

<https://doi.org/10.29162/pv.43.1.785>
UDC 821.111(73).09:81'373.7:94(73)=111
Original scientific paper
Received on 9 June 2024
Accepted for publication on 22 March 2026

RAYMOND M. SUMMERVILLE

“GRATITUDE IS THE CURSE OF THE REPUBLICS”: THE PROVERBS AND PROVERBIAL EXPRESSIONS OF WHARTON JACKSON GREEN

Abstract: This essay explores proverbial language use of Wharton Jackson Green (1831–1910), revealing how he used it in navigating the various roles he played as a soldier, civilian, and politician. Simultaneously, it illustrates the complexities of life during the Reconstruction (1865–1877) and Victorian eras (1837–1901), highlighting the extent to which Green’s family history is connected to National history. Drawing from Wolfgang Mieder’s scholarship on the political uses of proverbs, it demonstrates that even if aspects of Green’s writing reflect the racist ideology prevalent during Reconstruction, such as “the lost cause,” it is only by examining such instances carefully, that one may develop an understanding of the complex evolution of American culture. Green’s limited corpus of writings archived at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill includes his autobiography *Recollections and Reflections: An Auto of Half a Century and More* (1906), an editorial commemorating his father, Thomas Jefferson Green (1802–1863), written for the *North Carolina University Magazine* (1892), and several Senate speeches. These illustrate that Green had a range of uses for proverbial language including engaging in political discourse, conveying life lessons, and coping with the mental and emotional traumas associated with fighting in the Civil War (1861–1865).

Keywords: American Civil War, folklore, lost cause ideology, paremiology, proverbs

1. Introduction

Wharton Jackson Green (1831–1910) did not write much, although he wrote enough to illustrate that he was a walking masterclass in proverb usage. Furthermore, Green realized the importance of folklore. Green’s autobiography is filled with folktales and anecdotes, many of which include proverbs. In addition to exploring Green’s proverb use, this essay explores the extent to which Green’s writing may offer scholars a unique perspective on the American Civil War. Green’s writing proves he had a thorough understanding of the proverb, “history is told by the winning side” (Speake 2015: 185). Green’s work demonstrates the drawbacks of adhering to one-sided perspectives of American history. Important interactions between Union and Confederate officers are randomly scattered about in Green’s writings, revealing aspects of personal relationships which are usually omitted from books about the Civil War. Some may question acknowledging Green’s work, because Green was on what many consider, the “wrong side” of history, as a high-ranking Confederate officer and a Democrat during a time in American history when the Democratic Party was associated with pro-slavery far right wing conservatism, and this would not change until after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson (1908–1973) following the assassination of the bill’s designer, President John F. Kennedy (1917–1963). The historic signings marked an ideological split from Johnson’s Conservative mentor Senator Richard B. Russell, Jr. (1897–1971). A brief history of the Civil War may be necessary to understand Green’s unique position in United States history.

2. The U.S. Civil War (1861–1865)

The United States Civil War is largely viewed as a war over the expansion of American chattel slavery. The term “chattel” implies that kidnapped African people, were regarded as material objects to be bought and sold, at least from a legal standpoint. African slaves landed in the first Virginia colony in 1619. Slavery proliferated as colonial territory developed and eventually expanded into a new Nation. By the time Abraham Lincoln

(1809–1865) (the 16th U.S. President) took office in 1860, the number of slaves had grown to nearly four million, representing a meager four percent of the global Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Lincoln became world famous for denouncing human bondage.

When Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation (1863), freed slaves in southern territories, over one hundred thousand newly freed men joined over three hundred thousand Irish immigrants—providing enough manpower to finally defeat the Confederacy. General Robert E. Lee (1807–1870) surrendered to Commanding Union General Ulysses S. Grant (1822–1885) at Appomattox Courthouse in Virginia on April 9th, 1865. More than six hundred thousand human beings died in the American Civil War. The years following the Civil War, known as the Reconstruction Era, were marked by a concerted effort in Congress to rebuild the war-torn South.

3. Folkloristics and paremiology

Folklore as an academic field encompasses studies of informal tradition. To say that Green's words, including his use of traditional language in the form of proverbs and proverbial expressions are unimportant to folklorists simply because he was a Confederate would be a mistake for two reasons. Firstly, proverbs (like all language systems) may be used for benevolent purposes or with malicious intent. Secondly, traditional language carries symbolic meanings that extend far beyond the people who utter the phrases. Surprisingly, Green's autobiography is largely devoid of vitriolic racist language, and Green seems to avoid overtly supporting the institution of slavery. Contrarily, Green praises Union officers, mentioning high-ranking officers who attended West Point with him—admiring them for possessing leadership qualities such as self-sacrifice and discipline. Green also mentions proverbs used by the individual as well.

Proverbs are “concise traditional statements of apparent truths with currency among the folk” (Mieder 2004: 4). Several studies by Mieder explore the multifaceted political uses of proverbs including: *The Politics of Proverbs: From Traditional Wisdom to Proverbial Stereotypes* (1997), “*Right Makes Might*”: *Proverbs and the American Worldview* (2019), *The Worldview*

of *Modern American Proverbs* (2020), and *Worth A Thousand Words: Cultural Literary, and Political Proverb Studies* (2025). Proverbial language has always been considered an invaluable component in political communication, in part, because proverbial statements can carry a multitude of meanings. Thus, the same proverbial statement can mean different things for different listeners. As Mieder contends: “...there is no doubt that the folkloric indirection of proverbs has always carried considerable humanistic value in effective, considerate, and ethical sociopolitical discourse” (Mieder 2025: 116). The “folkloric indirection” of proverbial language mentioned by Mieder will be of utmost importance in examining multidimensionality in some of Green’s political language; but first, it is significant to consider some of the proverbial language Green uses in describing a time in his life when he was just getting his proverbial feet wet in politics.

At West Point, Green became interested in politics and gained much-needed practice by competing as a member of the debate team, about which he shares an anecdote describing the rather awkward moment he began to recognize his own unique oratory skills. In the following passage, Green describes what it was like to stand at a podium speechless in front of an audience of four hundred fellow West Point cadets. Green references a telling proverb in the process:

Grasping at the traditional straw of the drowning man, there was a hurried colloquy held in another debating society whose hall was in the garret of an individual cranium. The question flashed with electric thrill: Why continue to recite your memorized parroty lesson word by word? You are reasonably master of the subject and know what you wish to say. Say it. And so I did, and made the hit of my life on the oracular line, as then felt, and ever since known (Green 1906: 105).

Alluding to the proverb: “A drowning man will clutch at a straw” (Speake 2008: 48), Green describes the sense of desperation he must have felt in the moment. It would be interesting to know the full extent to which proverbs were a part of Green’s triumphant West Point speech.

4. *Green's Family History*

Recollections includes a good deal of American history and North Carolina regional history. Green's autobiography serves several purposes. Firstly, it preserves his family history. He was a second-generation veteran and a third-generation congressman. Secondly, it highlights ways this history is interwoven with the development of the Nation. For instance, Green's father served in Congress for four different States, and drafted legislation establishing two flagship universities: the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the University of California at Berkeley. Thomas Green was also a brigadier-general in command during the Texas Revolution (1835–1836) and, through legislative means, designated the Rio Grande River as the officially recognized border between Texas and Mexico—leading to the acquisitions of New Mexico, Arizona, California, and Nevada (Green 1892: 217).

Thirdly, Green's autobiography dispels stereotypes concerning the Civil War that had become part of the dominant narrative. Fourthly, it preserves a vast storehouse of proverbs and proverbial expressions. As an interesting sidenote, arguably one of the most well-known American expressions to date, was coined in reference to one of Green's daughters, Sarah (Sadie) Wharton Green Walters (1859–1943), who married wealthy Wilmington shipbuilder Pembroke Jones (1858–1919) in 1884 in Fayetteville, North Carolina. The lavish lifestyle they lived inspired the expression "keeping up with the Joneses" (Whiting 1989: 345; Smith 1996; Block 2007).

Wharton Green recalls a critical lesson he learned from his father. When this lesson was communicated, it was accompanied by a Latin expression. Thomas Green's favorite saying was: "the best directed bullet that ever left the mouth of a pistol was when Colonel Burr pulled the trigger on the heights of Weehawken" (Green 1892: 218; 1906: 31). Dueling with pistols was a common folk practice for much of the nineteenth century. When the government realized too many officers were losing their lives, it became outlawed. Thomas Green would employ this saying regarding the famous Hamilton-Burr duel (1804), to express party loyalty, and to instruct. Wharton reminisces:

Whilst Colonel Burr pushed his contempt of invidious public opinion to a fatal extreme, I would nevertheless have you, my son, imitate him to the extent of not attaching undue weight to the fulsome praise of overzealous friends or the covert dispraise of inimical mouthers. He, whose life motto is “mens sibi conscia recti,” will not be unduly elated or depressed by either (Green 1892: 218; 1906: 31–32).

The Latin expression “mens sibi conscia recti” meaning “a mind aware of what is right,” is a warning against falling victim to the same kind of egotism that led to the demises of Alexander Hamilton (1757–1804) and Hamilton’s eldest son, Philip Hamilton (1782–1801), who died at Weehawken defending his father’s honor in a duel three years prior to Hamilton senior’s death. Green reveals that this lesson was imparted as the elder Green presented his personal set of dueling pistols to Wharton as a gift. The lesson stayed with Wharton throughout his life. Wharton decided on several occasions against using the weapons and convinced several friends to do the same.

5. Build no monuments to commemorate civil strife

It has been commonplace since the founding of the Nation (1776) for American political figures to evoke Greco-Roman symbolism to position the United States as a kind of “New Roman Republic.” It is what the Founding Fathers imagined it would eventually become. This reframing often included the use of Latin phrases, expressions, and proverbs to induce a Greco-Roman ethos, which may be found in everything from artwork and speeches to the Nation’s founding documents. It is no surprise that Green had a penchant for quoting Latin proverbs; in fact, they seem to add an air of authority to his viewpoints. For instance, Green used didacticisms to illustrate his unique position on the war. Two proverbs that stand out the most are the proverb “De mortuis nil, nisi bonum,” “Of the dead nothing but good is to be said” (Green 1906: 8, 94; Bryan and Mieder 2016: 520), and the proverb “Build no monuments to commemorate civil strife” (Green 1906: 318). The first appears in the prologue. Green says:

In discussing this batch of “preux-chevaliers” and others of kindred soul but less resplendent lustre, as well as others still, who can

set up no claim o kinship with such immaculates as these, but with no mawkish observance of the classic adage— “De mortuis nil, nisi bonum.” If allusion is to be made to such as Nero, Caligula, Commodus, or Domitian, in an earlier age; or to Alva Jeffreys, or the Guises, in more recent times, chance position of the culprit will not restrain anathema or rather harsh criticism. Silence is sometimes culpable. “The rank is but the guinea’s stamp; a spade’s a spade, for all that.” Some have deemed me aforetime too plain of speech, in not calling that useful implement by a more euphemistic synonym. To such, the reply is that having used unvarnished old English up to the allotted span of man, it is now too late to acquire a modulated and more euphonic dialect in dealing with knaves, shams, and pretenders (Green 1906: 8).

There are several proverbs in this brief passage from the preface of *Recollections*. The first proverb, “De mortuis nil, nisi bonum” (Whiting 1989: 156; Bryan and Mieder 2016: 520) is Latin for “Of the dead nothing but good is to be said.” It is attributed to Chilon of Sparta. Green follows the proverb with a list of Roman emperors known for tyranny. Green exclaims: “If allusion is to be made to such as Nero, Caligula, Commodus, or Domitian, in an earlier age; or to Alva Jeffreys or the Guises, in more recent times, chance position of the culprit will not restrain anathema or rather harsh criticism” (8). Green uses the proverb to convince readers of the extent to which he can remain fair, accurate, and respectful to all the leaders and parties involved in the war. Green then uses two more proverbs to assure readers that there will be no holding back when denouncing tyrants or dictators. The proverb, “Silence is sometimes culpable,” insinuates that Green wants to avoid the mistake of not voicing his own deeply held convictions. The next proverb “The rank is but the guinea’s stamp,” is from the Scottish poet and lyricists Robert Burns (1759–1796). In the famous song “For A That” (1795) (Summerville 2024: 39) Burns describes how material objects such as gold are often valued more than personal character, and Green follows this with the proverbial expression “to call a spade a spade” (Bryan and Mieder 2016: 714; Mieder 2002). The expression was first used in reference to the garden utensil, but evolved through common usage to embody several different meanings, one of which is a racial slur against African Americans (Mieder

2014: 278), but in this instance, through the spade expression, Green is saying that he feels obligated to describe things accurately. The extent to which Green can "speak no ill of the dead" and still "call a spade a spade" is left entirely up to the reader's interpretation. The metaphors included in the last sentences of the preface reemphasize the notion that Green refuses to soften his tone to appease anyone. Green continues:

If there is any merit in my desultory writings, having been a scribbler off and on through life, it consist in thorough conviction and pointedness of expression. Those who object to that style might as well close the little volume. Rosewater and diluted catnip is repugnant to taste, and unsuited to my genius. The field is already overcrowded with that sort of men, measures, and policies, as they would a bolt from a catapult (Green 1906: 9).

Green employs the same proverb again when praising the character of Union General John M. Schofield (1888–1895), who also served as U.S. Secretary of War (1868–1869). Of Schofield, Green says he was: "A soldier in war, a citizen in peace, a gentleman always," which is a Victorian saying. Green also adds that Schofield "filled the bill" (Green 1906: 94), meaning that Schofield was one of the most efficient commanding officers. Green then stacks the same proverb and expression from the preface, saying: "I do not forget that I am stepping on new made graves, nor have I forgotten the point of the Latin apothegm—"De mortuis nil, etc" ["Speak no ill of the dead"] (Green 1906: 94). Perhaps to add more credence to the praise he bestows upon Schofield, Green repeats the lesson regarding historical accuracy from the preface, using nearly identical phrasing. Green asserts:

If so, let it be borne in mind that history has been equally oblivious in handling the post-mortem reputations of certain worthies with whom she had to deal, notably, Nero, Caligula, Commodus, and Domitian. She and her scribes have not been tender-footed or mealy-mouthed whenever it was necessary to call a spade a spade, or a tyrant a tyrant. When a people grow too squeamish for such good old English, pure and undefiled, they have grown to be too delicate and refined to be fit conservators of English liberty (Green 1906: 94).

The second proverb illustrating Green's perspective on the Civil War is: "Build no monuments to commemorate civil strife" (Green 1906: 318). Green employs this proverb while discussing some of the enlightening conversations he had with former West Point cadets who rose through the ranks to serve as generals—conversations which may have gone undocumented had Green not written his autobiography. The meaning behind the proverb requires contextualization. In the appendix of *Recollections*, Green includes a letter he wrote from his home, Tokay vineyard in Fayetteville, North Carolina, dated July 15, 1903, entitled: "Gettysburg Reminiscent—After a Hiatus of Forty Years." In this section, Green provides details of a tour of the famous Gettysburg battleground with several West Point alumni. Green begins the letter by explaining how difficult it is to remember specific events of the war, saying: "To make the tour, relying only on the vague recollection of a participant of forty years anterior, or the usual parrotty verbiage of a professional guide, is like threading the labyrinth without the ball of twine" (Green 1906: 314). Nevertheless, threading the proverbial labyrinth is exactly what Green does. Green describes meeting his former classmate Union General Oliver Otis Howard (1830–1909) whom he admired greatly. Howard was a major proponent of establishing institutions of higher education for African Americans following the Civil War. Howard University in Washington, D.C., and the Howard School (now Fayetteville State University) were named in his honor. Green says:

On the train from Baltimore, I met my old classmate, General O.O. Howard, whom I had seen but once since we were at the military academy together, half a century by gone. Notwithstanding the tremendous issue that had been involved in the meantime, and which shook the continent from centre to circumference, in which we saw duty from opposing standpoints and took sides accordingly, he to rise to high fame and distinction, whilst I came out where I went in, owing to two years imprisonment, he met me with all the cordiality, not to say impressment of uninterrupted friendship" (Green 1906: 314).

Green attributes their strong bond of friendship to the collegial environment at West Point. Green says: "It was illustration of an

oft asserted iteration, that the spirit of class Camaraderie (as the French term it) was stronger in that school than in any other institution organized of man before or since" (Green 1906: 314). Green asserts that at West Point, they resided in "Arcadian simplicity" and "brotherly love" until the Civil War was officially declared, then they "up and cut each other's throats" (Green 1906: 315). Green assures readers that any proverbial or literal throat cutting that happened ceased following the war. Green then depicts for readers a portion of the conversation he had that day with Howard. They are both concerned about the fates of others:

...how many of our fellows were killed on your side, Green? Nine out of twelve and all general officers, was the reply; and how was it on yours, Howard? Seven out of seventeen, was the answer. Sixteen out of an aggregate of twenty-nine surviving in 1861 was a no mean showing in a class that laid aside the academic shackles less than ten years anterior therto. Noble fellows, and duty's liegemen they were, one and all (Green 1906: 315).

Green, Howard, and several others visited important battleground sites where heavy casualties were incurred. It is at this point in the narrative that Green thinks about how imperative historical markers have been up to this point in the multiple day excursion. Green says:

During the drive, numerous statues and mementoes to departed valor were passed in transient review; some good, others indifferent, but mostly belonging to neither category, but all reminding, in reversal, of the old Roman "*lex non scripta*": "Build no monuments to commemorate civil strife, or to remind posterity of bloody intestine collision." A wise as well as valorous race was the outcrop of the Tiber she-wolf (Green 1906: 318).

Green's reference to the "Tiber she-wolf" of Roman mythology is another example of Green's proclivity for associating contemporary life with the virtues of the ancient world, which, in this instance, serves a two-fold purpose—it is a vehicle for classical tradition, and a way of summoning ideologies of the old South. Green and the other veterans also express disapproval of building statues as objects of commemoration, preferring iron plaques that detail specific events. Green observes:

On the way back to town remark was made on the large iron tablets, which denote the positions held by different Confederate commands at various stages. As indicators of position, I expressed my preference for these to the legion of bronze warriors who stood mute and unresponsive sentinels on every hand, and Howard said, so did he" (Green 1906: 320–21).

At another point, Green talks to Howard about another West Point alum who died in battle, and Green makes it clear that this particular Union officer is being celebrated for several reasons: (1) his sacrifice, (2) his distinguished career as a professor, and (3) for exemplifying an invaluable lesson encapsulated by an often-repeated proverb. Green asserts:

First-Lieutenant Joseph J. Reynolds was Assistant Professor of Philosophy, and a philosopher he was. He it was who enunciated the great dictum collateral with the great Dean's two blades of grass truism; "it costs less to feed two than one; I know, for I have tried them both" (Green 1906: 84).

Green identifies Reynolds as the person who coined the popular Victorian era proverb: "It costs less to feed two than one." Furthermore, Green's expression "two blades of grass truism" emphasizes that the proverb highlights the significance of sharing which often results in less cost. Green then provides readers with more details regarding Reynolds's death: "Gallant gentleman that he was, he died in front of our brigade at the deep railroad cut at Gettysburg, after inflicting a loss of some nine hundred on us. He died a Major-General, United States Army" (Green 1906: 84). Reynolds, remembered for his bravery, was instrumental in no fewer than six battles, and died on the first day of the three-day skirmish at Gettysburg which claimed over seven thousand lives. Major General J.F. Reynolds (1820–1863) was the highest-ranking officer on either side to perish. One interesting thing about this bit of metanarrative is that Green then quotes a saying from classical literature to highlight an oversight he made in getting Reynolds's initials wrong. Green writes: "As Byron says: 'Such is fame! Your name misspelt in a bulletin, or a bullet in your body. Long may the other live to prove his theory of economy in duality'" (Green 1906: 84). The saying: "Such is fame! Your name misspelt in a bulletin, or a bullet in

your body” is a reference to the work of English poet Lord Byron (George Gordon Byron) (1788–1824). It is from Canto Seven of the epic poem *Don Juan* (1824). What might be interpreted as a backhanded compliment on the part of Green for forgetting a friend’s initials may also be understood as a rather unique ode to an important fallen academician. Byron, arguably the most widely celebrated of the English poets of the Romantic movement died as he was leading a campaign against the Ottoman Empire during the Greek War for Independence at the age of thirty-six. Thus, by closing the statement with the Byron reference, Green is also celebrating the fact that Reynolds’s death was equally heroic as Byron’s famous act of self-sacrifice. This simultaneously highlights Green’s knowledge of classical literature and world history, and the underlying sentiment that the “right” side ultimately won the war. Perhaps, Green felt that some emotions were best left expressed through allusion by way of proverbial language due to the prevalence of political violence.

6. *Green’s public addresses*

In *Recollections*, Green includes a speech entitled: “Address on General Robert Ransom, Delivered Before the Ladies Memorial Association, May 10, 1899.” The subject of the address, General Robert Ransom, Jr. (1828–1892), like Green’s father, was also a Warren County, North Carolina native and a West Point alumnus. Public addresses such as these served as opportune moments for Green to frame himself as a “party man.” Many politicians sought to avoid being labelled a turncoat or traitor—the gravest of all political offenses. Likewise, Green wished to revitalize some of the grandeur the South lost because of the war. There are several instances of Green using the proverb, “the victorious cause pleased the gods, but the lost cause pleased Cato.” The proverb is from *Pharsalia* (c.61 – 65) or *Civil War*, written by the Roman poet, Lucan (39 – 65 AD). *Pharsalia* is an epic detailed account of the Roman civil war (83 – 81 BC) between Julius Ceasar (100 – 44 BC) and Pompey the Great (106 – 48 BC). Cato the Younger (95 – 46 BC) was a Stoic conservative who sought to preserve the Roman Republic. Cato valued freedom so highly, that he chose suicide over living under tyrannical rule. The proverb: “the vic-

torious cause pleased the gods, but the lost cause pleased Cato” may not have been a proverb when Lucan first penned the epic poem, but centuries later, the proverb is referenced in writings about civil wars around the world to rationalize the inevitability that some parties will remain dissatisfied with the outcome. As it relates to the U.S. Civil War, the lost cause proverb characterizes the largescale effort to reframe the conflict based on a kind of revisionist history—one in which slavery is severely downplayed or (most often) completely ignored. The “folkloric indirection” (Mieder 2025: 116) contained in the lost cause proverb makes it useful for eliciting a sense of United States national identity. Likewise, due to nineteenth-century historical negation, the proverb is also ideal for use in rhetoric promoting white supremacy, which is one use Mieder specifically warns against:

...[proverbs] normally fulfill a useful communicative role, but when employed in a manipulative or discriminatory fashion, these expressions and images can become aggressive and harmful tools strengthened by the claim of proverbial authority behind them. Proverbs in the political arena are thus speech patterns that should be understood with care and caution. While they are often nothing more than harmless metaphorical additions to otherwise tedious political rhetoric, they can take on serious stereotypical and manipulative roles. In the hands of demagogues, bigots, and racists, proverbs can be shaped into dangerous verbal weapons. Proverbs are best ambivalent bits of wisdom, and since they will remain a vital part of political rhetoric, they deserve to be watched carefully as both positive and negative elements of communication (Mieder 1997: 8).

As a Civil War veteran, employing the lost cause proverb in speeches more than likely brought Green some sense of redemption. Green states:

Genius coupled with gentleness, self-assertion with modest claim, loftiest ambition with humanity, flawless record with tempting opportunity, sublime faith with unflagging zeal, and every impulse subordinate to patriotic end, constituted fitness in the highest for command. Let it content us in defeat, my brothers, that the cause by them espoused will be gauged in history by their exalted standard. “Causa victrix placuit deis, sed victa Catoni” (Green 1906: 267).

Green also references the proverb in an address he gave before the United Daughters of the Confederacy (1905). However, Green takes a slightly different approach by referencing another well-known writer of his era who also used the famous Lucan proverb. The quote in Green's speech is taken from Professor George Long, who is writing in praise of heroism and sacrifice. Green says:

Professor George Long, one of the most profound scholars of his day, having an intense admiration for the great and good Aurelius, whom he seemed to regard as the most perfect of men, compiled and published the thoughts of his ideal hero (Green 1906: 306).

Green continues to explain to his audience that Long's book was soon pirated by a Northern publisher (Green 1906: 306). Green then tells the audience that an infuriated Long corrected the issue in authentic editions of his work with a new preface, which Green then quotes:

I have never dedicated a book to any man, and if I dedicated this, I should choose the man whose name seems to be most worthy to be joined to that of the Roman soldier and philosopher. I might dedicate the book to the successful general who is now President of the United States, with the hope that his integrity and justice will restore peace and happiness, so far as he can, to those unhappy States who have suffered so much from war and the unrelenting hostility of wicked men. But as the Roman poet says: "*Victrix causa deis placuit, sed victa Catoni*" (Green 1906: 306).

The fact that Green makes the conservative audience aware of the fact that the pirates are northern is a political move. The fact that he attributes the quote to a renowned scholar adds rhetorical strength to the speech. At another point in the narrative, Green again compares the United States to the ancient fallen Republic of Rome. Green says like Rome, the United States may fall if conditions do not improve drastically between the States, using a proverb to make his sentiment clear:

How can patriotism and love of country, without which free states are but as eggshells, survive for long such an abnormal condition of affairs? When it supervenes, a thousand Catos and Brutis cannot long postpone the inevitable fall. More appalling this than all of

the other dangers combined, colonization included, that can undermine free states by covert assault; the condition that faces us: “where wealth accumulates, and men decay,” with such unprecedented rapidity is the sure precursor of the impending downfall (Green 1906: 218–19).

Again, Green draws on ancient Greco-Roman imagery in referring to Cato and Brutus. The variation of the proverb “where wealth accumulates, men decay,” is from the poem “The Deserted Village” (1770) written by Anglo-Irish novelist, Oliver Goldsmith (1728–1774). Green also includes lines from the poem “What Constitutes a State” written by Sir William Jones (1746–1794). Green ends the Jones quote with Jones’s famous lines: “And crush the tyrant; while they rend the chain; These constitute a state” (Green 1906: 219). On the surface level, the proverb and accompanying poem seem to be a jab at Lincoln, who was accused of tyranny when he became the first and only president to suspend the writ of habeas corpus, which would forego an accused individual’s right to trial by jury. Lincoln is the only American president to have gone to such extremes to eradicate all traces of treason and insurrection including the brandishing of a Confederate flag, which would result in two years’ imprisonment. Upon closer examination, the Goldsmith proverb accompanied by the Jones quote may further display the extent to which Green may have been conflicted by his own sense of party loyalty. Sir William Jones was a British Oxford educated philologist and orientalist who expatriated to India to study Hindu and Sanskrit religious texts. Jones is credited as the first to discover relationships among European and Indo-Aryan languages. Such discoveries led Jones to establish the Asiatic Society of Bengal (1784). Quoting Jones indicates that Green may not have been completely on board with eugenics movement propaganda depicting people from the southern hemisphere as sub-human. Only a person familiar with Jones’s orientalist background would be able to make such a connection.

Green uses the Goldsmith proverb again when addressing young people in Fayetteville, North Carolina, who gathered to celebrate the ninety-fifth birthday of the President of the Southern Confederacy. The speech is entitled “The Life and Character of the Great Leader Described by One Who Knew Him Well”

(Green 1906: 288). The speech was later printed in the *Fayetteville Observer*. During the speech, Green praises the only president of the Confederate States (1861–1865), Jefferson Davis (1808–1889):

Like the old Greek, he did not know how to play the lute or dance the Pyrrhic (or the “german” either), but he knew how to make a small State great, for he was of a race that turned out men, “high-minded men,” and not mere physical and intellectual dwarfings, or moneyed mountebanks” (Green 1906: 289).

At this point, Green includes lines from the Goldsmith poem. Green exclaims: “Ill fares the land to hastening ills a prey, Where wealth accumulates and men decay” (289). The speaker of the poem describes a fictional hometown of Auburn, England, which has been deserted due to urban escape and emigration to America. Furthermore, the speaker is lamenting the loss of tradition and the old rustic way of living which was abandoned for extravagance. From a rhetorical standpoint, the Goldsmith reference in Green’s address prompts a direct comparison to the war-torn condition of the South following the Civil War, where Union brigades competed to be the first to rummage plantations for anything deemed of value; afterwards southern plantations were typically burned to the ground.

7. Green’s Congressional speeches

One of Green’s congressional speeches is entitled: “General Grant: Gratitude is the Curse of the Republics” delivered before Congress on Tuesday March 3, 1885. The speech is directed at the 18th President, Ulysses S. Grant (1822–1885) a fellow West Point alumnus who signed the bill that created the United States Department of Justice (DOJ). Grant was also known for extending many resources to help protect African Americans from racial and political violence during Reconstruction (1863–1877). There is no doubt that Green’s dedication is an expression of pride in the simple fact that the West Point brotherhood produced another high-ranking officer and president—one whom classmates affectionately nicknamed “Uncle Sam” because of his initials. In the speech, Green argues against the passage of a

bill that would greatly reduce the pension amount paid to veterans. Green's language insinuates that he anticipates resistance. The proverb "Gratitude is the Curse of the Republics" is a way of saying that a regime is incapable of adequately compensating those who serve, whether in the military or in public office. Throughout the speech, Green uses the ancient Roman Republic as an example. Green also mentions several U.S. presidents who died penniless. Civil War veterans who fought for the Confederacy received no recompense from the federal government, even though they could request meager pensions from their home states. At one point in the speech, Green seems to attack those who may attempt to hinder his efforts based solely on party loyalties, using a telling expression in the process:

Brave men bear no malice after a fair fight, an honest handshake, and a genuine make up. The opposite is equally certain. The skulker and the deserter, the bounty-jumper, and the contractor, the homeguard, the blackguard, and the demagogue—all of whom, like the warhorse in Holy Writ, snuff the battle from afar—are implacable in hate, even twenty years after guns are grounded and sabers sheathed. Every side in every struggle turns out these valiant mouthers and strutters; harmless as doves in war, but mischievous as serpents in peace, or as John Phoenix has it, "soldiers in peace, citizens in war" (Green 1885b: 3).

Green highlights an interesting dichotomy which exists in Congress. While Green, Grant, and other West Point alumni make sincere efforts to set aside their differences to work together, many of those who did not even serve during the war seem to be the most adamant about hindering the efforts of political opponents. Green's use of the expression "soldiers in peace, citizens in war" is a reference to *PhEnixiana: Sketches and Burlesques* (1856) written by George Horatio Derby (1823–1861) who used the pen names John Phoenix, and John P. Squibob. Derby, a veteran of the Mexican-American War (1846–1848), wrote a series of satirical letters filled with biting political satire. Derby's letters were compiled into the three-hundred-page anthology *PhEnixiana*. Derby is regarded as California's very first humorist. Several scholars have written about Derby's influence on Samuel Clemens (1835–1910) (Bellamy 1941; Caron 2010).

Clemens's pen name, Mark Twain is considered by some to be a homage to Derby. Likewise, Green used a pen name on at least one occasion. In a letter entitled: "West Point Then, West Point Now" (1901) included in the appendix of *Recollections*, under the pseudonym "Senex" (meaning wise old man), Green begins a satirical letter valorizing West Point with a wellerism—a special type of proverb invented by novelist and social critic Charles Dickens (1812–1870). Wellerisms attribute amusing characteristics or unusual actions to specific characters to make a point. Speaking as Senex, Green writes: "Brutality is a synonym for fun. So says the savage whilst gloating over the agonies of his victim" (Green 1906: 284). In the *Gratitude* speech, Green sets up a variation of the famous expression from Derby: "soldiers in peace, citizens in war" with two expressions of his own. Green exclaims: "harmless as doves in war," and "mischievous as serpents in peace" (Green 1885b: 3). Green refers to those who may wish to weaken the bill with riders (or amendments) reducing veterans' compensation. Green continues:

A Democratic House with singular unanimity accorded it. A Republican Senate thought proper to kill it with a rider. Now, sir these old veterans who had given us a foothold on the Pacific and extended our sway from ocean to ocean, worn down with years, and tottering on the brink of the grave are not entitled to the poor pittance asked for, upon what principle of equity or propriety can younger soldiers in later wars expect a recognition of their service in the manner suggested in this bill? Judged from the successful standpoint, no man can overrate the magnitude of the work he accomplished (Green 1885b: 6).

In the above passage, Green refers to the Mexican-American war (which both his father and Derby served in) which ultimately led to U.S. westward expansion. If they receive little or no compensation, what can the Nation's future war veterans expect? To emphasize the point further, Green employs the gratitude proverb:

But, I repeat, let us not for his own sake as well as ours insult him with a pecuniary recompense. Ay, let us not measure his merit by the metallic standard. Merit so measured is apt to dwindle in public esteem; to grow dim instead of brighter with advancing years. Tis an old saying: "Republics are ungrateful;" but all men who have

lived or died, non has less right to complain of the ingratitude of republics than he (Green 1885b: 6).

After alluding to the proverb by asserting “Republics are ungrateful,” (Green 1885b: 6) Green uses the proverb to question whether opponents would agree on the matter if they were of the same political affiliation. Green ponders:

Perhaps had my lot been cast on this side of the Potomac instead of the other I might add that few have illustrated in their own person the force of the antithetical aphorism, “Gratitude is the danger, the curse of republics” (Green 1885b: 6).

In another attempt to weaken the partisanship guiding his opponents’ decision-making, Green declares:

Better the Ostra of Athens or the Tarpeia of Rome to curb the undue and dangerous popularity of a favorite than the gratitude which would prompt a free state to establish a pernicious precedent in his behalf (Green 1885b: 6).

Ostracism or excommunication was a common penalty for political crimes in the city of Athens while Tarpeia is the steep cliff which was used for political executions in Rome. Green feels that for some, both antiquated methods of punishment would be preferable to adopting measures proposed by adversaries. Green uses President James Madison (1751–1836) as an example of a president who died with no wealth to speak of and no annual pension from the government. The Former President’s Act granting pensions and secret service protection would not be signed into law until 1958. Green then conveys an anecdote about an unnamed veteran who continually turned down offers for compensation. Green argues:

It has been proposed by the highest recommendatory source to put him on the pension-list, but he declined with ungracious if not over-zeal. Zealous friends started to raise another large fund for his benefit; but he declined again. A wealthy friend offers to tear up a hundred and fifty-thousand-dollar mortgage in his behalf, but again the proposition is vetoed. Even his enemies were forced to cry, “Bravo!” It is for him to say whether his enemies shall say, with show: “The previous baits were inadequate; a shark is never caught with a sardine hook” (Green 1885b: 8).

Green uses the proverb "a shark is never caught with a sardine hook" to illustrate that the offers were to be viewed as bribes, which could not replace the sizable pensions veterans deserve. Green closes the speech with a proverb-like statement: "I for one do not propose to stifle my conscience to prove my loyalty" (Green 1885b: 8). Green employs a variation of the proverb "Gratitude is the curse of the republics" in another Congressional speech entitled "Repeal of Certain Internal Taxes: Interstate Commerce" (1885). Throughout the speech Green argues in favor of reducing tariffs on fruits and tobacco, in part, to promote free trade. Green makes it clear to his audience that to reduce taxes is to also reduce corruption. Green first uses a proverb coined by former president of the Republic of Texas, Mirabeau B. Lamar (1798–1859): "Truly, exclaimed old Mirabeau, 'from the capitol to the Tarpeian is but a step'" (Green 1885a: 5). Mirabeau's proverb "from the capitol to the Tarpeian is but a step" is used to convey how easily corrupt leaders might fall out of favor with citizens—with over taxing and dishonesty being the two fastest pathways to the Tarpeian cliff. Later, Green returns to the gratitude proverb: "Aye Mr. Speaker, greed next to gratitude is the bane of the republics" (Green 1885a: 5). Green includes the word "greed" for added emphasis. Green had a penchant for referencing proverbs and revising them for the purpose of making his own arguments. Green's inventive rhetorical strategy might be termed most simply as *proverb revision*. Later, in the same speech, Green utilizes proverb revision again, announcing the rhetorical strategy to his audience:

Some five score years and ten ago, Mr. Speaker, a trite but euphonic aphorism was born in this good land of ours to justify the taking of arms against recognized authority; or, to make it plain, to extenuate rebellion" (Green 1885a: 8).

Green sounds as if he might be talking about the Civil War, but he is alluding to the Revolutionary War (1775–1783), setting the stage for listeners in dramatic fashion:

Popularized by passion, it flew from mouth to mouth with the rapidity of tongued flame on the grass blades of the prairie. It was heard in the shop and in the field, from the pulpit and the rostrum, in the marts of commerce and in the school, and in the highways

and the byways, until at length it became the slogan of a mighty revolution, surpassing in beneficent results all the struggles of recorded time. The cry went up, "Taxation without representation is tyranny" (Green 1885a: 8).

The proverb "No taxation without representation" (Mieder 2021: 44, 184) was coined by the Massachusetts congressman James Otis, Jr. (1725–1783). Otis wrote a series of pamphlets against England's unfair taxation of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. While Otis may be credited with the proverb, the concept, in and of itself, may be traced to the Magna Carta (1215), a document drafted to protect British citizens from tyranny. Green then declares a revision:

The times, Mr. Speaker, call for a paraphrase of that now universally admitted truism, and here it is: "Taxation without occasion or necessity is no less tyranny, and the party which imposes it no less a tyrant and a robber" (Green 1885a: 8).

As a historical reference, the original proverb creates some common ground between the speaker and the audience, and the announced revision allows the speaker to highlight reasons why the proverb is applicable. Overall, Green demonstrates that there is some skill involved in using old aphorisms to make new statements.

In "Contested—Election Case—Hurd vs. Romeis" (1886) Green comes to the aid of fellow Democrat Frank H. Hurd (1840–1896), who lost his congressional seat by a small margin of votes. Subsequently, Republican Jacob Romeis (1835–1904) was declared the winner. It is difficult to say what Green's Senate speech did to sway public opinion, but Green's argument was filled with proverbial language. Near the beginning of the speech, Green references the Golden Rule (Bryan and Mieder 2016: 322): "In spite of bathos and the golden rule, poor frail humanity is naturally prone to incline to the side of such as are of a kindred line of thought" (Green 1886: 2). Building more upon the notion of preexisting party loyalties, Green employs scattered references from the Bible, Greek philosophy, and classical literature:

In this view of this, Mr. Speaker, we are constrained to admit that with some at least party ties are not bound with lilliputian threads, or party claim the figment of a disordered fancy. Ay, next to the ties which hold men together in the crisis of battle none are made of stronger chord. For one I lay no self-righteous claim to be unfettered by them, and what is more I do not wish to be as long as it is patent and apparent that they hold my political foes together with the tenacity of hooks of steel. I have always been afraid, Mr. Speaker, of being better than my neighbor; for next to the devil I hate, loathe, and detest a tyrant, and next to him their twin brother, the ill-begotten offspring of Hypocrite and Pharisee. God forbid that I should out-Herod Herod or out Pharisee the Pharisees (Green 1886: 2).

Green’s statement “To out Herod Herod or to out Pharisee the Pharisees” (Bryan and Mieder 2016: 382) is a well-known reference which warns against keeping up false appearances. Later in the speech, Green employs a proverb in Latin to convince opponents that it may be wise to listen, despite party loyalties. Green exclaims:

“Fast est ab hoste doceri” is an excellent rule in statecraft or party tactics. But mine be the teaching which in party strife or civil broil inculcates imitation of example instead of precept coming from the other side (Green 1886: 2).

The proverb in Latin translates “It is right to be taught even by an enemy,” and Green employs it to convince Congress that his argument is valid. Green then attempts to convince his audience that the election was rigged:

Ay, Mr. Speaker, I am not ashamed to proclaim myself a party man, or, if you prefer, a partisan, to the point that self-contempt would be my legitimate portion did party foes praise, pity, or otherwise cajole me. And so, Mr. Speaker, I approach this question with a degree of bias confest, which some others feel, but fain would smother or conceal; and yet I trust I approach it dispassionately and with as honest purpose as any on this floor to be guided by facts and the rules of evidence. I approach it with a full conviction, sustained by the facts of the case, that the contestant is entitled to the seat he is claiming. But were I hampered with a doubt, Heaven forefend that

I should stretch my conscience to give the benefit of that doubt to the other side (Green 1886: 2–3).

Green then uses a quote which he attributes to Ambassador of France to the United Kingdom, Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord (1754–1838). Green contends:

But magnanimity is another thing after the requirements of justice have been answered. Prate not to me of party magnanimity. In man's dueling with his fellow-man, it is beautiful, it is sublime. In party concessions to opposing faction, it is folly—it is worse than folly, it is a blunder; and that, quoth Tallerrand, is worse than a crime. That party whose convictions are worth a pinch of salt should, where issue is joined and principles involved, "a hair divide betwixt the south and southwest side" before conceding the breadth of a hair (Green 1886: 3).

Green describes the nature of partisanship with a concept that has been expounded upon by several philosophers including Plato (427–348 BC), Immanuel Kant (1724 –1804), and Edmund Burke (1729–1797). Each philosopher offered their own unique perspective on what it means to be beautiful and what it means to be sublime. Green equates the philosophical dichotomy with the political dichotomy which exist between the Republicans and Democrats. In reduced form, the quote attributed to Talleyrand becomes a proverb-like statement: "party concessions to opposing faction is worse than crime" (Green 1886: 3), and therefore, any political party whose agenda is worth a proverbial "pinch of salt" should avoid conceding the width of a single hair. Setting the stage, Green follows his assessment with another proverbial statement: "Justice is justice, and should be done though the heavens fall" (Green 1886: 2-3). "Justice is justice, and should be done though the heavens fall" is a variation of the well-known legal proverb: "Let justice be done though the heavens fall." Green follows the legal proverb with a brief anecdote containing yet another proverb-like phrase:

He was a wise Kindergarten teacher who, walking in the garden with the young king, one day, was asked by his majesty whether he should retain in confidential trust the adherents of his unfriendly predecessor. Replying, not in words, he began to strike off with

his cane the heads of the highest poppies. Leave not your enemies about you, and especially those of a larger growth, was the lesson inculcated. The lesson to-day is worthy of illustration, chimeras and cobwebs notwithstanding (Green 1886: 3).

The statement: “Leave not your enemies about you” issues a warning and implies that justice may simply be too far out of reach for Hurd at this point. However, Green closes his speech with another proverb. Green exclaims:

Of a verity, ward politics in virtuous Ohio towns, like Toledo, for example, are not controlled by filthy shekels and the judicious manipulation of ballots by a blatant pot-house politician. But of course, if such things be, it is for the good of the wage-worker, who is not aware that he would otherwise vote against his true interest! But sir, if such things be, I humbly submit that the law which applies to South Carolina and Louisiana under Republican potency shall none the less apply to New England, or Pennsylvania, or Ohio elections under the ruling of a Democratic House. Let us have done with all such confusion of terms which import one thing in one locality and an entirely different thing in another. Let Republican irregularities be measured by their own bushel. Then, Mr. Speaker, when the vote is taken there will be one more tenant on this side of the House and a corresponding vacancy across the main aisle (Green 1886: 4).

Based on the language, Green seems to imply that the election was thrown because of inconsistent polling procedures across several different states. Moreover, Green attributes these irregularities solely to the Republican Party. John Griffin Carlisle (1834–1910), the House Speaker whom Green addresses is a fellow Democrat. The final proverbial expression Green includes for good measure further demonstrates party loyalty. Green pleads to Congress: Let the Republican’s “irregularities” (or errors) be measured by the Republican’s own “bushels” (or ethical standards) (Green 1886: 4).

8. Conclusion

A proverb in Latin appearing in a family crest on the cover of *Recollections* reads: “Generosus nasitur non fit” or “A gentleman

is born, not made.” This proverb is similar to other expressions regarding the notion of gentility running throughout the fabric of the text. It is an ideal connected to the notion of Medieval chivalry, revived in America during the Victorian era. It gave rise to sayings like: “a gentleman and a soldier,” and “soldiers in war, citizens in peace, and a gentleman always.” Collectively the sayings illustrate conflicting ideals which Civil War veterans may have struggled with. Green includes several anecdotes to illustrate that each person had their own perception of what it meant to be a “gentleman” and what it meant to be a “soldier” and when it was most appropriate to fashion oneself as either. In Green’s narrative accounts of the two years spent at the prisoner of war camp on Johnson’s Island in Ohio, he emphasizes the fact that, depending on who was in command, he and fellow prisoners could expect to be “treated like gentlemen,” or they could expect to be “treated like dogs” (Bryan and Mieder 2016: 217). Green expresses gratitude to Union officers who treated them as gentlemen despite the multitude of horrific encounters experienced on the battlefield. Green’s proverb, “A gentleman is born, not made” and others like it encapsulate the notion of what it meant to be human and may have helped soldiers retain a sense of humanity in times of conflict. Furthermore, it suggests that Green survived the war with his sense of humanity intact, and it is clearly one quality that he wanted to be remembered for.

Green’s purpose in using proverbial language encompasses a very broad spectrum. Green aimed for irrefutable oratorical eloquence when he strategically reframed proverbs on the Senate floor, with hopes that the collective force of proverbial wisdom could circumvent partisanship. At other times, Green’s objective was didactic, especially when he used proverbs to illuminate some moralizing instruction. Lastly, Green used proverbs to commemorate fallen comrades—illustrating that for him proverb use was a form of moral anchoring, as much as it was a primary component of political rhetoric. If some of Green’s proverbial statements may be read as posthumous proverbial olive branches, extended in atonement for political differences, Green’s skillful use of proverbial language gives readers a much more complex view of the Civil War era and contributes some much-needed humanizing elements which are often missing from history textbooks.

References

- Bellamy, Gladys Carmen. “Mark Twain’s Indebtedness to John Phoenix.” *American Literature*. vol. 13, 1941, pp. 29–43.
- Block, Susan Taylor. “Catching up With the Joneses.” *Wrightsville Beach Magazine*, 29 January 2007, <https://wrightsvillebeachmagazine.com/catching-up-with-the-joneses/>, retrieved on 9 June 2024.
- Bryan, B. George, and Wolfgang Mieder, editors. *A Dictionary of Anglo-American Proverbs & Proverbial Phrases: Found in Literary Sources of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. New York: Peter Lang, 2005.
- Caron, James E. “Why ‘Literary Comedians’ Mislabels Two Comic Writers, George Derby (‘John Phoenix’) and Sam Clemens (‘Mark Twain’).” *Studies in American Humor*, vol. 3, no. 22, 2010, pp. 43–67.
- Doyle, Charles Clay, Wolfgang Mieder, and Fred R. Shapiro, editors. *The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.
- Green, Wharton J., “Repeal of Certain Internal Taxes: Interstate Commerce, Speech of Honorable Wharton J. Green of North Carolina in the House of Representatives”. Washington: UNC Archives & Records, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1885a.
- Green, Wharton J., “General Grant: ‘Gratitude is the Curse of the Republics,’ Speech of Honorable Wharton J. Green of North Carolina in the House of Representatives.” Washington: UNC Archives & Records, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1885b.
- Green, Wharton J., “Contested Election Case—Hurd vs. Romeis., Speech of Honorable Wharton J. Green of North Carolina in the House of Representatives.” Washington: UNC Archives & Records, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1886.
- Green, Wharton J., “General Thomas J. Green, of Warren.” *North Carolina University Magazine*, vol.11, no. 5, 1892, pp. 217–28.
- Green, Wharton J., *Recollections and Reflections: An Auto of Half a Century and More*. Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Printing Company, 1906.
- Longacre, Edward G. *A Gentleman and A Soldier: A Biography of Wade Hampton III*, Lincoln: University Nebraska Press, 2003.
- Mieder, Wolfgang. *Proverbs Are Never Out of Season: Popular Wisdom in the Modern Age*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Mieder, Wolfgang. *The Politics of Proverbs: Traditional Wisdom to Proverbial Stereotypes*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997.

- Mieder, Wolfgang. *"Call A Spade A Spade": From Classical Phrase to Racial Slur: A Case Study*. New York: Peter Lang, 2002.
- Mieder, Wolfgang. *Proverbs: A Handbook*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004.
- Mieder, Wolfgang. *Behold the Proverbs of a People: Proverbial Wisdom in Culture, Literature, and Politics*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014.
- Mieder, Wolfgang. *The Worldview of Modern American Proverbs*. New York: Peter Lang, 2020.
- Mieder, Wolfgang, editor. *Dictionary of Authentic American Proverbs*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2021.
- Phoenix, John. *PhEnixiana; or Sketches and Burlesques*. New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1856.
- Smith, Claiborne T., "Walters, Sarah (Sadie) Wharton Green Jones." *NCPE-DIA*, 1996, <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/walters-sarah-sadie>, retrieved on 9 June 2024.
- Speake, Jennifer, editor. *Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs*. 5th edition., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Speake, Jennifer, editor. *Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs*. 6th edition., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Summerville, Raymond M. *Proverb Masters: Shaping the Civil Rights Movement*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2024.
- Whiting, Bartlett Jere. *Modern Proverbs and Proverbial Sayings*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Index of Proverbs and Proverbial Expressions *(In the order in which they appear)*

1. History is told by the winning side
2. A drowning man will clutch at a straw
3. Keeping up with the Joneses
4. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty
5. The best directed bullet that ever left the mouth of a pistol was when Colonel Burr pulled the trigger on the heights of Weehawken
6. Mens sibi conscia recti (A mind aware of what is right)
7. To be a matter of bread and butter
8. De mortuis nil, nisi bonum (Of the dead nothing but good is to be said)
9. Build no monuments to commemorate civil strife
10. To thread the labyrinth without the ball of twine

11. To call a spade a spade
12. Silence is culpable
13. The rank is but the Guinea's Stamp
14. To be a soldier in war, a citizen in peace, and a gentleman always
15. To fill the bill
16. To step on one's grave
17. To cut one's throat
18. Two blades of grass truism
19. It cost less to feed two than one
20. Such is fame! Your name misspelt in a bulletin, or on a bullet in your body.
21. Causa victrix placuit deis, sed victa Catoni (the victorious cause pleased the gods, but the lost cause pleased Cato)
22. Where wealth accumulates, men decay
23. To play politics
24. Gratitude is the Curse of the Republics
25. To be soldiers in peace, and citizens in war
26. Brutality is a synonym for fun. So says the savage whilst gloating over the agonies of his victim
27. To be harmless as doves
28. To be as mischievous as serpents
29. A shark is never caught with a sardine hook
30. From the capitol to the Tarpeian is but a step
31. No taxation without representation
32. The Golden Rule
33. To out-Herod Herod
34. To out Pharisee the Pharisees
35. Fast est ab hoste doceri (It is right to be taught even by an enemy)
36. To be worth a pinch of salt
37. Justice is justice
38. Let justice be done though the heavens fall
39. To be measured by one's own bushel
40. Generosus nascitur non fit (A gentleman is born, not made)
41. To be a gentleman and a soldier
42. To be soldiers in war, citizens in peace, and a gentleman always

- 43. To be a soldier in peace and a citizen in war
- 44. To be treated like a gentleman
- 45. To be treated like a dog

Raymond M. Summerville
Department of English: Literature, Teaching, Pre-Law,
and Creative & Professional Writing
Fayetteville State University
1200 Murchison Road
Fayetteville, North Carolina
USA
E-mail: Raymondmjms@gmail.com

Copyright (c) 2026 Author(s)
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons
Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

