

Forty-five Tagalog Proverbs from Bulakan

For the following forty-five proverbs the *Journal* is indebted to Pablo Valeriano of the Caro Electrical company, who very considerably submitted them in the original Tagalog. The most accurate translations possible have been made:

*Only rust destroys iron.
Thorns wound the swift step deep.
Though you be far behind, wit will put you ahead.*

*Twit a drunken man with impunity, but not him just awakened from sleep.
Noisy waters are always shallow.
Never seek fortune; if really yours it will come of itself.*

*Even water-soaked wood will burn if left long enough in the fire.
Repentance never precedes folly.
Savings of today are the comforts of tomorrow.*

Even a rag, put away in the closet, will turn up for good use.

Real wisdom will always shame that which is mere pretense.

A small stool made of sound wood is better than a bishop's chair honeycombed with borers.

When a pullet begins laying eggs, expect chickens.

Criticise yourself before doing so to others.

However high the aim, the shot is measured by the strength of the archer.

He who spits at the sky gets the spray in his face.

Pounding wet rice in the mortar only besmears the clothing.

Thieves are always jealous of other thieves' skill

Loss is sure; gain, a chance.

To the hungry man, the rice is never scorched.

When the carabao is beaten, the horse feels the pain.

*(The open reprimand of some as an example to others, quite a prevalent practice in the Philippines, especially among housewives managing a retinue of domestics.—A similar Tagalog proverb is, *The whole body is pained when a finger is pinched.*)*

*Late to table, take the leavings.
It were better that your wrong-doing be observed by ten old men than by a single child.*

Work as hard and long as you like, he who thinks too will beat you.

A big tree—without heart. (Old in years alone).

Riches with care are worse than poverty with contentment.

He who gets lost has not stopped to take bearings.

Persistence wins the most stubborn girl's consent.

Kindness is never answered with unkindness.

Rather live in a hovel with men than in a palace with bats.

The fly on the carabao feels bigger than his host. (Borrowed power is bravest).

More wounds to the hero, more courage in his blows.

*After hardship, pleasure.
Striving for everything loses all.*

The reformed man may go straight a long time, then back to his wickedness.

Not all that glitters is gold, nor all that's bright is bronze.

Mabulos are not gathered from santol trees.

Where the old crab crawls the young crawl, too.

The longest procession returns to the church.

*The rudder of the boat is at the stern.
You can see the eye of the needle, but not the hole in the axe.*

("For example," the translator said, "two thieves live in the same community, or the same house; and the worse of the two keeps denouncing the other, so as to throw suspicion off of himself.")

Seeking whom may be your enemy, never look far away.

The next was in simple verse, of which two versions are apologetically submitted for the reader's choice:

*I
I'm the one who hulls the rice,
And the one to boil it;
But when I would eat the rice,
Other mouths aye foil it.*

*II
I'm the one who hulls the rice
And boils it for the table;
Others come and eat it then,
And I eat when I'm able.*

He who is too choice finally weds a hair-lip.

They who loiter at the market come away empty-handed.

The thief is the greedy man's brother.

When other sets of proverbs are received, they will be gladly published as a part of the material designed to record and interpret the culture of the islands. Collections of proverbs are wanted from every region. Will some reader send a collection from Bikolandia, and another a Bisayan collection; and so on. In this way the islands can be covered, and a final collection printed. It is preferred to have the proverbs in the vernacular in which they occur. Translation is easily effected in the *Journal* office. High schools should be first rate centers for the collecting and assorting.

Duplications, obvious derivations from foreign sources, etc., all this will be left to the discernment of the reader. But it must be remembered that the universality of peasant lore is itself proverbial. This is precisely one of the interesting points to be brought out: how much fundamental difference, if any, there is between East and West.—ED.

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