

## MALAPROVERBS, NEO-ADAGES, WRONGISMS

ANIL

Perth, Australia

Over the years Word Ways has occasionally published humorous variations of traditional proverbs or conventional phrases. In February 1972 Philip Cohen demonstrated that certain proverbs alter their message if the last few words are removed (“People who live in glass houses shouldn’t”). In November 1975 Mary Youngquist and Harry Hazard created new proverbs by removing a phrase and inserting another in an existing one. This game was taken up by Jan Ackerson, who in November 1988 welded the beginnings of proverbs to the ends of other proverbs. In February 2003 Word Ways reviewed a book by Scott Johnson, *Don’t Cry Over More Than You Can Chew!*, which employed the same idea. In August 2003 Don Hauptman exhibited various original humorous proverbs, which inspired Ove Michaelsen to do the same in the May 2004 Kickshaws. In related wordplay, Don collected real-life mixed metaphors (“ironing the bugs out”) that he had spotted in newspapers, giving examples in August 2001 and May 2004.

In the collection below, I include not just hybrid proverbs (a la Jan Ackerson) but corrupted proverbs of any sort that yield novel adages, opinions, or re-expressions. A few are just silly, not adages at all. Some are curtailed proverbs; others enlarge that idea and omit, add to or change a single letter or word or so to give a very different meaning. I believe the following are original—but some probably aren’t, being very obvious (I independently created two by Youngquist and Hazard, “let sleeping bags lie” and “you can’t teach an old dog card tricks”).

Honesty is the beset policy  
 Nothing succeeds like succession (opportunity runs in families)  
 Actions speak louder than the beginning of wisdom  
 The bigger they come the harder they  
 The road to hell is paved with good inventions  
 Walls have bugs  
 You have to eat a peck of dirt before you get elected  
 The price of liberty is eternal virginity  
 Now is the time for all good Parties to come to the aid of *Men*  
 Many hands take a light load

I before ‘e except after ‘e got there first  
 Ever since Newton things have been going downhill  
 Be it ever so humble the more things change  
 You can lead a horse to water but you can’t make it  
 Life is the scum of the earth  
 Beware of Greeks baring gifts  
 One man’s meat makes Jack a doll boy  
 A miss is as good as the devil’s workshop  
 An inch is as good as 2.54 centimeters  
 You scratch my back and I’ll itch for you

Don’t put the course before the hart (you cannot serve Golf and mammals)  
 If you’re not part of the solution you haven’t dissolved yet

A journey of a thousand miles loves company  
 Taste makes waist (a stitch in time saves embarrassment)  
 Don't stick anything in your ear that you'll regret tomorrow  
 Don't cut off your nose despite your face  
 All things come to pass  
 Variety is the price of life (*in vivo veritas*)  
 Don't burn your bridges before you come to them  
 "Sufficient unto the day" begins at forty  
 Garbage in, garbage believed (more deadly than the mail is the evil thereof)  
 Never judge a book but discover

One picture is a thousand Wordsworth?  
 Ask no questions, I'll tell you know lies  
 As you make your story so must you lie in it  
 A fiend in need is a fiend indeed  
 Behind ever successful man is a woman scorned  
 Physician, heel thyself!  
 Longevity is the best medicine  
 Man cannot be bred alone (boys will be girls)  
 A barking dog never stops  
 It's too late to open the car door after the dog has suffocated

When there's life there's hop (when there's life there's hops)  
 All that glitter flock together  
 Give a man enough rope and he'll sell it and get rich  
 A fool and his money are soon parting  
 A penny saved is a penny yearned  
 When a man merries his troubles big end  
 Early to bed and early to rise makes Jack a dull boy  
 Make hay while the moonshine's  
 There's safety in numbness  
 Don't hide your peck under a bushel (the meek shall inherit the dirt)

Beggars can't be choosers (you can't have your cake and eat it either)  
 Home was not built in a day  
 Speak softly and spare the rod  
 Don't put new wine in old  
 Brevity, wit's soul  
 There is nothing new under the conservatives  
 He who lives by the sword they first make mad  
 He that preaches war is worth a pound of curare  
 Assassination is the sincerest form of flattery  
 From the sublime to the ridiculous is worth doing well

*Money makes the world go funny*  
*Crime marches on like time*  
*Liquor makes the world go quicker*  
*Wine makes the world go fine*

world It's a small world, isn't it?