine landscape that I admired less.
1924 Cricket Match iii. It's no use arguing about that ... Tastes differ.
1940 Four Defences xii. Tastes differ. One has to admit it.
1974 Appleby's Other Story xi. She seemed as alive as an electric eel, and no more comfortable for the purpose of making passes at. But tastes of course differ.

偏见 ; 味

破
see there's many a GOOD cock come out of a tattered bag.
tax
see NOTHING is certain but death and taxes.

You can't TEACH an old dog new tricks

1530 Husbandry (ed. 2) G1V The dogge must lerne it when he is a whelpe, or els it wyl not be; for it is harde to make an olde dogge to stoupe.
1636 Remains concerning Britain (ed. 5)300 It is hard to teach an old dog trickes.
1672 English & Latin Proverbs 46 An old dog will learn no new tricks.
1806 Letter 15 Feb.(1834)14 There is an old proverb, ‘You cannot teach an old dog new tricks.’
1987 Little Death Music V. He's listening to records with Vance. Downright rude, if you ask me, but you can't teach an old dog new tricks.

习惯 ; 创新 ; 老年

Don't TEACH your grandmother to suck eggs
A caution against offering advice to the wise and experienced. The metaphorical phrase to teach one's grandmother (to suck eggs) is also found.

1707 tr. Quevedo's Comical Works IV. 403 You would have me teach my Grandame to suck Eggs.

1738 Polite Conversation I. 57 'I'll mend it, Miss.' .. 'You mend it! go, Teach your Grannam to suck Eggs.'

1882 Christowell II. iii. A .. twinkle, which might have been interpreted—‘instruct your grandfather in the suction of gallinaceous products.’

1967 English Proverbs Explained 48 Don't teach your grandmother to suck eggs.

1983 Anodyne Necklace i. Rota. I'm well aware there's a rota. You trying to teach your grandmother to suck eggs, Jury?

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advice
teach
see also he who CAN, does.
teacher
see EXPERIENCE is the best teacher.
tooth
see the GODS send nuts to those who have no teeth.

TELL the truth and shame the Devil

1548 Expedition into Scotland A5 An Epigram .. the whiche I had, or rather (to saie truth and shame the deuel, for out it wool) I stale .. from a frende of myne.

1576 Grief of Joy II. 555 I will tell trewth, the devyll hymselfe to shame.

1597–8 Henry IV, Pt I. III. i. 58 And I can teach thee, coz [cousin], to shame the devil By telling truth: tell truth, and shame the devil.

1639 Pararmiologia Anglo-Latina 316 Tell the truth, and shame the Devill.

1738 Polite Conversation I. 93 Well; but who was your Author? Come, tell Truth and shame the Devil.

1945 Lark Rise xiv. A few homely precepts, such as .. ‘Tell the truth and shame the devil.’

1980 Attending Physician iv. You'll get the opportunity to tell the truth and shame the devil.

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tell
too see also BLOOD will tell; you can't tell a BOOK by its cover; CHILDREN and fools tell the truth; DEAD men tell no tales; every PICTURE tells a story; STRAWS tell which way the wind blows; never tell TALES out of school; TIME will tell.
telling
see a TALE never loses in the telling.
temper
see GOD tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.
ten
see one PICTURE is worth ten thousand words.
thaw
see ROBIN HOOD could brave all weathers but a thaw wind.
themselves
see GOD helps them that help themselves; LISTENERS never hear any good of themselves.
thick
see YORKSHIRE born and Yorkshire bred, strong in the arm and weak in the head.
thicker
see BLOOD is thicker than water.
set a THIEF to catch a thief
Cf. CALLIMACHUS Epigram xliii. "μὸνος ὁ κλέφτης", being a thief myself I recognized the tracks of a thief.

1654 Pleasant Notes upon Don Quixote IV. ii. As they say, set a fool to catch a fool; a proverb not of that gravity (as the Spaniards are), but very useful and proper.

1665 Four New Plays 74 According to the old saying, Set a Thief to catch a Thief.

1812 Tales of Fashionable Life VI. 446 ‘You have all your life been evading the laws … Do you think this has qualified you peculiarly for being a guardian of the laws?’ Sir Terence replied, ‘Yes, sure, set a thief to catch a thief is no bad maxim.’

1979 Guardian 5 July 9 ‘Set a thief to catch a thief.’ .. She was implicitly condoning bent practices used by the police against .. The Underworld.

guile; wrong-doers

thief
see also HANG a thief when he's young, and he'll no' steal when he's old; there is HONOUR among thieves; LITTLE thieves are hanged, but great ones escape; OPPORTUNITY makes a thief; a POSTERN door makes a thief; PROCRASTINATION is the thief of time; if there were no RECEIVERS, there would be no thieves.

When THIEVES fall out, honest men come by their own

1546 Dialogue of Proverbs II. ix.L1 And olde folke vnnderstood, Whan theues fall out, true men come to their good, Which is not alwaie true.

a 1640 Blind Beggar (1659)IV. G2V Here's the old Proverb right, When false Theeves fall out, true men come to their own.

1681 Whigs' Supplication II. 53 When thieves reckon, it's oft-times known that honest people get their own.

1838 Letter 26 Mar. in Correspondence (1931) V. 545 You must recollect the old adage, ‘When rogues fall out, truth is revealed, and honest men get justice.’

1866 Hereward the Wake XV. The rogues have fallen out, and honest men may come by their own.

1980 Queue here for Murder xiii. ‘She’s pretty tied up with that Arab fellow, isn’t she? They seem thick as thieves.’ ‘But thieves fall out.’ .. ‘You’re a disgraceful old matchmaker!’

honesty and dishonesty; wrong-doers

If a THING'S worth doing, it's worth doing well
Job is sometimes used instead of thing.

1746 Letter 9 Oct. (1932) III. 783 Care and application are necessary… In truth, whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well.

1910 What's wrong with World IV. xiv. The elegant female, drooping her ringlets over her water-colours, .. was maintaining the prime truth of woman, the universal mother: that if a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing badly.

1915 Bealby V. ‘If a thing's worth doing at all,’ said the professor .. ‘it's worth doing well.’

1980 Church Times 22 Feb. 12 ‘Things worth doing are worth doing well,’ was the motto at my first school.

1992 Rather English Marriage (1993) iii. 62 She'd never cared for dripdry .. she'd rather see everything starched and crisply ironed. ‘If a job's worth doing, it's worth doing well’ was Gracie's motto.

www.EnglishPro.ir
ALL good things must come to an end; ALL things are possible with God; ALL things come to those who wait; the BEST things come in small packages; the BEST things in life are free; FACTS are stubborn things; FIRST things first; there's no such thing as a FREE lunch; GIVE a thing, and take a thing, to wear the Devil's gold ring; KEEP a thing seven years and you'll always find a use for it; LITTLE things please little minds; there is MEASURE in all things; MODERATION in all things; things PAST cannot be recalled; to the PURE all things are pure; THREE things are not to be trusted; you can have TOO much of a good thing; if you WANT a thing done well, do it yourself; the WORTH of a thing is what it will bring.

When THINGS are at the worst they begin to mend

1582 Heptameron of Civil Discourses vi. Things when they are at the worst, begin again to amend. The feauer giueth place to health, when he hath brought the pacyent to deathes door.
1600 Sir John Oldcastle H1V Patience good madame, things at worst will mend.
1623 Duchess of Malfi IV. i. Things being at the worst, begin to mend.
1748 Clarissa III. liv. When things are at the worst they must mend.
1889 Nether World I. ii. When things are at the worst they begin to mend... It can't be much longer before he gets work.
1928 Vampire v. If there be any truth in the old adage, that ‘When things are at the worst they must amend,’ the bettering of Spectral Melodrama is not distant.

THINK first and speak afterwards

1557 Sermons B6 Thinke well and thou shalt speak wel.
1623 Chaucer New Painted B1V Thinke twise, then speak, the old proverbe doth say. Yet Fooles their bolts will quickely shoot away.
1639 Paræmiologia Anglo-Latina 133 First thinke and then speak.
1640 Art asleep Husband? vii. You thinke twice befor you speake, and may be demanded twice before you answer.
1855 Hand-Book of proverbs 528 Think to-day and speak to-morrow.
1902 in Philistine May 192 Think twice before you speak and then talk to yourself.
1943 Happy Golden Years i. You must do your thinking first and speak afterward. If you will .. do that you will not have any trouble.
1981 Xanadu Talisman iv. Please think before you speak.

discretion ; tact

see also GREAT minds think alike; what MANCHESTER says today, the rest of England says tomorrow.

THIRD time lucky

1840 letter (1933) 5 ‘The luck of the third adventure’ is proverbial.
1862 proverbs of Scotland 194 The third time's lucky.
1882 New Arabian Nights II. 59 ‘The next time we come to blows—’ ‘Will make the third,’ I interrupted ... ‘Ay, true ... Well, the third time's lucky.’
1942 Death & Dancing Footman vii. It was a glancing blow... It might have been my head ... One of
them's saying to himself: ‘Third time lucky.’

1979 tr. K. A. Blom's Limits of Pain ix. The expression third time lucky had something in it.

luck ; superstition

The THIRD time pays for all

□1574 Mirror for Magistrates (1946) 93 The third payes home, this prouerbe is to true.
□1599 Warning for Fair Women E3 The third time payes for all.
1855 North & South I. xvii. ‘This is th' third strike I've seen,’ said she ... ‘Well, third time pays for all.’
1922 Punch 20 Dec. 594 Mrs. Ellison has already been twice married. The third time pays for all, so they say.
1978 Stand III. liv. If I could have brought myself to jump once .. I might not be here. Well, last time pays for all.

perseverance ; superstition

third

see also while TWO dogs are fighting for a bone, a third runs away with it.

Thomas

see on SAINT Thomas the Divine kill all turkeys, geese, and swine.

thorn

see beware of an OAK it draws the stroke; no ROSE without a thorn.

THOUGHT is free

□c 1390 Confessio Amantis v. 4485 I have herd seid that thougt is fre.
1601 Twelfth Night I. iii 64 fair lady, do you think you have fools in hand?—Now, sir, thought is free.
1874 Malcolm II. xvii. ‘How do you come to think of such things?’ ‘Thought's free, my lord.’

opinions

thought

see also SECOND thoughts are best; the WISH is father to the thought.

thousand

see one PICTURE is worth ten thousand words.

THREATENED men live long

Cf. early 14th-cent. Fr. le[s] menaciez encore vivent, threatened men live long.
□1534 in M. St. C. Byrne Lisle Letters II. ii. Ther es a nolde sayeng thretend men lyue long.
□1555 in Ballads of Elizabethan Period (1912) 69 It is a true prouerbe: the threatened man lyues long.
1607 Fair Maid of Exchange II. 68 Threatened men live long.
1655 Church Hist. Britain VIII. iii. Gardiner .. vowed .. to stop the sending of all supplies unto them ... But threatened folke live long.
1865 Haunted London ii. Temple Bar was doomed to destruction by the City as early as 1790 ... ‘Threatened men live long.’ .. Temple Bar still stands.
1930 Murder at Vicarage iv. Archer .. is vowing vengeance against me, I hear. Impudent scoundrel. Threatened men live long, as the saying goes.
1980 Hunters & Hunted i. The threat was an old one; and, the proverb ran, threatened men live long.

mortality ; peril

THREE may keep a secret, if two of them are dead

□1546 Dialogue of Proverbs II. v. G4VWe twayne are one to many (quoth I) for men saie, Three maie keepe a counsell, if two be awaie.
Is your man secret? Did you ne'er hear say Two may keep counsel, putting one away?

Three may keep a secret, if two of them are dead.

Two of everything .. two bodies, two causes of death .. What was it? ‘Three may keep a secret, if two of them are dead.’

THREE removals are as bad as a fire

I never saw an oft removed Tree, Nor yet an oft removed Family, That thrice so well, as those that settled be. And again, Three Removes are as bad as a Fire.

Did you ever ‘move’? .. There is an old proverb that three removes are as bad as a fire.'.. you may estimate the extent of his misfortune.

THREE things are not to be trusted: a cow's horn, a dog's tooth, and a horse's hoof

Three things are not to be trusted—a cow's horn, a dog's tooth, and a horse's hoof.

Horses feet. Womens Protestations.

Three things are not to be trusted—a cow's horn, a dog's tooth, and a horse's hoof.

He was .. beginning to worry about being employed by a venomous Englishman. ‘Four things not to trust,’ said the Cashelmor proverb: ‘a dog's tooth, a horse's hoof, a cow's horn, and an Englishman's laugh.’

Three things are not to be trusted: a cow's horn, a dog's tooth, and a horse's hoof.

Three things are not to be trusted: a cow's horn, a dog's tooth, and a horse's hoof.

He that cast hym for to thryve, he must ask leve of his wyff.

He that would thrive, must ask his wife. It was lucky for me that I had one as much dispos'd to industry and frugality as myself.

He that will THRIVE must first ask his wife

He that will thrive, must ask his wife.
There is an old English proverb which says, ‘He that would thrive must first ask his wife.’

Don't THROW out your dirty water until you get in fresh

Don't THROW the baby out with the bathwater

The proverb is often used allusively, especially in the metaphorical phrase to throw (or empty) out the baby with the bathwater. Known in German from at least as early as the start of the sixteenth century; Cf. J. KEPLER Tertius Interveniens (sub-heading) Das ist Warnung .. das sie .. nicht das Kindt mit dem Badt ausschütten, this is a caution .. lest you throw out the baby with the bath.

Don't throw away Dirty Water till you have got Clean... The Man being possess’d with Avarice, throws away a Certain Benefit upon uncertain .. Expectations.

'You must empty out the bathing-tub, but not the baby along with it.' .. How to abolish the abuses of slavery, and save the precious thing in it: also, I do not pretend that this is easy.

We shall in a very literal sense empty the baby out with the bath by abolishing an institution [marriage] which needs nothing more than a little .. rationalizing to make it .. useful.

In their ardour to get rid of it [old-fashioned apologetic] they emptied out the baby with the bath-water.'

Do be careful that you don't throw the baby out with the bath water, and find yourself with too many people who lack experience.

Let's not throw the baby out with the bathwater. Let's note that, while diplomats who wantonly break the laws of their host countries should be forced to face the consequences of their behavior, a new system is not necessary.
KNOW thyself; PHYSICIAN, heal thyself.

thysen (yourself):

see HEAR all, see all, say nowt.

tide

see a RISING tide lifts all boats; TIME and tide wait for no man.

tiger

see he who RIDES a tiger is afraid to dismount.

There is a TIME and place for everything
An expanded version of there is a TIME for everything.

1509 Ship of Fools 94 Remember: there is tyme and place for every thyng.
1862 Wild Wales II. x. There is a time and place for everything, and sometimes the warmest admirer of ale would prefer the lymph of the hill-side fountain to the choicest ale.
1986 Dead Liberty iv. A memory from A Midsummer Night's Dream to do with Snout serving the office of a wall welled up in Sloan's mind, but he suppressed it instantly. There was a time and a place for everything.

opportunity; orderliness; time

TIME and tide wait for no man

1390 Clerk's Tale 1. 118 For thogh we slepe or wake, or rome, or ryde, Ay fleeth the tyme; it nil no [will no] man abyde.
1520 Everyman (1961) l. 143 The Tyde abydeth no man.
1592 Disputation between He Cony-catcher & She Cony-catcher X. 241 Tyde nor time tarrieth no man.
1639 Paramiologia Anglo-Latina 233 Time and tide tary on no man.
1767 Disappointment II. i. Let's step into the state-room, and turn in: Time and tide waits for no one.
1822 Nigel III. ii. Come, come, master, let us get afloat ... Time and tide wait for no man.
1979 Some die Eloquent x. Time and tide and newspapers wait for no man.

opportunity; time

TIME flies
Cf. L. tempus fugit, time flies.

c 1390 Clerk's Tale 1. 118 For though we slepe or wake, or rome, or ryde, Ay fleeth the tyme.
1639 Paramiologia Anglo-Latina 308 Time flyeth away without delay.
1776 Letter 21 Mar. in Works (1803) IX. 197 Time flies! Years of plenty .. disappear before the eternity to which we are all hastening.
1985 Dick & Jane 196 Six years of marital bliss, huh? Time flies when you're having fun.

time

There is a TIME for everything
With allusion to ECCLESIASTES iii. 1 (AV) To every thing there is a season.

c 1390 Clerk's Prologue l. 6 But Salomon seith 'every thyng hath tyme.'
1540 Bible (Prologue) +3 Ther is tyme for every thyng.
1590 Comedy of Errors II. ii. 63 Well, sir, learn to jest in good time; there's time for all things.
1818 Northanger Abbey xxx. Your head runs too much upon Bath; but there is a time for every thing—a time for balls .. and a time for work.
1980 Going It Alone I. x. There is a time for everything, and he hoped that, in the present exigency, Tim wasn't going to be .. frivolous.

opportunity; time

TIME is a great healer
There are numerous expressions derived from the ancient concept that time heals, several of which are illustrated here. Predominantly used in the context of feelings and emotions rather than physical suffering. Cf. MENANDER Fragments dclxxvii. (Kock) ἐὰν τιθημένοι τῷ θεῷ τὸν αἰώνα, time is the healer of all necessary evils.

 diligently as 1385 Troilus & Criseyde v. 350 As tyme hem [them] hurt, a tyme doth hem cure.

1591 tr. Ariosto's Orlando Furioso VI. ii. He hurt the wound which time perhaps had healed, weening [thinking] with greater sinne the lesse to mend.

1622 Complete Gentleman iv. Time, the Phisition of all.

1837 Henrietta Temple III. vi. ix. Time is the great physician.

1926 Translations & Tomfooleries 60 Time is the great healer.

1942 Body in Library viii. He had a terrible shock and loss ... But Time, as my dear mother used to say, is a great healer.

1987 Little Death Music xv. Tony was a young Turk in his day. Broke with his father for a while. But it was his father, after all. And time heals all wounds.

TIME is money

Gr. τὸ πολλὸν τελέστιον ἥρον, τὸ χρόνον ὡς νύν, the most costly outlay is time (attributed to Antiphon).

1572 Discourse upon Usury 33 They saye tyme is precious.

1748 Papers 1961 III. 306 Remember that Time is Money. He that can earn Ten Shillings a Day .. and .. sits idle one half of that Day .. has really .. thrown away Five Shillings.

1840 Money III. vi. ‘You don't come often to the club, Stout?’.. ‘No, time is money.’

1980 Murder of Maharajah xv. I can't wait here day after day ... Time's money, you know.

1996 Washington Post 16 Aug. A31 Time is money, and money is congealed time—the time it takes to earn it.

efficiency and inefficiency ; time

No TIME like the present

1562 Accidence of Armoury 225 Mary [to be sure] sir no time better then euen now.

1696 Lost Lover IV. i. No time like the present.

1888 Second Son I. iv. ‘If you were a-passing this way, sir, some time in the morning—.’ ‘There's no time like the present,’ answered Roger.

1982 Death turns Trick viii. No time like the present. Come on, get it over with.

opportunity ; time

TIME will tell

Cf. MENANDER Monosticha 11 ἀνείδησπερ ὑπὸ γειανθείαν χρόνον οὖς time brings the truth to light.

1539 tr. Erasmus' Adages 37 Tempus omnia reuelat. Tyme discloseth all thynges.

1616 Adages 205 Time reuealeth all things.

1771 Letter 15 Apr. in Publications of Mississippi Hist. Society 1925 V. 50 Time only will shew how far those Informations have been well founded.

1863 Hard Cash I. vi. I will answer .. that she will speak as distinctly to music as you do in conversation —Time will show, madam.

1913 Pollyanna xxiii. The doctor had looked very grave .. and had said that time alone could tell.

1929 Eye in Museum xiv. ‘I'm not .. bringing any charge.’ .. ‘Oh .. a bright idea, perhaps. Or perhaps not...
‘Time will tell,’ the Superintendent retorted. 1979 Satan Sampler vii. Somewhere in all this there is a very ancient and fish-like smell … I say no more … Time will or will not tell.

future; time

TIME works wonders

□1588 Exhortation to defend Country F2 You .. thinke that time will worke wonders, though you your selves follow your owne pleasures.
□1845 (title) Time works wonders.
□1872 Satanella II. xxiv. ‘I want you to like me.’ .. ‘They say time works wonders .. and I feel I shall.’
□1982 Rebel Angels 4 But there was time, and I was to be in his outer room, constantly under his eye. Time works wonders.

time

see also there is always a FIRST time; NEVER is a long time; OTHER times, other manners; PARSLEY seed goes nine times to the Devil; PROCRASTINATION is the thief of time; one STEP at a time; a STITCH in time saves nine; THIRD time lucky; the THIRD time pays for all; WORK expands so as to fill the time available.

TIMES change and we with time

Cf. L. omnia (also tempora) mutantur nos et mutamur in illis, all things (also times) are changing and we with them [attributed to Lothar I, Holy Roman Emperor 840–55].
□□1578 Euphues I. 276 The tymes are chaunged as Ouid sayeth, and wee are chaunged in the times.
□□1666 Italian Proverbs 281 Times change, and we with them ... The Latin says the same, Tempora mutantur, et nos mutamur in illis.
□□1943 Diary 21 Feb. (1979) 168 In English cities the Red Flag has been flown ... Times change indeed, and we with time.
□□1981 Brock 31 Times were chaging and Melford with them.

circumstances; innovation

tinker

see if IFS and ands were pots and pans, there'd be no work for tinkers' hands.

TODAY you; tomorrow me

Cf. L. hodie mihi, cras tibi, today it is my turn, tomorrow yours.
□□1250 Ancrene Wisse (1962) 143 Ille hodie, ego cras. He to deii, and ich to marhen [he today, and I tomorrow].
□□1620 tr. Cervantes' Don Quixote II. lxv. To day for thee, and to-morrow for me.
□□1855 Westward Ho! II. i. To-day to thee, to-morrow to me.
□□1906 Sir Nigel xv. ‘It is the custom of the Narrow Seas,’ said they: ‘To-day for them; to-morrow for us.’
□□1929 tr. E. M. Remarque's All Quiet on Western Front ix. ‘Comrade,’ I say to the dead man, but I say it calmly, ‘To-day you, tomorrow me.’

future

today

see also JAM tomorrow and jam yesterday, but never jam today; what MANCHESTER says today, the rest of England says tomorrow; never PUT off till tomorrow what you can do today.

told
see one STORY is good till another is told.

Tom
see MORE people know Tom Fool than Tom Fool knows.

TOMORROW is another day

- **1527** Calisto & Melebea C1V Well mother to morrow is a new day.
- **1603** tr. Montaigne's Essays II. iv. A letter .. beeing delivered him .. at supper, he deferred the opening of it, pronouncing this by-word. To morrow is a new day.
- **1824** St. Ronan's Well III. vii. We will say no more of it at present .. To-morrow is a new day.
- **1927** Field God I. 148 Go to it, you Mag and Lonie! To-morrow's another day, and you'll need all you can hold.
- **1972** Naked to Grave xii. There's an old adage that tomorrow’s another day. At this time of night it's quite a comfort.

future

TOMORROW never comes

- **1523** Froissart (1901) II. 309 It was sayde every day among them, we shall fight tomorowe, the whiche day came never.
- **1602** Letter 8 May (1939) I. 142 Tomorrow comes not yet.
- **1678** English Proverbs (ed. 2) 343 Tomorrow come never.
- **1756** Poor Richard's Almanack (July) To-morrow, every Fault is to be amended; but that To-morrow never comes.
- **1889** Nether World III. ix. ‘It's probably as well for you that to-morrow never comes.’ ‘Now just see how things turn out!’ went on the other.
- **1966** I start Counting xvii. ‘It's late, honey. Talk tomorrow.’ ‘Tomorrow never comes.’

future; procrastination

tomorrow
see also JAM tomorrow and jam yesterday, but never jam today; what MANCHESTER says today, the rest of England says tomorrow; never PUT off till tomorrow what you can do today; TODAY you, tomorrow me.

The TONGUE always returns to the sore tooth

- **1586** tr. S. Guazzo's Civil Conversation (1925) II. 201 The tongue roles there where the tooth aketh.
- **1659** Proverbs (Spanish) 27 There the tongue goes where the tooth akes.
- **1746** Poor Richard's Almanack (July) The Tongue is ever turning to the aching tooth.
- **1817** Letters from South II. 167 The tongue touches where the tooth aches, as the saying goes; the English of which is that people are apt to talk of what annoys them most at the moment.
- **1949** Walk Dark Streets ii. He would stop .. to find the flaws in his case were standing over him, implacable, like the certainty of guilt. The tongue always returned to the sore tooth.

persistence

tongue
see also the DEVIL makes his Christmas pies of lawyers' tongues and clerks' fingers; a STILL tongue makes a wise head.

TOO many cooks spoil the broth

- **1575?** Life of Carew (1857) 33 There is the proverb, the more cooks the worse potage.
When an undertaking hath been committed to many, it caused but confusion, and therefore it is a saying: Too many cooks spoils the broth.

Westward Ho! As Amyas sagely remarked, ‘Too many cooks spoil the broth, and half-a-dozen gentlemen aboard one ship are as bad as two kings of Brentford.’

It was a great mistake to think that administration was improved by taking on more administrators... ‘Too many cooks spoil the broth.’

Too many cooks spoil the broth and at Apple there is now the equivalent of Marco Pierre White, Anton Mosimann and Nico Ladenis.

You can have TOO much of good thing

To much is nouht of any maner thyng [too much of anything is nothing].

Well (quoth I) to muche of one thyng is not good, Leaue of this.

A man may take too much of a good thing.

Fie, Miss! you said that once before; and, you know, Too much of one Thing is good for nothing.

We believe that you can have too much of a good thing—a blasphemous belief, which at one blow wrecks all the heavens that men have hoped for.

A more modestly sized delegation .. might have spared Congress a certain ridicule. Mae West once said it was possible to have too much of a good thing and it was wonderful.

Modern liberals feel that a more tolerant society is good thing, and they are right. Yet, it is possible to have too much of a good thing.

The makers of the series believe that those who meddle with pitch may be defiled.

Cf. APOCRYPHA Ecclesiasticus xiii. 1 (AV) He that toucheth pitch, shall be defiled therewith.

Handlyng Synne (EETS) 1. 6578 Who-so handlyth pycche wellyng hote, He shal haue fylthe therof sumdey1 [in some degree].

Euphues l. 250 He that toucheth pitche shall be defiled.

729 Proverbs 249 Touch Pitch and you'll be Defil'd... There is Danger every Way in Ill Company.

Living or Dead II. ix. The next two months of my life .. made me take a lower and more debased view of the world... I was touching pitch, yet striving to keep myself from being defiled.

The makers of the series believe that those who meddle with pitch may be defiled.
associates; example, good and bad

see when the GOING gets tough, the tough get going.

town
see GOD made the country, and man made the town.

TRADE follows the flag

1870 in Fraser's Magazine. Jan. 4 The removal of a million poor creatures to Canada and the establishment of them there .. would probably have turned out .. a profitable investment. Trade follows the flag.

1945 Enemy at Gate 152 There is a glib saying .. that ‘trade follows the flag’ an apothegm that succeeds in putting the cart before the horse with greater aplomb than almost any other cant phrase in common use.

1979 in Tales from Dark Continent i. There is a famous old quotation that ‘Trade follows the Flag’ but .. in West Africa .. the reverse was true.

business

trade
see also EVERY man to his trade; there are TRICKS in every trade; TWO of a trade never agree.

transplant
see you cannot SHIFT an old tree without it dying.

TRAVEL broadens the mind

1929 Poet & Lunatics iii. He may be a trifle cracked, .. but that's only because his travels have been too much for his intellect. They say travel broadens the mind; but you must have the mind.

1949 Painted Garden iii. Foreign travel broadens the mind .. and a broadened mind helps all art.

1969 When in Greece xvii. 'The Americans we have met compare very favorably with most other nationals.' Travel, after all, can broaden only so many minds.

1981 Commonplace Book 22 It has so truly been said that travel—anywhere—broadens the mind.

1997 Times 24 Dec. 14 The past may be a foreign country through which we travel as strangers. But travel still broadens the mind.

experience; travel

travel
see (verb) BAD news travels fast; it is BETTER to travel hopefully than to arrive.

He TRAVELS fastest who travels alone

Cf. 1854 H. D. THOREAU Walden 78 The man who goes alone can start today; but he who travels with another must wait till that other is ready.

1888 Story of Gadsby (1889) 94 Down to Gehenna, or up to the Throne, He travels fastest who travels alone.

1921 Journal 19 June in Diaries (1979) 129 Hale's gone already. I suppose he will have to. ‘He travels fastest who travels alone’ anyway.

1989 Reflections in Jaundiced Eye iv. The reason I can ‘do what I do’ is because I've never married. He travels fastest who travels alone, and that goes double for she.

efficiency and inefficency; independence; travel

tread
see FOOLS rush in where angels fear to tread.

As a TREE falls, so shall it lie
One must not change long-established beliefs, etc., in the face of death. With allusion to ECCLESIASTES xi. 3 (AV) If the tree fall toward the South, or toward the North, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.

Seven Sermons IV. M3VWhere soever the tree falleth.. there it shall reste.
1578 Euphues I. 308 Where the tree falleth there it lyeth .. and every ones deaths daye is his domes day.
1678 English Proverbs (ed. 2) 296 As a man lives so shall he die, As a tree falls so shall it lie.
1836 Cruise of Midge II. ii. It is of no use ...As the tree falls, so must it lie—it is a part of my creed.
1921 Traveller in Little Things iii. She sent a message .. to the old father to come and see her before she died... His answer was, ‘As a tree falls so shall it lie.’

death; fate and fatalism

The TREE is known by its fruit

The TREE is known by its fruit. With allusion to MATTHEW xii. 33 (AV) The tree is known by his fruit.

Obedience of Christian Man 88VJudge the tre by his frute, and not by his leves.
1597–8 Henry IV, Pt. I ii. iv. 414 If then the tree may be known by the fruit .. there is virtue in that Falstaff.
1670 English Proverbs 11 A tree is known by the fruit, and not by the leaves.
1896 Council of Trent iv. Lutherans said the tree is known by its fruit. Teach a pure faith, and abuses will disappear.
1928 Lady Chatterley's Lover iv. The mental life .. [is] rooted in spite and envy ...Ye shall know the tree by its fruit.
1955 Flame of Forest I. 15 ‘I never judge a man by his mask.’ ‘A tree should be judged by its fruits,’ Myna responded.

appearance; human nature
tree

see also the APPLE never falls far from the tree; he that would EAT the fruit must climb the tree; you cannot SHIFT an old tree without it dying; as the TWIG is bent, so is the tree inclined; WALNUTS and pears you plant for your heirs; a WOMAN, a dog, and a walnut tree, the more you beat them the better they be.

trick

see you can't TEACH an old dog new tricks.

There are TRICKS in every trade

Knavery in all Trades.
1654 Mercurius Fumigosus 12–19 July 49 If there be not Knavery in All Trades, I shrewdly am mistaken.
1692 Fables of Aesop clxxxiii. Jupiter appointed Mercury to make him a Composition of Fraud and Hypocrisie, and to give Every Artificer his Dose on't... Mercury .. gave the Taylors the Whole Quantity that was Left; and from hence comes the Old Saying, There's Knavery in All Trades, but Most in Taylors.
1857 Border Rover vi. ‘I would be willing to swear you had bewitched this rifle.’ .. ‘Thar's tricks to all trades 'cept oorn.’
1948 Dinner at Antoine's xx. There's tricks to all trades. Running down murderers is one way of making a living, so that makes it a trade.
1978 Burglar in Closet xvii. You age them [bills, paper money] .. by cooking them with a little coffee—well, there are tricks in every trade-and I don't .. know some of the ones the counterfeiters have come up with.

business
A TROUBLE shared is a trouble halved

1931 Five Red Herrings ix. ‘Unbosom yourself,’ said Wimsey. ‘Trouble shared is trouble halved.’
1966 Shadow Dance viii. He found he wanted to share the experience of the previous night with Edna (a trouble shared is a trouble halved).
1987 Killings at Badger's Drift 7 She had never felt more keenly the truth of the saying ‘a trouble shared is a trouble halved.’ But she had lived in a small village long enough to know that what she had discovered could safely be discussed with no one.

Never TROUBLE trouble till trouble troubles you

1884 Folk-Lore Journal II. 280 Never trouble trouble, till trouble troubles you.
1945 Cats don't Smile i. Never trouble trouble until trouble troubles you. I always wondered: what then?
1972 Rise & fall of British Nanny 332 Never trouble trouble till trouble troubles you.
1983 Good Housekeeping Oct. 75 Talking of proverbs, there is an old Yorkshire saying: never trouble trouble, till trouble troubles thee. To which I would add the rider: and when it does trouble thee, keep it to thyself.

Never trouble trouble till trouble troubles you

Many a TRUE word is spoken in jest

c 1390 Monk’s Prologue 1. 1964 Be nat wrooth, my lord, though that I pleye. Ful ofte in game a sooth [truth] I have herd seye!
a 1628 Proverbs in Scots no. 1099 Manie suith word said in bourding [jesting].
c 1665 in Roxburghe Ballads (1890) VII. 366 Many a true word hath been spoke in jest.
1738 Polite Conversation I. iii. ‘I did a very foolish thing yesterday.’ .. ‘They say, many a true Word’s spoken in Jest.’
1898 Widower's Houses I. in Plays Pleasant & Unpleasant I. 10 There actually are Johannis churches here .. as well as Apollinaris ones… There is many a true word spoken in jest.
1979 Shikasta 356 By the time we have finished I expect we shall have a dozen or more [children… Many a true word is spoken in jest.

Put your TRUST in God, and keep your powder dry

Advice attributed to Oliver Cromwell (see quot. 1834), combining spiritual exhortation with the practical measure of making sure that one's gunpowder is kept serviceable. The second half of the saying is often used allusively in the phrase to keep one's powder dry.

1834 Oliver's Advice in Ballads of Ireland (1856) I. 192 Put your trust in God, my boys, and keep your powder dry.
1856 Ballads of Ireland (ed. 2) I. 191 Cromwell .. when his troops were about crossing a river .. concluded an address .. with these words— ‘put your trust in God; but mind to keep your powder dry.’
1908 Times Literary Supplement 6 Nov. 383 In thus keeping his powder dry the bishop acted most wisely,

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though he himself ascribes the happy result entirely to the observance of the other half of Cromwell’s maxim.

1979 Satan Sampler iv. God .. created us for a better end ..We must put our trust in Him and keep our powder dry.

prudence ; self-help

There is TRUTH in wine

Cf. Gr. ἐν κόρινθη, there is truth in wine (attributed to the 6th-cent. BC lyric poet Alcaeus); L. in vino veritas. The Latin version, used in Erasmus' Adages, is widely known and perhaps more frequently used than the English proverb.

1545 tr. Erasmus' Adages (ed. 2) H5 V In wyne is trouthe.

1659 Parnassi Puerperium 5 Grant but the Adage true, that Truth's in wine.

1869 He knew He was Right II. li. There is no saying truer than that .. there is truth in wine. Wine .. has the merit of forcing a man to show his true colours.

1934 Claudius the God ix. The man who made the proverb ‘There's truth in wine’ must have been pretty well soaked when he made it.

1984 Through Glass, Darkly 15 In vino veritas .., the Latin poets say, and if there is truth in wine, then why not also fiction?

drunkenness ; truth

TRUTH is stranger than fiction

Similar to FACT is stranger than fiction.

1823 Don Juan XIV. ci. Truth is always strange, Stranger than Fiction.

1863 Hard Cash II. xv. Sampson was greatly struck with the revelation: he .. said truth was stranger than fiction.

1905 Club of Queer Trades 133 ‘Do you believe that truth is stranger than fiction?’ ‘Truth must of necessity be stranger than fiction,’ said Basil placidly. ‘For fiction is the creation of the human mind, and therefore congenial to it.’

1981 Loitering with Intent i. ‘Human nature,’ said Sir Quentin, ‘is a quite extraordinary thing …You know the old adage, truth is stranger than fiction?’

1996 American Spectator June 47 Truth is stranger than fiction, and thus too complicated for the soundbite age.

reality and illusion

TRUTH lies at the bottom of a well

Cf. Gr. ἐν κόρινθη, we know nothing certainly, for truth lies in the deep (attributed to Democritus); LACTANTIUS Institutiones Divinae III. xxviii. in puteo .. veritatem iacere demersam, truth lies sunk in a well.

1562 De Neutralibus G6 V The truth lyeth yet still drowned in the depe.

1578 tr. J. Iver's Courtly Controversy 90 I shall conduct you .. vnto the Mansion where the truth so long hidden dothe inhabite, the which sage Democritus searched in the bottom of a well. a

1721 Dialogues of Dead (1907) 225 You know the Antient Philosophers said Truth lay at the bottom of a Well.

1887 Democracy 30 Truth .. is said to lie at the bottom of a well.

1943 Murder minus Motive xii. Truth .. is reputed to reside at the bottom of a well. I've often conned that old saw over to myself, and .. its originators must have meant that truth is often damned hard to discern.

1973 Appleby's Answer xiii. He was picking up a stone, which he now tossed into the well ... ‘I wonder
what's at the bottom of it. Truth—could it conceivably be? ‘Truth at the bottom of the well?’ There was a trace of impatience in Dr. Howard's voice. ‘A foolish proverb.’

TRUTH will out
Similar in form to MURDER will out.

1439 Life of St. Alban (1974) 203 Trouthe wil out … Ryghtwysnesse may nat ben hid.
1596 Merchant of Venice II. ii. 73 Truth will come to light; murder cannot be hid long; a man's son may, but in the end truth will out.
1822 Letter 17 Jan. (1971) 324 Whether about a novel or a murder the truth will out.
1979 Mortal Affair x. The time would come when she .. would want to cash in on the Trust fund and truth would out.

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Every TUB must stand on its own bottom
A proverb advocating independence and initiative.

1564 Dialogue against Fever 48\^V Let every Fatte [vat] stande vpon his owne bottome. 
1639 Paremiologia Anglo-Latina 66 Every tub must stand on his owne bottome.
1721 Refusal v. 721 I have nothing to do with that… Let every Tub stand on its own Bottom.
1866 Griffith Gaunt I. vi. There is an old saying, ‘Let every tub stand on its own bottom.’
1948 Still glides Stream iv. ‘Every tub must stand on its own bottom,’ was one of his homely ways of expressing the individual independence desirable in children.

independence

Tuesday

see Monday's CHILD is fair of face.

tag

see when GREEK meets Greek, then comes the tug of war.

tune

see why should the DEVIL have all the best tunes?: a DRIPPING June sets all in tune; when the FURZE is in bloom, my love's in tune; there's many a GOOD tune played on an old fiddle; he that LIVES in hope dances to an ill tune; he who PAYS the piper calls the tune.

TURKEY, heresy, hops, and beer came into England all in one year

1599 Diet's Dry Dinner G4 I know not how it happened (as he merrily saith) that herisie and beere came hopping into England both in a yeere.
1643 Chronicle Henry VIII 66 About [1524] .. it happened that divers things were newly brought into England, whereupon this Rime was made: ‘Turke[y]s, Carps, Hoppes, Piccarell [young pike], and Beere, Came into England all in one yeere.’
1906 Puck of Pook's Hill 235 We say—‘Turkey, Heresy, Hops, and Beer Came into England all in one year.’
1979 Observer 16 Dec. 56 ‘Turkeys, heresies, hops and beer All came to England in the one year’ says the rhyme, but the Romans gave us hops.

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innovation
turkey
see also on SAINT Thomas the Divine kill all turkeys, geese, and swine.

TURN about is fair play

1755 Life of Captain Dudley Bradstreet 338 Hitherto honest Men were kept from shuffling the Cards, because they would cast knaves out from the Company of Kings, but we would make them know, Turn about was fair Play.

1854 Handley Cross xviii. ‘Turn about is fair play,’ as the devil said to the smoke-jack [an apparatus for turning a roasting spit].

1979 Peripheral Spy iv. Since turn about is fair play, let me tell you about the additions to my knowledge.

1986 Tourist Trap xi. ‘And if you hear anything about Les, you'll let me know, won't you?’ ‘I'II be glad to. But turn-about's fair play—if you hear something, will you let me know?’

1997 Washington Post 4 Sept. C1 Last year, the Orioles benefited from everything that is fun, unfair and stupid about baseball's current playoff system. This season, The Orioles may suffer a severe case of Turnabout Is Fair Play.

fair dealing
turn
see also (noun) one GOOD turn deserves another; (verb) a BAD penny always turns up; CLERGYMEN'S sons always turn out badly; even a WORM will turn.

turneth
see a SOFT answer truneth away wrath.

turning
see it is a LONG lane that has no turning.

twelve
see it is not SPRING until you can plant your foot upon twelve daisies.

twice
see FOOL me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me; he GIVES twice who gives quickly; LIGHTNING never strikes the same place twice; ONCE bitten, twice shy; OPPORTUNITY never knocks twice at any man's door.

As the TWIG is bent, so is the tree inclined

Cf. 1530 J. PALSGRAVE L'élaircissement de la Langue Française 161 A man may bende a wande [shoot] while it is grene [pliant] and make it strayght though it be neuer so croked.

1732 Epistles to Several Persons I. 102 'Tis Education forms the common mind, Just as the Twig is bent, the Tree's inclined.

1818 Ladies Monitor 75 ‘Tis education forms the tender mind, Just as the twig is bent the tree's inclined.’

1940 Primary Education in Pocketful of Wry 16 As bends the twig, thus grows the el-em .. So, twice a month, we're bound to sell'em The doctrine of Impartial Minds.

1979 Some die Eloquent viii. ‘Nature, not nurture?’ murmured the biologist ... ‘As the twig is bent,’ Sloan came back.

1996 National Review 9 Dec. 63 Older, bigger children defend their privileges, while younger kids try to subvert the status quo. As the twig is bent, so grows the tree.

children ; human nature ; nature and nurture

TWO blacks don't make a white
Similar to **TWO** wrongs don't make a right.

**1721** Scottish Proverbs 321 Two Blacks make no White. An Answer to them who, being blam'd, say others have done as ill or worse.

**1822** Letter 14Mar (1934) VII. 96 To try whether I cannot contradict the old proverb of ‘Two blackies [Lockhart Life: blacks] not making a white.’

**1882** Charles Lamb vii. As two blacks do not make a white, it was beside the mark to make laborious fun over Southey's youthful ballads.

**1932** Adventures of Black Girl 28 Never forget that two blacks do not make a white.

**1966** I start Counting viii. ‘What's the modern murderer got to fear? .. They'll only go to prison ..’. ‘Two blacks don't make a white.’

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**good and evil**

While **TWO** dogs are fighting for a bone, a third runs away with it

**c 1386** Knight's Tale l. 1177 We stryve as did the houndes for the boon ...Ther cam a kyte, whil that they were so wrothe, And baar awaie the boon betwixe hem bothe.

**1534** Dialogue of Comfort (1553) I Aiii[1]VNow strive there twain for vs, our lord send the grace, that the thyrde dog cary not awaie the bone from them both.

**1639** Paræmiologia Anglo-Latina 94 Two dogs strive for a bone, and the third runs away with it.

**1784** Gazette of State of S. Carolina 17 July 2 Verifying the coarse proverb, while two dogs are fighting for a bone, a third comes and runs away with it.

**1983** Practical Computing June 5 While the major companies continue to argue among themselves they are in a poor position to police the rest of the industry. When two alsatians are fighting over a large bone, a passing poodle can easily walk off with it.

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**opportunity, taken**

**TWO** heads are better than one

Similar to **FOUR** eyes see more than two.

**c 1390** Confessio Amantis i. 1021 Tuo han more wit then on.

**1530** L'éclaircissement de la Langue Française 269 Two wyttes be farre better than one.

**1546** Dialogue of Proverbs i. ix. C2[VBut of these two thynges he wolde determyne none Without ayde. For two hedds are better than one.

**1778** Nabob I. 5 Here comes brother Thomas; two heads are better than one; let us take his opinion. 

**1817** Rob Roy I. viii. ‘Francis .. was likely to be as effectually .. supported by my presence than by yours.’ ‘Two heads are better than one, you know.’

**1979** Eurokillers xviii. Two heads are better than one .. I'd value your advice.

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**assistance**

**TWO** is company, but three is none

The alternative ending is three's a crowd.

**1706** Spanish & English Dict. s.v. Compañia, A Company consisting of three is worth nothing. It is the Spanish Opinion, who say that to keep a Secret three are too many, and to be Merry they are too few.

**1860** Season Ticket viii. Three is a very inconvenient limitation, constituting, according to an old adage, 'no company.'

**1869** English Proverbs 442 Two is company, but three is none.

**1944** Modern Language Notes LIX. 517 Two's company, three's a crowd.

**1979** Love & Land Beyond viii. Two's company and three's none, so one of the three has been taken out of the game.

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**friends**
TWO of a trade never agree

1630 Second Part of Honest Whore II. 154 It is a common rule, and 'tis most true, Two of one trade never loue.

1673 Careless Lovers A2 Two of a Trade can seldome agree.

1727 Fables I. xxi. In every age and clime we see, Two of a trade can ne'er agree.

1887 Poems (1978) I. 148 Two of a trade, lass, never agree! Parson and Doctor!—don't they love rarely, Fighting the devil in other men's fields!

1914 Beasts & Super-Beasts 96 The snorts and snarls .. went far to support the truth of the old saying that two of a trade never agree.

1981 Queen Mother vii. There is an old adage, ‘Two of a kind never agree.’

quarrelsomeness ; similarity and dissimilarity

If TWO ride on a horse, one must ride behind

1598–99 Much Ado about Nothing III. v. 34 An two men ride of a horse, one must ride behind.

1628 Berkeley MSS (1885) III. 32 If two ride upon an horse one must sit behinde; meaninge, That in each contention one must take the [defeat].

1874 Uncle John I. x. There is an old adage .. ‘When two ride on one horse, one must ride behind.’

1942 Posted for Murder VI. iii. There comes a point when you are very exasperating … ‘When two ride on one horse, one must ride behind.’ But I'm getting off for a while.

1986 Mystery Lady (1988) iv. Collaboration on a book is an awkward business. If two people ride one horse, one of them must ride behind.

co-operation

There are TWO sides to every question

Cf. PROTAGORAS Aphorism (in Diogenes Laertius Protagoras IX. li.) Καὶ Πρὸς τὸ σῶμα, ὧν ἐστὶ καὶ τὸ σῶμα τοῦ ἄλλου, Protagoras was the first to say that there are two sides to every question, one opposed to the other.

1802 Autobiography (1966) III. 269 There were two Sides to a question.

1817 Letter 5 May in Adams—Jefferson Letters (1959) II. 513 Men of energy of character must have enemies: because there are two sides to every question, and .. those who take the other will of course be hostile.

1863 Water Babies vi. Let them recollect this, that there are two sides to every question, and a downhill as well as an uphill road.

1957 Letter in V. Glendinning Edith Sitwell (1981) xxviii. It's more than platitudinous to say that there are two sides to every question but there is something to be said on both sides.

1971 Red Hand iii. From the English point of view which inevitably they have applied to .. Ireland, the art of politics consists in realizing that there are two sides to every question.

fair dealing

It takes TWO to make a bargain

1597 Colours of Good & Euill x. 68 The seconde worde makes the bargaine.

1598 Mucedorus B2 Nay, soft, sir, tow words to a bargaine, a

1637 et al. Widow V. i. There's two words to a bargain ever .. and if love be one, I'm sure money's the other.

1766 Vicar of Wakefield II. xii. ‘Hold, hold, Sir,’ cried Jenkinson, ‘there are two words to that bargain.’

1943 Journey in Dark iv. Takes two to make a bargain, and you both done mighty wrong.
1973 Bardel's Murder iv. My father was in skins and he had to carry a life-preserver, they got so nasty. Caveat emptor, he used to say, it taking two to make a bargain.

**Buying and Selling**

It takes TWO to make a quarrel

□1706 Spanish & English Dict. s.v. Barajar, When one will not, two do not Quarrel.
□1732 Gnomologia no. 4942 There must be two at least to a Quarrel.
□1859 Geoffrey Hamlyn II. xiii. It takes two to make a quarrel, Cecil, and I will not be one.
□1979 Times 3 Dec. 13 If it were not for the truism that it takes at least two to make a quarrel, the French and the Germans .. could fairly claim that the fault lay wholly with the United Kingdom.

**Anger, Quarrelsomeness**

It takes TWO to tango

 Probably based on earlier sayings of the it takes two to... form (see above). Sung by Pearl Bailey, the Hoffman and Manning song (quot. 1952) was a worldwide hit, giving this saying instant international currency.

□1952 Takes Two to Tango (song-title) 2 There are lots of things you can do alone! But takes two to tango.
□1965 Listener 24 June 923 As for negotiation .. the President has a firm, and melancholy, conviction: it takes two to tango.
□1974 Bridge of Magpies vii. ‘We’re not getting anywhere.’ ‘It takes two to tango,’ I said ‘I’ll listen,’
□1991 Times 22 May 14 Remember. It only take two to tango, and neither of them has to be you.

Both your computer's video card and your monitor must be capable of a given rate to achieve it.

**Co-operation**

TWO wrongs don't make a right

Similar to TWO blacks don't make a white.

□1783 Letter 2 Aug. (1951) I. 308 Three wrongs will make one right.
□1814 Several Trials of David Barclay 249 Two wrongs don't make one right.
□1905 Starvecrow Farm xxiv. He ought to see this!.. After all, two wrongs don't make a right.
□1979 Daily Telegraph 24 May 14 If two wrongs do not make a right, three rights can make a terrible wrong.
□1991 Washington Post 26 Apr. Even in law school, two wrongs don't make a right.
□1994 Too Many Cooks Spoil Broth ii. 9 I had to lie slightly to cover for my rudeness ... Maybe two wrongs don't make a right, but sometimes that's all there is left.

**Good and Evil**

two

see also BETTER one house spoiled than two; BETWEEN two stools one falls to the ground; a BIRD in the hand is worth two in the bush; two BOYS are half a boy, and three boys are no boy at all; of two EVILS choose the less; FOUR eyes see more than two; one HOUR'S sleep before midnight is worth two after; NO man can serve two masters; ONE for sorrow, two for mirth; if you can't RIDE two horses at once, you shouldn't be in the circus; if you RUN after two hares you will catch neither; THREE may keep a secret, if two of them are dead; one VOLUNTEER is worth two pressed men.
undone
see what's DONE cannot be undone.

The UNEXPECTED always happens
Similar to NOTHING is certain but the unforeseen. Cf. PLAUTUS Mostellaria 1. iii. 197 insperata accidunt magi' saepe quam quae speres, unexpected things happen more often than those you hope for.

1885 How to be Happy though Married xxv. A woman may have much theoretical knowledge, but this will not prevent unlooked-for obstacles from arising … It is the unexpected that constantly happens.

1909 Times Weekly 12 Nov. 732 No place in the world is more familiar than the House of Commons with ‘the unforeseen that always happens.’

1938 Scoop I. iii. Have nothing which in a case of emergency you cannot carry in your own hands. But remember that the unexpected always happens.

1977 Peter's Quotations 296 Peter’s Law—The unexpected always happens.

certainty and uncertainty; foresight and hindsight

unforeseen
see NOTHING is certain but the unforeseen.

UNION is strength
Unity is a popular alternative for union, especially when used as a trade-union slogan. Cf. HOMER Iliad XIII. 237 ὑπερετήσαντες τε οἱ ἁλκυόνες ἐφανερώθησαν μεγάλη ὕπαρξις, even weak men have strength in unity; L. vis unita fortior, force united is stronger; c 1527 T. BERTHELET tr. Erasmus’ Sayings of Wise Men A4V Concorde maketh those thynges that are weake, mighty and stronge.

1654 Complete Writings (1963) VI. 280 Union Strengthens.

1837 in Early Negro Writing (1971) 228 In Union is strength.

1848 Letter 29 Dec. in Indiana Hist. Collections (1936) XXII. 178 ‘Union is strength,’ and that is the only kind that can control the floods of such a ‘great father of rivers [the Mississippi].’

1877 Tales of Great Families I. 264 The prosperity of the House of Rothschild [is due to] the unity which has attended the co-partnership of its members, .. a fresh example of the saying that ‘union is strength.’

1933 Strange Murder of Hatton xxix. Union is strength. We, by pooling our resources, .. are able .. to secure a steady income.

1981 Assault Force ix. This unfortunate misunderstanding; we must clear it up … After all, unity is strength.

strength and weakness; unity and division

UNITED we stand, divided we fall

1768 Liberty Song in Boston Gazette 18 July Then join Hand in Hand brave Americans all, By uniting we stand, by dividing we fall.

1849 Flag of our Union in Poems (1853) 41 ‘United we stand—divided we fall!’—It made and preserves a nation!

1894 Fables of Aesop 122 Then Lion attacked them one by one and soon made an end of all four [oxen]. United we stand, divided we fall.

1974 Continuous Katherine Mortenhoe iv. Establishing a higher rate for the job. United we stand, divided we fall.

unity and division

unity
see UNION is strength.

unlucky
see LUCKY at cards, unlucky in love.

unpunished
see no GOOD deed goes unpunished.

What goes UP must come down
Commonly associated with wartime bombing and anti-aircraft shrapnel.

□1929 Stretchers vii. The antiaircraft guns always took a shot for luck. What goes up must come down, and one can be killed quite as neatly by a fragment of his own shrapnel as by the enemy's.

1949 Naked & Dead III. vi. Gravity would occupy the place of mortality (what goes up must come down)

1967 Epigrams at Large 57 ‘What goes up, must come down’ is really a time-worn statement which wore out after the Venus and Mars probes.

1991 Times 9 Sept. 18 Our descent is swift, in plunging abseils... [for] the Old Man [of Hoy; a rock pinnacle in the Orkney islands] and Sir Isaac Newton share a common law; that what goes up must irrevocably come down.

**fate and fatalism**

up
see up like a ROCKET, down like a stick.

upright
see EMPTY sacks will never stand upright.

use
see KEEP a thing seven years and you'll always find a use for it.

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V

vacuum
see NATURE abhors a vacuum.

vain
see in vain the NET is spread in the sight of the bird.

valet
see NO man is a hero to his valet.

valour
see DISCRETION is the better part of valour.

VARIETY is the spice of life

Cf. EURIPIDES Orestes 234 μακαρία, a change is always nice.

□1785 Task II. 76 Variety's the very spice of life, That gives it all its flavour.

1854 Ida May vi. Take all de wives you can get,—bariety am de spite of life.

1954 Invitation from Minerva 174 ‘Your signal is different from ours?’... ‘Variety is the spice of life,’ he retorted.

1974 Gaudy V. ‘It sounds .. as if the owner switches his interests during vacations.’ ‘As he well may do, if there is anything in the saying that variety is the spice of life.’

www.EnglishPro.ir
novelty; variety

varlet
see an APE'S an ape, a varlet's a varlet, though they be clad in silk or scarlet.

vengeance
see REVENGE is a dish that can be eaten cold.

venture
see NOTHING venture, nothing gain; NOTHING venture, nothing have.

vessel
see EMPTY vessels make the most sound.

view
see DISTANCE lends enchantment to the view.

vinegar
see HONEY catches more flies than vinegar; from the SWEETEST wine, the tartest vinegar.

VIRTUE is its own reward
Cf. OVID Ex Ponto II. iii. virtutem pretium .. esse sui, virtue is its own reward.

1509 Ship of Fools 10\textsuperscript{V} Vertue hath no rewarde.

1596 Faerie Queene III. xii. Your vertue selfe her owne reward shall breed, Euen immortall praise, and glory wyde.

1642 Religio Medici I. 87 That vertue is her owne reward, is but a cold principle.

1673 Assignation III. i. Virtue .. is its own reward: I expect none from you.

1844 Martin Chuzzlewit xv. It is creditable to keep up one's spirits here. Virtue's its own reward.

1989 Eight Months on Ghazzah Street (1989) 19 His patience was not like other people's, a rather feeble virtue, which had, by its nature, to be its own reward.

1998 Washington Times 3 Jan. D10 It's also not true the meek will inherit the earth or that virtue is its own reward.

just deserts; virtue

virtue
see also PATIENCE is a virtue.

The VOICE of the people is the voice of God
Cf. a 804 ALCUIN Letter clxiv. in Works (1863) I. 438 solent dicere: vox populi, vox Dei, they often say: the voice of the people is the voice of God.

\textsuperscript{c} 1412 Regimen of Princes (EETS) 104 Peples vois is goddes voys, men seyne.

1450 in Political Poems (1861) II. 227 The voice of the people is the voice of God.

1646 Pseudodoxia Epidemica I. iii. Though sometimes they are flattered with that Aphorisme, [they] will hardly beleve the voyce of the people to bee the voyce of God.

1822 Lacon II. 266 The voice of the People is the voice of God; this axiom has manifold exceptions.

1914 Misalliance p. lxxii. An experienced demagogue comes along and says, ‘Sir: you are the dictator: the voice of the people is the voice of God.’

1989 Washington Post 24 Mar. C2 I imagine they are fine citizens. After all, we elected them and the voice of the people is the voice of God, remember that.

politics; power; rulers and ruled

One VOLUNTEER is worth two pressed men
Pressed men were those who were forced into military service.

\textsuperscript{D} 1705 Journal 31 Oct. in Remarks & Collections (1885) I. 62 'Tis s\textsuperscript{d} my L\textsuperscript{d} Seymour presently after M'. Smith was pronounc'd Speaker, rose up, and told them, Gentlemen; you have got a Low Church man; but
pray remember that 100 Voluntiers are better than 200 press’d men.

1834 Jacob Faithful I. xiii. ‘Shall I give you a song?’ ‘That's right, Tom; a volunteer's worth two pressed men.’

1837 Arethusa I. iii. Don't fancy you will be detained against your will; one volunteer is worth two pressed men.

1897 Captains Courageous x. He presumed Harvey might need a body-servant some day or other, and .. was sure that one volunteer was worth five hirelings.

1979 Shadow of Moon (rev. ed.) iv. The Earl could not be persuaded to send her away… In any case, said the Earl, Winter would need a personal maid, and in his opinion one volunteer was worth three pressed men.

co-operation; free will and compulsion

vomit

see the DOG returns to his vomit.

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W

wag

see it is MERRY in hall when beards wag all.

wait

see ALL things come to those who wait; TIME and tide wait for no man.

waiting

see it's ILL waiting for dead men's shoes.

We must learn to WALK before we can run

The metaphorical phrase to run before one can walk is also common.

□ c 1350 Douce MS 52 no. 116 Fyrst the chylde crepyth and after gooth [walks].

c 1450 Towneley Play of First Shepherds (EETS) l. 100 Ffyrst must vs crepe and sythen [afterwards] go.

1670 English Proverbs 75 You must learn to creep before you go.

1794 Letter 20 July in Writings (1940) XXXIII. 438 We must walk as other countries have done before we can run.

1851 Lavengro II. ii. Ambition is a very pretty thing; but sir, we must walk before we run.

1876 Business 124 More fail from doing too much than too little. We must learn and be strong enough to walk before we can run.

1947 Manchester Fourteen Miles xv. Mrs. Winstanley reproved her for being impatient. She pointed out .. that everybody must learn to walk before they could run.

1980 Russian Hide & Seek iv. At the moment we can't leave it to the English to do anything. We must learn to walk before we can run.

patience and impatience

walk

see also AFTER dinner rest a while, after supper walk a mile.

wall

see the WEAKEST go to the wall.

WALLS have ears
Similar to *FIELDS have eyes, and woods have ears.*

1575 Supposes i. i. *The table .., the portals, yes and the cupbords them selves have eares.*

1592 *French Alphabet* II. 29 *The walles may have some eares ...Les murailles ont des aureilles.*

1620 tr. *Cervantes' Don Quixote* II. xlviii. *They say Walls haue eares.*

1676 *Neck or Nothing* II. i. *Not so fast and so loud, good master of mine—walls have ears.*

1822 *Nigel* I. vi. *It is not good to speak of such things... Stone walls have ears.*

1958 *Mountolive* XII. 232 *She lay in the silence of a room which had housed (if walls have ears) their most secret deliberations.*

1995 *All Deadly Beloved* iv. 51 *I swore the tale would never leave that room. Foolish of her to believe that, since the walls have ears and German was bound to tell Pam...*

**eavesdroppers**

see a *WOMAN, a dog, and a walnut tree, the more you beat them the better they be.*

**WALNUTS and pears you plant for your heirs**
The idea of ‘planting trees for posterity’ is much older than the specific references to walnuts and pears. Cf. *CICERO Cato Major* vii. 24 ‘serit arbores, quae alteri saeclo prosint,’ ut ait Statius noster in *Synephebis*, ‘he plants trees, which will be of use to another age;’ as [Caecilius] Statius says in his *Synephebi*.

1640 *Outlandish Proverbs* no. 198 *The tree that growes slowly, keepes it selfe for another.*

1732 *Gnomologia* no 2401 *He who plants a Walnut-tree, expects not to eat of the Fruit.*

1863 *Dreamthorp* xi. *My oaks are but saplings; but what undreamed-of English kings will they not outlive?.. A man does not plant a tree for himself: he plants it for posterity.*

1907 *English Proverbs* 361 *plant pears for your heirs. A proverb which no longer holds true, since pears are now made to yield well after a few years.*

1941 *Red Tapeworm* xv. *‘Better to plant them promptly,’ said Miss Quekett. ‘It's only walnuts and pears you plant for your heirs.’

**children and parents**

If you **WANT** a thing done well, do it yourself

Very similar to if you would be well SERVED, serve yourself.

1541 tr. *H. Bullinger's Christian State of Matrimony* xix. *If thou wilt prospere, then loke to euery thynge thyne owne self.*

1616 *Adages* 163 *If a man will haue his business well done, he must doe it himselfe.*

1858 *Poems* (1960) 160 *That's what I always say; if you want a thing to be well done, You must do it yourself.*

1927 *Times* 14 Nov. 15 *Lastly there is the illustration of the great principle: if you want a thing done, do it yourself.*

1975 *By Hook or by Crook* xxi. *Do you know how I got it done in the end? I went down to Annapolis myself. I always say, if you want a thing done well, do it yourself!*

1998 *Times* 20 Jan. 7 *After everything that's happend, pregnancy was the last thing on my mind ... there's a lot to be said for the old adage that if you want a job doing properly, do it yourself.*

**efficiency and inefficiency; self-help**

For **WANT of a nail the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe the horse was lost; and for want of a horse the man was lost**
The proverb is found in a number of forms. Cf. late 15th-cent. Fr. *par ung seul clou perd on ung bon cheval*, by just one nail one loses a good horse; *c 1390 GOWER Confessio Amantis* v. 4785 for sparinge of a litel cost Fulofte time a man hath lost The large cote for the hod [hood].
The French-men have a military proverb, The losse of a nayle, the losse of an army. The want of a nayle looseth the shoee, the losse of shoee troubles the horse, the horse indangereth the rider, the rider breaking his ranke molests the company, so farre as to hazard the whole Army.

Outlandish Proverbs no. 499 For want of a naile the shoe is lost, for want of a shoe the horse is lost, for want of a horse the rider is lost.

1880 Duty x. ‘Don’t care’ was the man who was to blame for the well-known catastrophe:—‘For want of a nail the shoe was lost, for want of a shoe the horse was lost, and for want of a horse the man was lost.’

1925 Juno & Paycock I. 16 You bring your long-tailed shovel, an’ I’ll bring me navvy [device for excavating earth]. We mightin’ want them, an’, then agen, we might: for want of a nail the shoe was lost, for want of a shoe the horse was lost, an’ for want of a horse the man was lost—aw, that’s a darlin’ proverb, a daarin’.

1979 Missionaries & Cannibals viii. No detail .. was too small to be passed over ... ‘For want of a nail,’ as the proverb said.

1995 National Review 12 June 10 For want of nail the battle was lost. Well, Republicans may have found just the right nail to win the entitlement battle.

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**action and consequence; great and small**

If you WANT something done, ask a busy person

The rationale behind this apparent paradox is indicated in quot. 1997.

1984 Christian Science Monitor 26 Oct. 38 It means. specifically, that you must banish all idleness; and it also means, in a general way, that if you want something done, you should ask a busy person—like me—to do it.

1997 Life Association News Aug. 60 It's the old story: If you want something done, ask a busy person. They know how to manage their time.

1998 Times 9 Jan. 33 They do say that if you want something done you should ask a busy person, but there must be limits.

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**efficiency and inefficiency**

want

see also (noun) WILFUL waste makes woeful want; (verb) the MORE you get, the more you want; if you want PEACE, you must prepare for war; WASTE not, want not.

WANTON kittens make sober cats

1732 Gnomologia no. 5415 Wanton [frolicsome] Kittins may make sober old Cats.

1832 Scottish Proverbs 97 Wanton kittens make douce [sedate] cats.

1855 Hand-Book of Proverbs 551 Wanton kittens may make sober cats.

1975 Women in Wall I. I was fleshy .. in my youth. Carnal. But wanton kittens make sober cats.

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**youth**

war

see COUNCILS of war never fight; all's FAIR in love and war; when GREEK meets Greek, then comes the tug of war; if you want PEACE, you must prepare for war.

warling

(one who is despised or disliked): see BETTER be an old man's darling, than a young man's slave.

warm

see COLD hands, warm heart.

One does not WASH one's dirty linen in public

It is unwise to publicize private disputes or scandals. The saying is very often used in the metaphorical
phrase to wash one’s dirty linen in public. Cf. Fr. c’est en famille, ce n’est pas en publique, qu'on lave son linge sale, one washes one's dirty linen amongst the family, not in public.

1809 Pills 45 The man has always had a great itch for scribbling, and has mostly been so fortunate as to procure somebody who pitied, his ignorance, to ‘wash his dirty linen.’

1867 Last Chronicle of Barset II. xliv. I do not like to trouble you with my private affairs;—there is nothing .. so bad as washing one’s dirty linen in public.

1886 How to be Happy thought Married i. Married people .. should remember the proverb about the home-washing of soiled linen.

1942 Danger point xlviii. The case .. will be dropped... There's nothing to be gained by washing a lot of dirty linen in public.

1980 Neapolitan Steak 199 Her look raked him from head to toe. ‘One does not wash one’s Dirty Linen in Public, Commissario.’

discretion

wash

see also one HAND washes the other.

WASTE not, want not

Want is variously used in the senses ‘lack’ and ‘desire.’ Another proverb making the connection between waste and want is WILFUL waste makes woeful want.

1772 Letter 10 Aug. (1931) V. 334 he will waste nothing; but he must want nothing.

1800 Parent's Assistant (ed. 3) V. 136 The following words .. were written .. over the chimney-piece, in his uncle's spacious kitchen—‘Waste not, want not.’

1872 Under Greenwood Tree I. 1. viii. Helping her to vegetable she didn’t want, and when it had nearly alighted on her plate, taking it across for his own use, on the plea of waste not, want not.

1941 Red Tapeworm xxii. ‘The lorry's full of children as well as rubbish.’ .. ‘And what is printed on the banner?’.. ‘Waste Not Want Not.’

1987 Skeleton in Grass i. No crusts to be eaten up, either—Sarah's childhood had been dominated by crusts to be eaten up, and waste not want not.

1995 Hard Christmas vii. 69 ‘I use turkey broth instead of ham at Thanksgiving,’ she said. ‘Waste not, want not.’

thrift; waste

waste

see also (noun) HASTE makes waste; WILFUL waste makes woeful want.

A WATCHED pot never boils

1848 Mary Barton II. xiv. What's the use of watching? A watched pot never boils.

1880 Cloven Foot III. viii. Don’t you know that vulgar old proverb that says that ‘a watched pot never boils’?

1940 Europe in Spring X. ‘He [Mussolini] is waiting to see how the next battle turns out,’ they said... ‘A watched pot never boils,’ they said—only this one finally did.

1979 Murder in Outline ii. I .. remained seated .. fixing my eyes hungrily on the rear mirror for signs of other guests arriving. It was a case of the watched pot, however.


patience and impatience

Don't go near the WATER until you learn how to swim
1855 Hand-Book of Proverbs 459 Never venture out of your depth till you can swim.

1975 Snow Tiger XV. ‘There I was … Over-protected and regarded as a teacher's pet into the bargain.’ ‘Don't go near the water until you learn how to swim,’” quoted McGill.

prudence

water

see also BLOOD is thicker than water; DIRTY water will quench fire; you can take a HORSE to the water, but you can't make him drink; the MILL cannot grind with the water that is past; you never MISS the water till the well runs dry; STILL waters run deep; STOLEN waters are sweet; don't THROW out your dirty water until you get in fresh.

The WAY to a man's heart is through his stomach

1814 Letter 15 Apr. in Works (1851) VI. 505 The shortest road to men's hearts is down their throats. 1845 Hand-Book for Travellers in Spain 1. i. The way to many an honest heart lies through the belly. 1857 John Halifax, Gentleman xxx. ‘Christmas dinners will be much in request.’ ‘There's a saying that the way to an Englishman's heart is through his stomach.’ 1975 Our Man in Camelot V. The way to a man's heart wasn't through his stomach, it was through an appreciation of what interested him. 1986 Jersey Tomatoes XV. What she meant was in a home she could bake things and make meals for him… The way to man's heart is through his stomach. 1991 McNally's Secret (1992) vii. 89 There was something demonic in her lovemaking that night … Popular wisdom has it that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. Don't you ever believe it.

food and drink

way

see also the LONGEST way round is the shortest way home; LOVE will find a way; OTHER times, other manners; STRAWS tell which way the wind blows; a WILFUL man must have his way; where there's a WILL there's a way.

There are more WAYS of killing a cat than choking it with cream

See also the following two entries.

1839 John Smith's Letters 91 There's more ways to kill a cat than one. 1855 Westward Ho! II. xii. Hold on yet awhile. More ways of killing a cat than choking her with cream. 1941 Black Lamb I. 506 Now I see the truth of the old saying that there are more ways of killing a cat than choking it with cream. In Bosnia the Slavs did choke the Turk with cream, they glutted him with their wholesale conversions … But here cream just did not come into the question. 1974 Porterhouse Blue ii. I have yet to meet a liberal who can withstand the attrition of prolonged discussion of the inessentials … There are more ways of killing a cat than stuffing it with …

ways and means

There are more WAYS of killing a dog than hanging it

See also the adjacent entries.

1845 Chronicles of Pineville 35 There's more ways to kill a dog besides choking him with butter. 1945 Lark Rise xvi. A proverb always had to be capped. No one could say, ‘There's more ways of killing a dog than hanging it’ without being reminded, ‘not of choking it with a pound of fresh butter.’ 1955 Destination, Danger x. It [liquor] was a lifesaver and I'm much obliged. But you can kill a dog without choking him with butter.
See also the two preceding entries.

**1678** *English Proverbs* (ed. 2) 127 There are more ways to kill a dog than hanging.

**1721** *Scottish Proverbs* 253 Many ways to kill a Dog, and not to hang him. There be many ways to bring about one and the same Thing, or Business.

**1725** *Drapier's Letters* X. 165 I know that very homely Proverb, more ways of killing a Dog than hanging him.

**1945** *Lark Rise* xvi. A proverb always had to be capped. No one could say, ‘There's more ways of killing a dog than hanging it’ without being reminded, ‘nor of choking it with a pound of fresh butter.’

### ways and means

**weak**

see *Yorkshire born and Yorkshire bred, strong in the arm and weak in the head.*

### The WEAKEST go to the wall

Usually said to derive from the installation of seating (around the walls) in the churches of the late Middle Ages. *To go to the wall* means figuratively ‘to succumb in a conflict or struggle.’

**a 1500** *Coventry Plays* (EETS) 47 The weykist gothe eyuer to the walle.

**c 1595** *Romeo & Juliet* I. i. 14 That shows thee a weak slave; for the weakest goes to the wall.

**1714** (title) The weakest go to the wall, or the Dissenters sacrific'd by all parties.

**1834** *Peter Simple* I. v. You will be thrashed all day long... The weakest always goes to the wall there.

**1888** *Travels in Arabia Deserta* I. x. There perished many among them; ... it is the weak which go to the wall.

**1916** *My Lady of Moor* i. He saw to it that I had a good education,.. knowing the necessity and value of it in these strenuous days of the ‘weak to the wall.’

**1955** *Doors of Sleep* i. ‘As in the early church, the weakest go to the wall,’ the Archdeacon said, seating himself on the low parapet.

### strength and weakness ; winners and losers

**weakest**

see also *a Chain is no stronger than its weakest link.*

**wealthy**

see *Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.*

**wear**

see *Better to wear out than to rust out; if the cap fits, wear it; constant dropping wears away a stone; give a thing, and take a thing, to wear the devil's gold ring; if the shoe fits, wear it.*

**weary**

see *be the day weary or be the day long, at last it ringeth to evensong.*

**weather**

see *there is no such thing as bad weather, only the wrong clothes; Robin Hood could brave all weathers but a thaw wind.*

**wed**

see *Better wed over the mixen than over the moor.*

### One WEDDING brings another

Similar to *one funeral makes many*, the idea in this case being that the social gathering of the bride's and groom's families and friends is likely to result in other romantic attachments.

**1634** in *Roxburghe Ballads* (1880) III. 54 ‘Tis said that one wedding produceth another.

**1713** *Wife of Bath* I. i. One Wedding, the Proverb says, begets another.

**1885** *Salt-Cellar* I. 88 Bridesmaids may soon be made brides. One wedding.. brings on another.
1929 True Heart I. 54 Cheer up, Suke! I dare say you'll get a boy in time—they do say one wedding brings another.

1957 Double Affair i. But when he said ‘One marriage always brings on another, Mrs. Hubback,’ I slapped his face with a nice bit of cod's tail.

weddings

WEDLOCK is a padlock

1678 English Proverbs (ed. 2) 56 Wedlock is a padlock.

1821 Don Juan (1857) v. clviii. Thus in the East they are extremely strict, And wedlock and a padlock mean the same.

1950 Henry Plumdew 211 Wedlock is a padlock, says our proverb.

marriage

Wednesday

see Monday's CHILD is fair of face.

weed

see ILL weeds grow apace.

weeding

see ONE year's seeding makes seven years' weeding.

week

see if you would be HAPPY for a week take a wife.

weep

see LAUGH and the world laughs with you.

weeper

see FINDERS keepers (losers weepers).

welcome

see when all FRUIT fails, welcome haws.

WELL begun is half done

WELL begun is half done, says our proverb. You, proverbially it is said that the beginning is the hald of every task; HORACE Epistles I. ii. 40 dimidium facti qui coepit habet, he who has made a beginning, has half done.

1415 Middle English Sermons (EETS) 148 The wise man seth that halfe he hath don that wel begynneth is werke.

1542 Erasmus' Apophthegms I. 16 Laertius ascrybeth to hym [Socrates] this saiying also: to haue well begoone is a thyng halfe dooen.

1616 Dict. (rev. ed.) 555 Well begun, is half done.

1703 Don Quixote IV. xli. Let me .. get .. ready for our Journey... 'Twill be soon done, and A Business once begun, you know, is half ended.

1883 Shropshire Folklore 273 They also account it very unlucky to give trust [credit] for the first article sold. ‘Well begun is half done,’ is evidently their principle.

1907 Acts I. 176 Satan spoils many a well-begun work ... Well begun is half—but only half—ended.

1981 Xanadu Talisman iv. The nannie-like proverbs .. Well begun is half done, The early bird catches the worm.

beginnings and endings

All's WELL that ends well

www.EnglishPro.ir
Cf. c 1250 Proverbs of Heding in Anglia (1881) IV. 182 Wel is him that wel ende mai.
□1381 in Chronicon Henrici Knighton (1895) II. 139 If the ende be wele, than is alle wele.
c 1530 Commonplace Book (EETS) 110 ‘All ys well that endyth well,’ said the gud wyff.
1602 All's Well that ends Well IV. iv. 35 All's Well That Ends Well. Still the fine's [end's] the crown.
1836 Midshipman Easy I. vi. I had got rid of the farmer, .. bull, and bees—all's well that ends well.
1879 Dead Game xviii. My rank's been confirmed. So all's well that ends well.
1997 Terminal Case xi. 113 Matter of getting used to, perhaps, sir. Anyway, all's well that ends well this time.

beginnings and endings ; good fortune

well
see also (noun) you never MISS the water till the well runs dry; the PITCHER will go to the well once too often; TRUTH lies at the bottom of a well.

well
see also (noun) LET well alone; (adjective) the DEVIL was sick, the Devil a saint would be; (adverb) he LIVES long who lives well; PAY beforehand was never well served; if you would be well SERVED, serve yourself; SPARE well and have to spend; everyone SPEAKS well of the bridge which carries him over; if a THING'S worth doing, it's worth doing well; if you WANT a thing done well, do it yourself.
west
see EAST, west, home's best.
wet
see (adverb) SOW dry and set wet; (verb) the CAT would eat fish, but would not wet her feet.
what
see what MUST be must be; what you SEE is what you get; what goes UP must come down.
wheel
see the SQUEAKING Wheel gets the grease.
while
see while there's LIFE there's hope.
whirlwind
see they that SOW the wind shall reap the whirlwind.
whistle
see don't HALLOO till you are out of the wood; A SOW may whistle, though it has an ill mouth for it.

A WHISTLING woman and a crowing hen are neither fit for God nor men

□1721 Scottish Proverbs 33 A crooning cow, a crowing Hen and a whistling Maid boded never luck to a House. The two first are reckoned ominous, but the Reflection is on the third.
1850 Notes & Queries 1st Ser. II. 164 A whistling woman and a crowing hen, Is neither fit for God nor men.
1891 Beast & Man ii. ‘A whistling woman and a crowing hen are neither fit for God nor men,’ is a mild English saying.
1917 Cheshire Proverbs 28 A whistling woman and a crowing hen will fear the old lad [the Devil] out of his den.
1933 Farmer Boy xi. Royal teased her, Whistling girls and crowing hens Always come to some bad ends.
1981 Kate Greenaway i. Mary was .. always ready with a relevant proverb ‘a whistling woman and a crowing hen, are neither good for God nor men.’
1995 Endangered Pleasures 116 I was the wrong sex. Boys whistled ... As grandmothers used to say, A
whistling girl and a crowing hen Both will come to a bad end.

see also it is a POOR dog that's not worth whistling for.

One WHITE foot, buy him; two white feet, try him; three white feet, look well about him; four white feet, go without him

A horse-dealing proverb.

□1882 Notes & Queries 6th Ser. V. 427 One white foot—buy him. Two white feet—try him. Three white feet—look well about him. Four white feet—go without him.

1957 Folklore of Maine iv. One white foot, buy him. Three white feet, try him. Three white feet, deny him. Four white feet and a slip in his nose, take him out and feed him to the crows.

□buying and selling ; horse lore

white

see also FEBRUARY fill dyke, be it black or be it white; TWO blacks don't make a white.

whole

see the HALF is better than the whole; HALF the truth is often a whole lie.

whore

see ONCE a whore, always a whore.

wife

see a BLIND man's wife needs no paint; CAESAR'S wife must be above suspicion; a DEAF husband and a blind wife are always a happy couple; if you would be HAPPY for a week take a wife; the HUSBAND is always the last to know; my SON is my son till he gets him a wife, but my daughter's my daughter all the days of her life; he that will THRIVE must first ask his wife.

A WILFUL man must have his way

□1816 Antiquary I. vi. A wilful man must have his way.

1907 Alice-for-Short xxxvii. ‘A wilful man will have his way,’ says Peggy, laughing ... Alice replies: ‘Never mind!’

1931 Blanket of Dark xii. ‘Take one of my men with you.’ He shook his head ... ‘A wilful man must have his way,’ she said.

□obstinacy

WILFUL waste makes woeful want

The connection between waste and want predates the present form of this proverb, e.g. 1576 R. EDWARDS Paradise of Dainty Devices 88 For want is nexte to waste, and shame doeth synne ensue.

□1721 Scottish Proverbs 353 Wilful waste makes woeful want.

1866 Wives & Daughters II. xxix. Now young folks go off to Paris, and think nothing of the cost: and it's well if wilful waste don't make woeful want before they die.

1946 Lying Ladies vi. ‘Well, do you want the drink or not?’ .. Regan .. emptied his glass and shoved forward. ‘Willful waste makes woeful want,’ he declared.

□action and consequence ; waste

He that WILL not when he may, when he will he shall have nay

□a 1000 in Anglia (1889) XI. 388 Nu sceal ælc man efsten, thæt he to gode gecerre tha hwile the he muege, thæaste, gyfhe nu nelle tha hwile the he muege, eft thone hewyle, he ne mæig [now shall each man hasten to turn to God while he may, lest if he will not now while he may, later when he will, he may not].
He that wyl nat when he may, He shal nat, when he wyl.

1450 in Index of Middle English Verse (1943) 186 He that will not when he may, When he will he shall have nay [denial].

Anatomy of Melancholy (ed. 2) III. ii. They omit opportunities ... He that will not when he may, When he will he shall have nay.

Caxtons III. XVIII. V. I must consider of all this, and talk it over with Bolt ... Meanwhile, I fall back on my favourite proverb,— ‘Where there’s a will there’s a way.’

1893 Catriona xix. That young lady, with whom I so much desired to be alone again, sang... ‘He that will not when he may, When he will he shall have nay.’

1935 We have been Warned III. 297 ‘She that will not when she may, When she will she shall have nay.’

Aren’t you feeling a bit like that?

1958 Glass of Blessings xi. ‘It was a rather pretty little box, just the kind of thing you like ...’ ‘I know,’ I said. ‘“If you will not when you may, when you will you shall have nay.”’

Where there’s a WILL, there’s a way

1640 Outlandish Proverbs no. 730 To him that will, wais are not wanting.

1822 in New Monthly Mag. Feb. 102 Where there’s a will, there’s a way.—I said so to myself, as I walked down Chancery-lane .. to inquire .. where the fight the next day was to be.

1849 Caxtons III. XVIII. V. I must consider of all this, and talk it over with Bolt ... Meanwhile, I fall back on my favourite proverb,— ‘Where there’s a will there’s a way.’

1897 R. KIPLING Captains Courageous x. ‘Thirty million dollars’ worth of mistake, wasn’t it? I'd risk it for that.' ‘I lost some; and I gained some.’

1966 Sabre-Tooth XIV. You win a few, you lose a few, and it's no good getting sore.

1979 Good Night Little Spy xi. I've no idea how it can be done. But where there’s a will, there's a way.

1994 Mr. Donaghue Investigates (1997) xxii. 169 ‘It takes will.’ she placed emphasis on the last word ... ‘Where there's a will, there's a way, eh?’ he said, smiling half-heartedly.

He who WILLS the end, wills the means

1692 Twelve Sermons 497 That most true aphorism, that he who wills the end, wills also the means.

1910 Spectator 29 Oct. 677 We won a Trafalgar .. because we not only meant to win, but knew how to win —because we understood .. the maxim, ‘He who wills the end wills the means.’

1980 Listener 13 Mar. 332 I could offer a text .. from Aneurin Bevan: ‘It's no good willing the end unless you’re also ready to will the means.’

You WIN a few, you lose a few

An expression of consolation or resignation of American origin, also found in the form you win some, you lose some. See also the next entry. Cf. 1897 R. KIPLING Captains Courageous x. ‘Thirty million dollars’ worth of mistake, wasn’t it? I'd risk it for that.' ‘I lost some; and I gained some.’
winners and losers
You can't WIN them all
See also the preceding entry.

1953 Long Good-bye xxiv. Wade took him by the shoulder and spun him round. ‘Take it easy, Doc. You can't win them all.’

1962 Girl, Gold Watch & Everything vii. ‘Well, hell,’ she said wistfully. ‘You can't win' em all.’

1984 Harm's Way xviii. ‘The finger being found on the footpath was just bad luck on the murderer's part.’ ‘You can't win them all,’ said Crosby ambiguously.

1994 Mr. Donaghue Investigates (1997) xxiv. 189 ‘This case .. might well turn out, as I said, to be my first defeat.’ ‘Ah well,’ said Carl Petersen .., ‘you can't win 'em all.’

winners and losers

win
see also let them LAUGH that win; also WON.

When the WIND is in the east, 'tis neither good for man nor beast

1600 Treasury of Similies 750 The East wind is accounted neither good for man or beast.
1609 MS (Trinity College, Cambridge) 86 The wind East is neither good for man nor beast.
1659 Proverbs (English) 19 When the wind is in the east it is good for neither man nor beast.
1670 English Proverbs 41 When the wind's in the East, It's neither good for man nor beast... The East-wind with us is commonly very sharp, because it comes off the Continent.
1825 Every-Day Book I. 670 When the wind's in the east, It's neither good for man nor beast.
1929 Room with Iron Shutters xx. ‘When the wind is in the East .. 'Tis neither good for man nor beast.’ Has it ever occurred to you .. to relate the incidence of crime to meteorological conditions?

weather lore

wind
see also APRIL showers bring forth May flowers; GOD tempers the wind to the shorn lamb; it's an ILL wind that blows nobody any good; ONE for the mouse, one for the crow; a REED before the wind lives on, while mighty oaks do fall; ROBIN Hood could brave all weathers but a thaw wind; they that SOW the wind shall reap the whirlwind; STRAWS tell which way the wind blows.

window
see the EYES are the window of the soul; when POVERTY comes in at the door, love flies out of the window.

when the WINE is in, the wit is out
Wit is used in the sense of ‘intelligence,’ rather than ‘clever or amusing talk.’

c 1390 Confessio Amantis VI. 555 For wher that wyn doth wit aweie [does away with wit], Wisdom hath lost the rihte weie [path].
1529 Dialogue of Images III. xvi. Whan the wyne were in and the wyt out, wolde they take vppon them .. to handle holy scrypture.
1560 Works I. 536VWhen the wine is in, the wit is out.
1710 Proverbs 18 When the Wine's In, the Wit's Out.
1854 Last of Old Squires vi. None is a Fool always, every one sometimes. When the Drink goes in, then the Wit goes out.
1937 And so—Victoria iii. Remember what I told you last night—that with wine in, wits go out.

drunkenness

wine
see also GOOD wine needs no bush; you can't put NEW wine in old bottles; from the SWEETEST wine, the tartest vinegar; there is TRUTH in wine.

wing
see a BIRD never flew on one wing; the MOTHER of mischief is no bigger than a midge's wing.

wink
see a NOD'S as good as a wink to a blind horse.

WINTER never rots in the sky

1621 Contemplations XIII. in Recollections 32 God .. chooses out a fit season for the execution; As we use to say of winter, the judgements of God doe neuer rot in the skie, but shall fall (if late, yet) surely.

1670 English Proverbs 42 Winter never rots in the sky.

1817 Diary 24 Jan. (1914) IV. 434 ‘Winter does not rot in the sky.’ We have a deep snow and for the first time this season the Earth is completely covered.

1959 Boston Herald 13 Mar. 42 Winter never rots in the sky, says the old proverb.

winter
see also if CANDLEMAS day be sunny and bright, winter will have another flight; a GREEN Yule makes a fat churchyard; the RICH man has his ice in the summer and the poor man gets his in the winter.

wisdom
see EXPERIENCE is the father of wisdom.

It is easy to be WISE after the event

Cf. c 1490 P. DE COMMYNES Mémoires (1924) I. i. xvi. Les deux ducz .. estoient saiges après le coup (comme l'on dit des Bretons); 1596 T. DANNETT tr. Commynes' Mémoires I. xvi. These two Dukes were wise after the hurt received (as the common prouerbe saith) of the Brittons.

1616 Epicæne II. iv. Away, thou strange iustifier of thy selfe, to bee wiser then thou wert, by the euent.

1717 Letter 28 Sept. (1843) II. 319 Had we not verified the proverb of being wise behind the time, we might for ever [have] been rid of them.

1900 Great Boer War xix. It is easy to be wise after the event, but it does certainly appear that .. the action at Paardeberg was as unnecessary as it was expensive.

1977 Who the Heck is Sylvia? ii. ‘It's easy enough to be wise after the event,' Babette pointed out sullenly.

foresight and hindsight

It is a WISE child that knows its own father

1584 Dict. (rev. ed). L4 Wise sones they be in very deede, That knowe their Parents who did them breede.

1589 Menaphon VI. 92 Wise are the Children in these dayes that know their owne fathers, especially if they be begotten in Dogge daies [the heat of summer], when their mothers are frantick with love.

1596 Merchant of Venice II. ii. 69 It is a wise father that knows his own child.

1613 Abuses I. ii. Is't not hence this common Prouerbe growes, 'Tis a wise child that his owne father knowes?

1762 Mystery Revealed 21 She called her father John instead of Thomas .. but perhaps she was willing to verify the old proverb, that It is a wise child that knows its own father.

1823 Peveril III. x. I only laughed because you said you were Sir Geoffrey's son. But no matter—'tis a wise child that knows his own father.
1967 Naked Ape iii. It may be a wise child that knows its own father, but it is a laughing child that knows its own mother.

1983 High Spirits 119 Its a wise child that knows its own father. How wise does a child have to be to know its own great-great-grandfather?

**children and parents**

wise

see also EARLY to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise; a FOOL may give a wise man counsel; FOOLS ask questions that wise men cannot answer; FOOLS build houses and wise men live in them; where IGNORANCE is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise; one cannot LOVE and be wise; PENNY wise and pound foolish; a STILL tongue makes a wise head; a WORD to the wise is enough.

The WISH is father to the thought

□1597–8 Henry IV, Pt.2 iv. v. 93 I never thought to hear you speak again.—Thy wish was father, Harry, to that thought.

1783 Letter 5 Jan. in H. C. Van Schaack Life (1842) 321 My ‘wish is father to the thought.’

1860 Framley Parsonage III. xiv. The wish might be father to the thought .. but the thought was truly there.

1940 Final Edition iii. She spied a smallish man .. walking away from us. The wish was father to the thought. ‘Ah, there is Lord Ripon,’ she said … He turned round. It wasn’t Lord Ripon at all.

1980 Birds of Air (1987) 40 Somewhere in that area of the human mind where the wish is father to the thought activity was taking place.

1988 Washington Times 13 Jan. A 13 The wish is father to the thought, and that timeless truism fits federal judges like a glove.

**wanting and having**

If WISHES were horses, beggars would ride

□a 1628 Proverbs in Scots no. 140 And [if] wishes were horses pure [poor] men wald ryde.

1721 Scottish Proverbs 178 If Wishes were Horses, Beggars would ride.

1844 Nursery Rhymes of England (ed. 4) 501 If wishes were horses, Beggars would ride; If turnips were watches, I would wear one by my side.

1912 British Weekly 18 Jan. 480 If wishes were horses Unionists would ride rapidly into office.

1959 White Elephant xii. I agree that she’d be an ideal wife .. but if wishes were horses, then beggars would ride.

1979 McQuaid in August vi. The kind of thinking which always brought out the same response from my mother: if wishes were horses, beggars would ride. I had better dismount.

1992 Rather English Marriage (1993) ix. 153 ‘If wishes were horses then beggars should ride,’ he told her. ‘Don't be too sure.’

**wanting and having**

wit

see BREVITY is the soul of wit; when the WINE is in, the wit is out.

wiving

see HANGING and wiving go by destiny.

woeful

see WILFUL waste makes woeful want.

wolf
see HUNGER drives the wolf out of the wood.

A WOMAN, a dog, and a walnut tree, the more you beat them the better they be
‘The old custom of beating a walnut-tree was carried out firstly to fetch down the fruit and secondly to break the long shoots and so encourage the production of short fruiting spurs’: M. Hadfield British Trees (1957) Cf. L. nux, asinus, mulier verbere opus habent, a nut tree, and ass, an a woman need a beating.

□1581 Civil Conversation III. 20 I have redde, I know not where, these verses. A woman, an asse, and a walnut tree, Bring the more fruit the more beaten they bee.

1670 English Proverbs 50 A spaniel, a woman and a walnut tree, The more they're beaten the better still they be.

1836 Clockmaker 1st Ser. xxv. There was an old sayin there [kent], which .. is not far off the mark: A woman, a dog, and a walnut tree, The more you lick’ em, the better they be.

1929 Poet's Pub xii. A woman, a dog, and a walnut tree, The more you beat ’em, the better they be.

1945 Lark Rise V. A handsome pie was placed before him .. such as seemed to .. illustrate the old saying, ‘A woman, a dog and a walnut tree, the more you beat'em the better they be.’

1981 Daily Telegraph 5 Feb. 17 It's not right to batter your wife. It's like the old saying, ‘A wife, a dog and a walnut tree, the more you beat'em the better they be.’ It is just not true.

women

A WOMAN and a ship ever want mending
Cf. PLAUTUS Poenulus II. 210–15 negoti sibi qui volet vim parare, navem et mulierem, haec duo comparato … Neque umquam satis haec duae res ornantur, neque is ulla ornandi satis satietas est, whoever wants to acquire a lot of trouble should get himself a ship and a woman. For neither of them is ever sufficiently equipped, and there is never enough means of equipping them.

□1578 First Fruits 30 Who wil trouble hym selfe all dayes of his life, Let hym mary a woman, or buy hym a shyp.

1598 Mirror of Policy (1599) X2 Is it not an old Prouebe. That Women and Shippes are neuer so perfect, but still there is somewhat to bee amended.

1640 Outlandish Proverbs no. 780 A shippe and a woman are ever repairing.

1840 Two Years before Mast iii. As has often been said, a ship is like a lady's watch, always out of repair.

1928 Here comes Old Sailor II. vi. There are special proverbs for us shipmen:.. ‘A woman and a ship ever want mending.’

women

A WOMAN'S place is in the home

□1844 High Life II. 121 A woman's place is her own house, a taking care of the children.

1897 Beth Book (1898) xix. If we had .. done as we were told, the woman's-sphere-is-home would have been as ugly and comfortless a place for us today as it used to be.

1936 Corpse with Dirty Face iv. Mrs. Franks, being a dutiful wife, was always on the premises. ‘Ah, yes—woman's place is in the home,’ said Pierce.

1943 Moving Finger vi. I go up in arms against the silly old-fashioned prejudice that women's place is always the home.

1979 Barnardo v. Barnardo .. firmly believed that a woman's place was in the home.

women

A WOMAN'S work is never done

□1570 Husbandry (rev. ed.) 26 Some respite to husbunds the weather doth send, but huswiues affaires haue never none ende.
A woman's work is never done.

If you go among the Women, you will learn . . . that a Woman's work is never done.

We shall never hear the whole of woman's work during the war.

A woman's work is never done when it never gets started!

A woman's work is never done...

Women's work is never done. We shall never hear the whole of woman's work during the war.

My grannie used to say, A woman's work is never done when it never gets started!

Never CHOOSE your women or your linen by candlelight; ENGLAND is the paradise of women.

Faint heart never won fair lady.

FAINT heart never won fair lady.

TIME works wonders.

WONDERS will never cease

You have heard, no doubt, of his giving me the reversion of a good living in Worcestershire... Wonders will never cease.

The by-standers .. looked from one to the other, with expressions of mingled surprise and dread... ‘Blessed hour... Wonders will never cease.’

Wonders will never cease... Early Tudor—practically untouched.

WOOING that is not long a-doing

Thrice happy's the wooing that's not long a-doing!' So much time is saved in the billing and cooing.

The old saying .. ‘Happy the wooing that's not long doing.’

Many go out for WOOL and come home shorn

You will goe for wooll, and returne home shorne.

To wander through the world .. without once considering how many there goe to seeke for wooll, that returne againe shorne themselves.

Many go out for wool and come home shorn.

There's a proverb about going out after wool, and coming home shorn.
Some go [to Ascot] intent on repairing the ravages of Epsom or Newmarket; and in this speculative section not a few .. who go for wool come away shorn.

One always comes back tired from holidays. ‘Go for wool and come back—?’ ‘Shaved—no, cropped.’ ‘Sheared. Yes.’

A WORD to the wise is enough

Now often abbreviated to a word to the wise. Cf. L. verbum sat sapienti, a word is sufficient to a wise man; also verb. sap.

Few words may serve the wised.

Fewe woords to the wise suffice to be spoken.

They say, a word to the Wise is enough: so by this little French that he speaks, I see he is the very man I seek for.

A word is sufficient to a wise man; also verb. sap.

I advise you to keep an eye on that eldest daughter of yours ... You know what they say, a word to the wise.

A word, Mons. Yorick, to the wise .. is enough.

Fred!’ cried Mr. Swiveller, tapping his nose, ‘a word to the wise is sufficient for them—we may be good and happy without riches, Fred.’

I advise you to keep an eye on that eldest daughter of yours ... You know what they say, a word to the wise.

‘Well—’ the Major appeared embarrassed. ‘Word to the wise and so forth. Nod’s as good as a wink.’

That was one of my father's favorite proverbs. I hope the new legislative majority remembers it, along with the other family values they count.

A word to the wise is sufficient. That was one of my father's favorite proverbs. I hope the new legislative majority remembers it, along with the other family values they count.

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. All play and no work makes Jack mere toy.

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy’ but all play and no work makes him something greatly worse.

Is that why you give garden parties yourself, eh? .. all work and no play makes Jill a very—’ ... ‘Plain girl. She is that already.’

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, ‘he observed, pouring the champagne into a glass.

Do you catch me trying to reconstruct people's noses .. while I'm on holiday? Of course you don't. You know what they say—all work and no play ..

WORK expands so as to fill the time available

Commonly known as ‘Parkinson's Law,’ after Professor C. Northcote Parkinson, who first propounded it.
It is a commonplace observation that work expands so as to fill the
time available for its completion.

Social Psychology of Work viii. ‘Parkinson's Law’ is that ‘work expands so as to fill the
time available.’

Though there are fewer Bills than usual, MPs, being well known as exemplars
of Parkinson's law, can be relied on to stretch their work to fill all the time available and more.

It is not WORK that kills, but worry

Young Mrs. Jardine III. ix. Working .. all day, writing .. at night .. Roderick had yet .. never spent
a happier three months .. for it is not work that kills, but ‘worry.’

Though there are fewer Bills than usual, MPs, being well known as exemplars
of Parkinson's law, can be relied on to stretch their work to fill all the time available and more.

It is worry that kills, they say, and not work …The canker of care seems
to eat the life away.

It is worry that kills, they say, and not work …The canker of care seems
to eat the life away.

If you won't WORK you shan't eat

With allusion to 2 THESSALONIANS iii. 10(AV) If any would not work, neither should he eat.

Satire of Three Estates (EETS) 475 Qui non laborat, non manducet ... Quha labouris nocht he
sall not eit.

General Hist. Virginia III. x. He that will not worke shall not eate.

Life's Handicap 362 If you won't work you shan't eat ...You're a wild elephant, and no educated
animal at all. Go back to your jungle.

Circus is Coming v. Proper termagent she was, bless her. ‘Them as can't work can't eat,’ she
always said.

Ironmaster xx. I say them as don't work shan't eat.

work

see also (noun) the DEVIL finds work for idle hands to do; the END crowns the work; the EYE of a
master does more work than both his hands; FOOLS and bairns should never see half-done work; if IFS
and ands were pots and pans, there'd be no work for tinkers' hands; MANY hands make light work; a
WOMAN'S work is never done; (verb) TIME works wonders.

workman

see a BAD workman blames his tools.

workshop

see an IDLE brain is the Devil's workship.

world

see it takes ALL sorts to make a world; all's for the BEST in the best of all possible worlds; BETTER be
out of the world than out of the fashion; GOD'S in his heaven, all's right with the world; one HALF of the
world does not know how the other half lives; the HAND that rocks the cradle rules the world; LAUGH
and the world laughs with you; a LIE is halfway round the world; LOVE makes the world go round.

Even a WORM will turn

Even the humblest will strike back if harassed or imposed upon too far.

Dialogue of Proverbs II. iv. G4'Trede a worme on the tayle, and it must turne agayne.

Groatsworth of Wit XII. 143 Stop shallow water still running, it will rage. Tread on a worme and it
will turne.

Ida May xi. Even the worm turns when he is trodden upon.
Since even the worm will ‘turn’, the space-theorist can hardly be expected to remain motionless when his Editor stirs him up.

He’s a very meek type. Still, the worm will turn, or so they say.

Signs were not wanting that she was putting stuffing into Charles Vandervell, of late so inclined to unwholesome meditation of headlong dying. It was almost as if a worm were going to turn.

**retribution**

see also **the EARLY bird catches the worm.**

**worm**

see **it is not WORK that kills, but worry.**

**worry**

see **the LABOURER is worthy of his hire.**

**worse**

see **A BIRD in the hand is worth two in the bush; a KING’S chaff is worth more than other men's corn; an OUNCE of practice is worth a pound of precept; a PECK of March dust is worth a king’s ransom; one PICTURE is worth ten thousand words; it is a POOR dog that's not worth whistling for; a SWARM in May is worth a load of hay; if a THING'S worth doing, it's worth doing well; one VOLUNTEER is worth two pressed men.**

**worst**

see **he who is ABSENT is always in the wrong; the KING can do no wrong; TWO wrongs don't make a right; (adverb) if ANYTHING can go wrong, it will; (adjective) there is no such thing as BAD weather, only the wrong clothes.**
year
see there are no BIRDS in last year's nest; a CHERRY year a merry year; KEEP a thing seven years and you'll always find a use for it; you should KNOW a man seven years before you stir his fire; ONE year's seeding makes seven years' weeding; TURKEY, heresy, hops, and beer came into England all in one year.
yesterday
see JAM tomorrow and jam yesterday, but never jam today.

YORKSHIRE born and Yorkshire bred, strong in the arm and weak in the head
The names of other (chiefly, northern) English counties and towns are also used instead of Yorkshire.

1852 Notes & Queries 1st Ser. V. 573 Derbyshire born and Derbyshire bred, Strong i' th' arm, and weak i' th' head.

1869 English Proverbs 273 Manchester bred: Long in the arms, and short in the head.

1920 Credit-Power & Democracy vi. Organised labour at this time shows considerable susceptibility to the Border gibe of being 'strong i' th' arm and weak i' th' head.'

1966 Double Agent ii. He thought, Yorkshire born and Yorkshire bred, strong in th' arm and weak in't head; but it wasn't true, most of them were as quick as weasels and sharp as Sheffield steel.

human nature

YOUNG folks think old folks to be fools, but old folks know young folks to be fools

1577 Golden Aphroditis O2 Young men thinks old men foole, but old men knoweth well, Yount men are fooyles.

1605 Remains concerning Britain 221 Wise was that saying of Doctor Medcalfe: You Yong men do thinke VS olde men to be foole, but we olde men do know that you yong men are foole.

1790 Contrast V. ii. Young folks think old folks to be fools; but old folks know young folks to be fools.

1850 Frank Fairlegh xxx. ‘Young folks always think old ones fools, they say.’ ‘Finish the adage, Sir, that old folks know young ones to be so, and then agree with me that it is a saying founded on prejudice.’

1930 Murder at Vicarage xxxi. I remember a saying of my Great Aunt Fanny's. I was sixteen at the time and thought it particularly foolish... She used to say, ‘The young people think the old people are fools—but the old people know the young people are fools!’

fools ; old age ; youth
A YOUNG man married is a young man marred

1589 Art of English Poesy III. xix. 173 The maide that soone married is, soone marred is.

1602 All's Well that ends Well II. iii. 291 A young man married is a man that's marr'd.

1961 Old House of Fear i. Don't forget this, though, Duncan—'You can grave it on his tombstone, you can cut it on his card: A young man married is a young man marred.'

marriage ; youth

YOUNG men may die, but old men must die
Cf. the words of a Roman noblewoman rejecting an elderly suitor after the death of her young husband: jvnis quidem potest cito mori; sed senex diu vivere non potest, a young man may indeed die early, but an old man cannot live long (quoted by ST JEROME, Letter cxxvii. 2).
Dialogue of Comfort (1553) II. ii. As the younge man maye happe some time to die soone, so the olde man can never liue long.

Remains concerning Britain (ed. 3) 276 Young men may die, but old men must die.

Letter 5 Sept. (1967) III. 174 According to the good English Proverb, young people may die, but old must.

Life of Billy Yank (1952) xii. That is the Way of the World. The old must die and the young may die.

Young men may die, but old men must die.

Middle English Sermons from MS Royal 18 B xxiii (EETS) 159 Itt is a comond prouerbe bothe of clerkes and of laye men, 'younge seynt, old dewell'.

Seventh Sermon, Lord's Prayer in Sermons (1844–5) 431 The old proverb, ‘Young saints, old devils’ .. is .. the devil's own invention; which would have parents negligent in bringing up their children in goodness.

Collection of Sermons & Treatises 269 Young Saints, will prove but old Devils .. But .. such as proove falling starres, never were ought but meteors.

Caleb Catlum's America xxvii. Young saint, old devil .. looks to me like you been leadin' too virtyus a life.

Good and evil; human nature; youth

Young see also BETTER be an old man's darling than a young man's slave; whom the GODS love die young; the GOOD die young; HANG a thief when he's young, and he'll no' steal when he's old; you cannot put an OLD head on young shoulders.

YOUTH must be served

Boxiana 2nd Ser. II. 60 Tom Cannon made his appearance in the Prize Ring rather too late in life, under the idea that ‘Youth must be served’.

Green Flag 125 There were .. points in his favour ...There was age—twenty-three against forty. There was an old ring proverb that ‘Youth will be served’.

Envious Casca iv. You're just an old curmudgeon, and you're upset because you didn't like young Roydon's play ...But, my dear chap, youth must be served!

Menu Cypher i. Maybe we should all figure to foregather at number forty in the next world. As Pearson used to say in lecture hall, with his voice quavering: ‘Youth must be served, young colleagues, served.’

Opportunity; youth

Yule see a GREEN Yule makes a fat churchyard.
Edited by John Simpson and Jennifer Speake
Over 1,000 entries
This invaluable work includes the best-known proverbs in the English language from around the world. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* provides the fascinating history behind our proverbs. Discover the story behind 'Never say never', 'It takes one to know one', 'The devil is in the detail', and 'If you want something done, ask a busy person'.

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