

Graham Harry

# **Perverted Proverbs: A Manual of Immorals for the Many**



**Harry Graham**  
**Perverted Proverbs: A Manual**  
**of Immorals for the Many**

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Perverted Proverbs: A Manual of Immorals for the Many:*

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# Perverted Proverbs: A Manual of Immorals for the Many

Dedicated to  
Helen Whitney

Do you recall those bygone days,  
When you received with kindly praise  
My bantling book of Rhyme?  
Praise undeserved, alas! and yet  
How sweet! For, tho' we had not met,  
(Ah! what a waste of time!)

I could the more enjoy such mercies  
Since I delighted in *your* verses.

And when a Poet stoops to smile  
On some one of the rank and file,  
(Inglorious – if not mute,)  
Some groundling bard who craves to climb,  
Like me, the dizzy rungs of Rhyme,  
To reach the Golden Fruit;  
For one in such a situation

The faintest praise is no damnation.

Parnassus heights must surely pall;  
For simpler diet do you call,  
Of nectar growing tired?  
These verses to your feet I bring,  
Drawn from an unassuming spring,  
Well-meant – if not inspired;  
O charming Poet's charming daughter,  
Descend and taste my toast and water!

For you alone these lines I write,  
That, reading them, your brow may light  
Beneath its crown of bays;  
Your eyes may sparkle like a star,  
With friendship, that is dearer far  
Than any breath of praise;  
The which a lucky man possessing  
Can ask no higher human blessing.

And, though the "salt estranging sea"  
Be widely spread 'twixt you and me,  
We have what makes amends;  
And since I am so glad of you,  
Be glad of me a little, too,  
Because of being friends.  
And, if I earn your approbation,  
Accept my humble dedication.

*H. G.*

# Foreword

The Press may pass my Verses by  
With sentiments of indignation,  
And say, like Greeks of old, that I  
Corrupt the Youthful Generation;  
I am unmoved by taunts like these —  
(And so, I think, was Socrates).

Howe'er the Critics may revile,  
I pick no journalistic quarrels,  
Quite realizing that my Style  
Makes up for any lack of Morals;  
For which I feel no shred of shame —  
(And Byron would have felt the same).

I don't intend a Child to read  
These lines, which are not for the Young;  
For, if I did, I should indeed  
Feel fully worthy to be hung.  
(Is "hanged" the perfect tense of "hang"?  
Correct me, Mr. Andrew Lang!)

O Young of Heart, tho' in your prime,  
By you these Verses may be seen!  
Accept the Moral with the Rhyme,

And try to gather what I mean.  
But, if you can't, it won't hurt me!  
(And Browning would, I know, agree.)

Be reassured, I have not got  
The style of Stephen Phillips' heroes,  
Nor Henry Jones's pow'r of Plot,  
Nor wit like Arthur Wing Pinero's!  
(If so, I should not waste my time  
In writing you this sort of rhyme.)

I strive to paint things as they Are,  
Of Realism the true Apostle;  
All flow'ry metaphors I bar,  
Nor call the homely thrush a "throstle."  
Such synonyms would make me smile.  
(And so they would have made Carlyle.)

My Style may be at times, I own,  
A trifle cryptic or abstruse;  
In this I do not stand alone,  
And need but mention, in excuse,  
A thousand world-familiar names,  
From Meredith to Henry James.

From these my fruitless fancy roams  
To seek the Ade of Modern Fable,  
From Doyle's or Hemans' "Stately Ho(l)mes,"  
To t'other of The Breakfast Table;



Like Galahad, I wish (in vain)

"My wit were as the wit of Twain!"

Had I but Whitman's rugged skill,  
(And managed to escape the Censor),  
The Accuracy of a Mill,  
The Reason of a Herbert Spencer,  
The literary talents even  
Of Sidney Lee or Leslie Stephen.

The pow'r of Patmore's placid pen,  
Or Watson's gift of execration,  
The sugar of Le Gallienne,  
Or Algernon's Alliteration.  
One post there is I'd not be lost in,  
– Tho' I might find it most ex-austin'!

Some day, if I but study hard,  
The public, vanquished by my pen'll  
Acclaim me as a Minor Bard,  
Like Norman Gale or Mrs. Meynell,  
And listen to my lyre a-rippling  
Imperial banjo-spasms like Kipling.

Were I a syndicate like K.  
Or flippant scholar like Augustine;  
Had I the style of Pater, say,  
Which ev'ryone would put their trust in,  
I'd love (as busy as a squirrel)

To pate, to kipple, and to birrel.

So don't ignore me. If you should,  
'Twill touch me to the very heart oh!  
To be as much misunderstood  
As once was Andrea del Sarto;  
Unrecognized to toil away,  
Like Millet – not, of course, *Millais*.

And, pray, for Morals do not look  
In this unique agglomeration,  
– This unpretentious little book  
Of Infelicitous Quotation.  
I deem you foolish if you do,  
(And Mr. Russell thinks so, too).

# "Virtue is Its Own Reward"

Virtue its own reward? Alas!  
And what a poor one as a rule!  
Be Virtuous and Life will pass  
Like one long term of Sunday-School.  
(No prospect, truly, could one find  
More unalluring to the mind.)

You may imagine that it pays  
To practise Goodness. Not a bit!  
You cease receiving any praise  
When people have got used to it;  
'Tis generally understood  
You find it *easy* to be good.

The Model Child has got to keep  
His fingers and his garments white;  
In church he may not go to sleep,  
Nor ask to stop up late at night.  
In fact he must not ever do  
A single thing he wishes to.

He may not paddle in his boots,  
Like naughty children, at the Sea;  
The sweetness of Forbidden Fruits

Is not, alas! for such as he.  
He watches, with pathetic eyes,  
His weaker brethren make mud-pies.

He must not answer back, oh no!  
However rude grown-ups may be,  
But keep politely silent, tho'  
He brim with scathing repartee;  
For nothing is considered worse  
Than scoring off Mamma or Nurse.

He must not eat too much at meals,  
Nor scatter crumbs upon the floor;  
However vacuous he feels,  
He may not pass his plate for more;  
– Not tho' his ev'ry organ ache  
For further slabs of Christmas cake.

He is enjoined to choose his food  
From what is easy to digest;  
A choice which in itself is good,  
But never what *he* likes the best.  
(At times how madly he must wish  
For just *one* real unwholesome dish!)

And, when the wretched urchin plays  
With other little girls and boys,  
He has to show unselfish ways  
By giving them his choicest toys;

His ears he lets them freely box,  
Or pull his lubricated locks.

His face is always being washed,  
His hair perpetually brushed,  
And thus his brighter side is squashed,  
His human instincts warped and crushed;  
Small wonder that his early years  
Are filled with "thoughts too deep for tears."

He is commanded not to waste  
The fleeting hours of childhood's days  
By giving way to any taste  
For circuses or matinées;  
For him the entertainments planned  
Are "Lectures on the Holy Land."

He never reads a story book  
By Rider H. or Winston C.,  
In vain upon his desk you'd look  
For tales by Richard Harding D.;

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