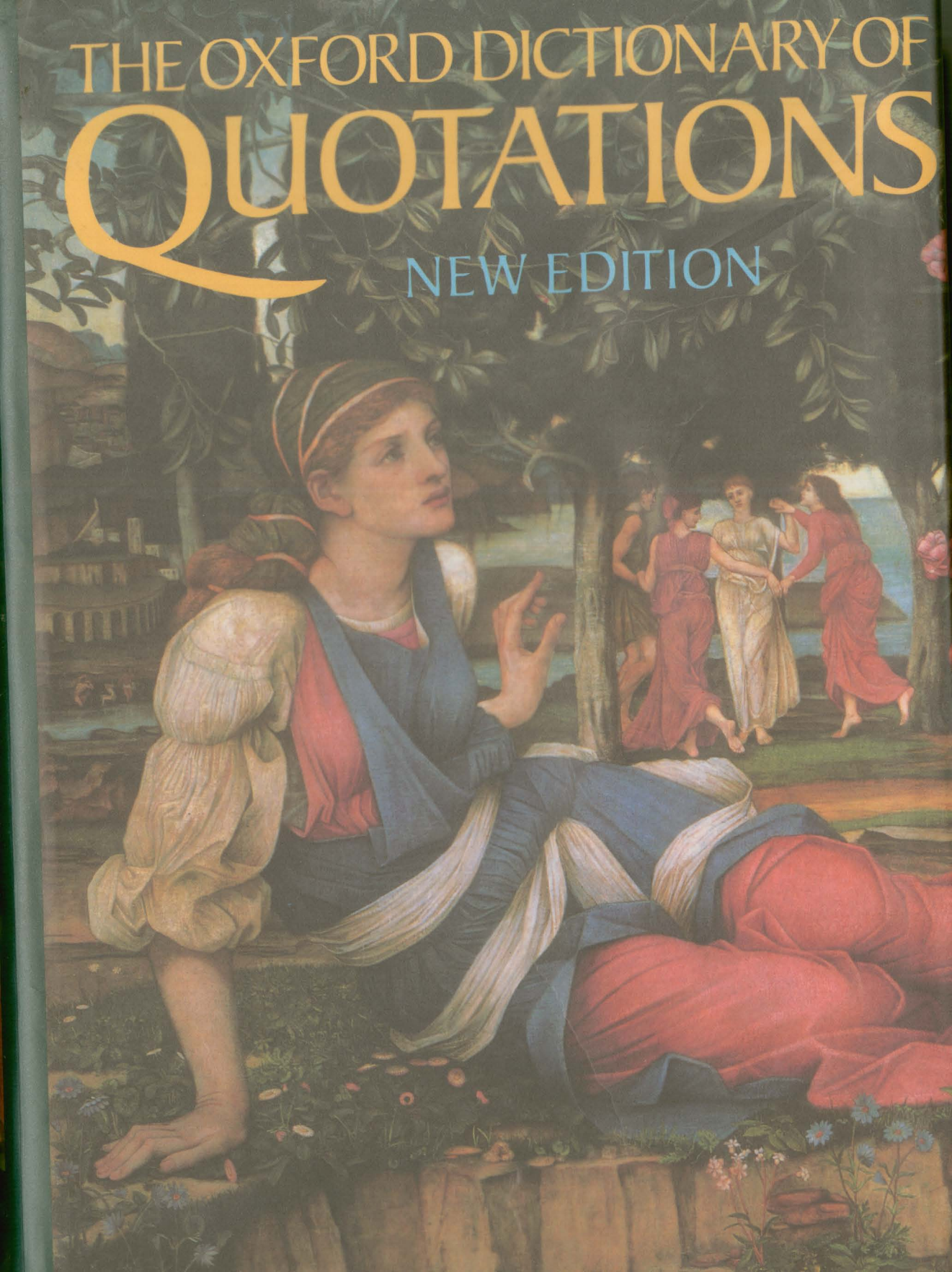
THE OXFORD DICTIONARY OF QUOTATIONS

NEW EDITION



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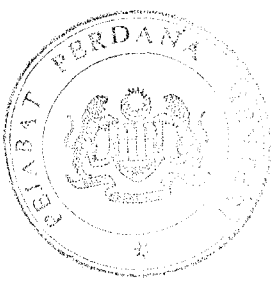
FOURTH EDITION

Edited by
ANGELA PARTINGTON



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Preface to the Fourth Edition

THIS, the fourth edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, is a new, thoroughly revised selection of writings and sayings from the past and present, drawn from every aspect of our culture.

A team of distinguished advisers, united by scholarship in particular literary periods and subject fields, coupled with great breadth of reading and variety of outlook, enabled us to pick our way through the *embarras des richesses* offered both by the previous 1979 edition of the *Dictionary* and the more recently issued *Oxford Dictionary of Modern Quotations*. In so doing, space was created for a generous intake of new material.

Additions, substitutions, and deletions were made where these were demanded by shifts in contemporary tastes, expectations, and cultural stimuli. New authors were introduced, and some older ones relinquished; others were retained, but represented by different sayings or different facets of their work. The resulting selection amounts to some 17,500 quotations from roughly 2,500 authors.

A major area for expansion was the representation of non-English authors, thinkers, and public figures. In 1979, Flaubert, for instance, rated only two quotations, as did Sartre: they now run to nine and fifteen respectively. Tolstoy and Chekhov were the sole representatives of Russian literature, whereas now they are joined by more than a dozen others, including Dostoevsky, Pushkin, Gogol, Goncharov, Akhmatova, Pasternak, Solzhenitsyn, and Yevtushenko.

American authors put in a much more substantial appearance than before. 'The Adams Family'—John, John Quincy, Henry, and the formidable Abigail ('It is not in the still calm of life that great characters are formed')—make an impressive opening with quotations which display the prodigious range of their activities. American politicians in general remain well represented and recently updated ('Read my lips: no new taxes') while American authors, and especially poets, enjoy substantial new representation: Richard Wilbur, Sylvia Plath, Hart Crane, Theodore Roethke, and many more, not forgetting Alice Walker ('Expect nothing. Live frugally on surprise'). Expansion has occurred also in non-literary fields. New or improved entries for philosophers and psychologists include Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, Hegel, Weber ('The concept of the "official secret" is bureaucracy's specific invention'), de Tocqueville ('History is a gallery of pictures in which there are few originals and many copies'), Chomsky, Wittgenstein, and many more.

Among those newly representing the sciences are Richard Dawkins ('However many ways there are of being alive . . . there are vastly more ways of being dead') and Arthur Eddington ('Science is an edged tool with which men play like children, and cut their own fingers'). Economists featuring in the *Dictionary* for the first time include J. R. Hicks ('The best of all monopoly profits is a quiet life') and David Ricardo ('Rent is that part of

the earth, which is paid to the landlord for the use of the original and indestructible powers of the soil').

Social observers are well represented also, with pertinent quotations such as this from Thorstein Veblen: 'The thief or swindler who has gained great wealth by his delinquency has a better chance than the small thief of escaping the rigorous penalty of the law', and this from Samuel Smiles: 'Middle class people are apt to live up to their incomes, if not beyond them: affecting a degree of "style" which is most unhealthy in its effects upon society at large.'

Many quotations have been added from previously neglected authors, especially early women poets, some of whom are now belatedly receiving recognition: Mary Leapor on the importance of marrying well ('In spite of all romantic poets sing, This gold, my dearest, is an useful thing'), Hetty Wright (née Wesley) on the death of a new-born infant ('Smiling wonder of a day'), Esther Lewis voicing a complaint still common among women authors and publishers after two hundred and fifty years ('Why are the needle and the pen Thought incompatible by men?').

Hymns and songs make a welcome reappearance in the *Dictionary*, having been suppressed in the 1979 edition on the grounds that 'if the words cannot be said without the tune coming to mind, they are *not* quotations in the same sense as the others'. Given that verse forms in general enjoy a very much lower profile than once was the case, this policy seemed to exclude two of the richest and most heavily worked seams in our culture. Hymns especially provide us with some of the finest poetry in the language—'Love to the loveless shown, That they might lovely be', 'Let holy charity Mine outward vesture be'—and for many in an increasingly secular society, their only remaining link with the sacred world.

Songs, too, are a rich source of lyrical, ironic, and satiric observation—'When the deep purple falls over sleepy garden walls', 'You've got to be taught to be afraid Of people whose eyes are oddly made', 'Ev'rything free in America For a small fee in America!'—their quality often overshadowed by the music for which they are best remembered, but for which they should not only be remembered. Some may throw up their hands in disbelief, but popular songs assuredly will feature in the verse anthologies of tomorrow, and a dictionary of this kind, which essentially is a mirror of the age, must acknowledge merit in whatever form it takes.

As with all mirrors, however, what we see and how significant it appears to us is determined by the angle at which the mirror is held. 'What *is* a quotation?' we ask ourselves. According to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, it is 'a passage or remark quoted', which strictly means that any of us could be candidates for inclusion in such a dictionary if only our friends could be persuaded to repeat the more felicitous of our utterances. We could claim grounds for inclusion, like M. Jourdain in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*: 'For more than forty years I have been speaking prose without knowing it.'

Fame (or notoriety—'He would, wouldn't he?'), memorability, significance, importance—all, rightly, have claimed their place among the many criteria for inclusion in such a work. Among the more pressing is the combination of that which is both dateless and indisputably true, so that when we discover just how old a quotation is ('Man is by

nature a political animal') we marvel that it was not written yesterday, and when we discover just how new it is ('Damaged people are dangerous; they know they can survive') we wonder that it was not always with us.

Ideally, a quotation should be able to float free from its moorings, remaining buoyant when detached from its original context. It should be apposite, pithy, wise, and of universal application—'To thine own self be true . . . Thou canst not then be false to any man'—much quoted, and easily remembered. If it is witty as well—'History just burps, and we taste again that raw-onion sandwich it swallowed centuries ago'—all to the good.

Much that falls into this category, however, more properly belongs in the realm of aphorism than of quotation, and some of it sounds better than in fact it is: style is found to have overtaken content, a high gloss masking what is little more than platitude. But judgements of this kind are fluid at best, one generation finding insight and moral uplift in observations which strike another as merely banal. For this and other reasons, the *Dictionary* requires regular revision and updating.

Inevitably such revisions will reflect differing social attitudes and political perspectives, as well as literary tastes. In the last century Gladstone, for instance, even at the height of his powers was widely considered a bore ('He speaks to me as if I was a public meeting'—Queen Victoria), endlessly droning on about Home Rule. Hindsight, however, coupled with a decline in imperialistic values, has considerably enhanced his standing, and though by 1953 he rated only eleven entries, dropping to just nine in 1979, he now rises again to eighteen.

Conversely, Elizabeth Barrett Browning in her day would have called for much larger representation than her husband Robert, whose talents, unbelievably as it seems to us now, were overshadowed by those of his wife; but by 1979 she ran to just over one column, whereas he weighed in at fifteen. As Pope remarked, on the altered tastes of his own day, 'Who now reads Cowley? if he pleases yet, His moral pleases, not his pointed wit.'

New characters edge in at the corners, others take on unexpected significance: Gerard Manley Hopkins's 'Binsey Poplars' ('Ten or twelve, only ten or twelve Strokes of havoc unselve') chimes so well with the mood of the times that it is hard to believe that it has not appeared in these pages before. On the same theme, 'We'll to the woods no more, The laurels all are cut', a long-term resident of the *Dictionary*, takes on added and yet more ominous significance. On a lighter note, we all thought—well, the editor thought—an 'ology' was the brainchild of 'Beattie', British Telecom's tame subscriber, the one with the telephone grafted to her ear ('You got an ology? You got an ology, you're a scientist!') but it was there in the *Dictionary* all the time: 'Maidservants, I hear people complaining, are getting instructed in the "ologies" ' (Carlyle, 1866).

It would be good to think that 'Beattie' was nudging us into an acknowledgement of her wide field of cultural reference: more likely it was by happy accident that she hit on the same word as Carlyle. Often when we quote, or allude to a quotation, we do so without knowing we have done so: we are perhaps vaguely aware of expressing some well-worn idiom, but we think of it perhaps more in terms of a cliché than as being or

belonging to a saying with a known source. 'There's method in my madness,' we say, or 'I'm not my brother's keeper!', drawing as we think on a common stock of language. It is both the distinction and the fate of some of our best known language (notably that of Shakespeare and of the Bible) that over time it is absorbed into our common vocabulary, becoming intrinsic to the way in which we express ourselves, and even to the way in which we think. We know what we can say: how we say it not only articulates our meaning, but shapes it, too. Language influences thought, acting favourably or unfavourably upon our nervous systems, as much as thought is reflected in language.

The reader wishing to check that his latest *bon mot* or happy turn of phrase is really his own creation and not that of some sixteenth-century wit, need only consult the index. To brush up on general knowledge, he can glance at the brief author descriptions, new to this edition, which in some cases make sense of the following quotation for the first time. (Anyone wondering what 'Win one for the Gipper' actually means, will discover that 'the Gipper' was an American football legend.)

In this edition, full bibliographical references are given for every quotation for which there is a known printed source.

Explanatory notes have been offered, where possible and where it has been felt that they would add to the interest or enjoyment of a quotation. Virtually all literary quotations from foreign literatures are offered in their original language, as are most of the philosophical and many of the political quotations from foreign sources. Translations, where not otherwise acknowledged, are intended as a faithful rendering of the original.

Every effort has been made to check sources of new quotations, and of old quotations where they gave grounds for doubt. Errors will have crept in, and will have remained in, and no doubt we shall be indebted, as before, to vigilant readers who take the trouble to write to us and point them out. It is a pleasure to acknowledge here the lively correspondence we enjoy with those who, in this way, give generously of their time and efforts to share with us the fruits of their own knowledge and scholarship, contributing in no small measure to the steady flow of good new quotations added to each successive edition of the *Dictionary*.

The selections made will not be to everyone's taste, or reflect everyone's judgement. They, and any other deficiencies, reflect the limitations of the editor, compounded by pressure of time and the usual economic and practical constraints incumbent upon producing a work of such substance at a price which the general reader can afford. Hymns and songs always will seem idiosyncratic in their selection; nursery rhymes and carols, however, were omitted for reasons of space and because they are comprehensively collected elsewhere. Many authors remain unrepresented, for the reason that from our considerable database they were found not to be quoted, and a specific reading programme would have been necessary to do justice to their undoubted merits.

Omissions which the editor would have wished to repair perforce remain unrepaired in some cases, or at best temporarily patched—most notably our relationship to the natural world in all its forms. It is to be hoped that in the not too distant future, and by a perfectly natural process of selection, we shall have a noticeably greener *Dictionary*—one indeed

which reflects a stemming of the trend observed as early as 1879: 'Forests keep disappearing, rivers dry up, wildlife's become extinct.'

Its faults notwithstanding, the Fourth Edition has endeavoured to reflect that which is most pithy, most witty, and most treasurable in the cultures to which those of us in the English-speaking world have access. May it be for many a source of 'fireside enjoyments, home-born happiness'.

ANGELA PARTINGTON

Oxford, April 1992

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