WHAT WILL THEY THINK OF US?

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One day, hopefully in the far-distant future, an archaeologist may come across the ruins of our American civilization, and will try to reconstruct, as accurately as possible, the civilization that it had been. In order to do this, he may attempt to analyze the words and phrases that we used. For example, he may discover that George Dewey, an admiral in the U.S. Navy, is reputed to have said at Manila Bay, "You may fire when ready, Gridley." And he may also discover that William Prescott, a Revolutionary soldier, said at Bunker Hill, "Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes." As these two quotations are clearly at variance with each other in determining the proper time to fire at an adversary, he may conclude that the American people were split about 50-50 between the laissez-faire attitude of Admiral Dewey and the considerably stricter requirements laid down by Mr. Prescott. Or did the rules change drastically depending on whether one was on land or at sea?

Our archaeologist will also, no doubt, come across the following:

A stitch in time saves nine
Act in haste and repent in leisure
Strike while the iron is hot

From these, he can plausibly conclude that the American people were in favor of immediate action by a two-to-one margin.

After further investigation, he may throw up his hands and cry, "These people were certainly confused because every time I find one aphorism, I can find another one to contradict it. Small wonder that they finally disappeared from the face of the earth!"

To test the reader's awareness of inconsistent maxims, we present a list of well-known proverbs below. Can you cite the opposite proverb for each of these? If you give up, the answers can be found in Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue.
1. A man's reach should exceed his grasp
2. Haste makes waste
3. Above all, to thine own self be true
4. It is never too late to learn
5. Good things come in small packages
6. There is no point in beating a dead horse
7. He who hesitates is lost
8. Two is company, three is a crowd
9. . . . do it well or not at all
10. Nothing ventured, nothing gained
11. Never judge a book by its cover
12. Out of sight, out of mind
13. Many hands make light work
14. Never send a boy to do a man's job
15. Actions speak louder than words
16. Never change horses in mid-stream
17. Silence is golden
18. Practice makes perfect
19. A penny saved is a penny earned