



VICTORIAN VALUES

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Martin Farquhar Tupper (1810-89) was a once eminent but now unfairly forgotten Victorian. He had many virtues - a major figure in the Student Volunteer Movement, a pioneer in the study of African literature and the object of Karl Marx's hearty dislike.

If remembered, it is for his didactic moralising, his prose taking the form of blank verse, which culminates in his classic epic, *Proverbial Philosophy*. Each Tupper line, truth be told, contains its own little piece of wisdom.



In an age of vacuous and godless relativism, his sonorous proselytising is a veritable breath of fresh air. At least twice, I have read out many lines of Tupper at wedding receptions, counselling the radiant bride and randy groom as to how they might best comport themselves in later married life, and have been deemed a jolly fine fellow for so doing. Whether you are happily married, eager to marry, or merely intellectually curious, I entreat you to share these fine Tupper lines with me. First though, here's a joke. What did the servants of Mr and Mrs Martin Tupper call their food storage containers? Tupperware™

Excerpt from Martin Tupper, *Proverbial Philosophy*, 'On Marriage'

Mark the converse of one thou lovest, that it be simple and sincere;
For an artful or false woman shall set thy pillow with thorns.
Observe her deportment with others, when she thinketh not that thou art nigh,
For with thee will the blushes of love conceal the true colour of her mind.
Hath she learning? it is good, so that modesty go with it:
Hath she wisdom? it is precious, but beware that thou exceed;
For woman must be subject, and the true mastery is of the mind.
Be joined to thine equal in rank, or the foot of pride will kick at thee;
And look not only for riches, lest thou be mated with misery:
Marry not without means; for so shouldst thou tempt Providence;
But wait not for more than enough; for Marriage is the DUTY of most men:
Grievous indeed must be the burden that shall outweigh innocence and health,
And a well-assorted marriage hath not many cares.
In the day of thy joy consider the poor; thou shall reap a rich harvest of blessing;
For these be the pensioners of One who filleth thy cup with pleasures:
In the day of thy joy be thankful: He hath well deserved thy praise:
Mean and selfish is the heart that seeketh Him only in sorrow.
For her sake who leaneth on thine arm, court not the notice of the world,
And remember that sober privacy is comelier than public display.
If thou marriest, thou art allied unto strangers; see they be not such as shame thee:
If thou marriest, thou leavest thine own; see that it be not done in anger.

Dr Mark Stocker is a former academic and art curator who lives in New Zealand. Besides his jokes, he has 230 marginally more serious publications, many of which are on Victorian public monuments, numismatics

and New Zealand art. His book *When Britain Went Decimal: The Coinage of 1971* will be published by the Royal Mint in 2021.

The [image](#) shows, "The Wedding Register," by Edmund Blair Leighton, painted 1920.

