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### FIELDING'S *PROVERBS*: A CAUTIONARY TALE

**Abstract:** The attribution of Thomas Fielding's *Select Proverbs of all Nations* (1824) to John Wade, the English social activist, is explored in some detail. Two persistent bibliographic errors concerning this collection are exposed along the way.

**Keywords:** Thomas Fielding, John Wade, William Henry Ireland, George Berger, proverb collection, paremiography.

Thomas Fielding's *Select Proverbs of all Nations* (1824) is an unassuming collection for which the author himself claimed no originality save for its arrangement and is little cited today. This belies, however, the impact the book seems to have had in the middle half of the nineteenth century on both sides of the Atlantic. Generally well received and frequently used as a source of proverbs, this volume went through two London publishers and three editions between 1824 and 1847 and, as late as 1859, was still being advertised. If not the very first, it was certainly one of the earliest proverb collections published in America, picked up by no fewer than six publishers from 1825 to 1854, following the settlement of the continent from New York to Maryland to Ohio to Utah. Unlike most popular collections of this ilk, Fielding's *Proverbs* might have been more than just a fun browse. The entries are all European, with some unlikely to resonate or even make much sense outside a narrowly defined cultural or historical context. But there are plenty of others of more universal appeal, and it would be interesting to know to what extent the book was actually responsible for the transmission and adoption of proverbial wisdom, especially in the New World. The issues pursued here will be of a more modest nature, though one hopes the far trickier question of influence is someday taken up by paremiologists.

My involvement with the book began innocently enough. I purchased a small, leather-bound copy issued by W. B. Cram of

Baltimore in 1831 as a future Christmas gift for Wolfgang Mieder, attracted by the nicely patinated cover and hoping only that this obscure-looking volume was one he didn't already own. He didn't, as it would turn out, though of course he was quite familiar with the book and did have other editions. In the meantime, I got to wondering who Fielding might have been. Queries directed to booksellers proved singularly unhelpful, and initial on-line searches, though yielding some relevant information, left me more puzzled than enlightened.

Three names emerge for the identity of Thomas Fielding. It has been alleged that, early on, some writers cited the book thinking it was compiled by Henry Fielding, the author of *Tom Jones*, an attribution that is surely mistaken. (He died in 1754, for one thing.) In the third quarter of the nineteenth century, William Henry Ireland (1775/7-1835), the notorious forger of Shakespeare documents and writer of the pseudo-Shakespearean play *Vortigern*, was claimed to have produced the book. Today, the settled opinion is that the true author was John Wade (1788-1875), the English social activist best known for the infamous *Black Book* (1820), his scathing indictment of British religious, industrial and political practices. What I did not find, however, was any basis for the attribution to Wade or explanation as to what happened to the alleged Ireland connection.

And what of the original publisher? The received wisdom is that there are two 1824 editions—one published by Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown & Green and the other by G. Berger, two firms with no known connection and unlikely ever have to done business together. It is not unusual in the early nineteenth century to find a book brought out by one publisher and then, a short while later, issued by another. Neither is it unheard of for two publishers today to release the same book simultaneously, say, a London firm an English edition and a Boston firm an American one. But here we have two unaffiliated London publishers offering Fielding's *Proverbs*, with copies of both versions not infrequently described by booksellers as First Editions. That makes no sense, not even in the madcap world of nineteenth century publishing. One of these companies had to have gotten the book from the other.

What follows is my subsequent attempt to flush out the truth of the matter. The bibliographic tradition attributing authorship to Wade got it right but more by luck than design. It will also be argued that, in all likelihood, there was only one 1824 edition.

1. Henry Fielding's *Proverbs*, 1822(?)

The case for Wade's authorship appears rock solid. For one thing, we have his word on it. In his correspondence and published works, Wade makes occasional reference to having compiled the collection. For example, in the final section of the Appendix on maxims of conduct to his *History of the Middle and Working Classes* (1833), he makes casual reference to "a little work of mine, published under the title of Fielding's *Select Proverbs of all Nations*" (p. 587). There is no reason to think that he was delusional or that there was anything to be gained by his lying about this. Indeed, why would Wade, a fervent would-be reformer, risk undermining his credibility by making up such a story? He might have been a radical, but he was no fool. The book itself also supports the attribution. The sentence and paragraph structure, as well as the tone, is quite consistent with that found in Wade's less incendiary writings. In the course of the Introduction, an otherwise straightforward touting of proverbs as an insight into time, place and national character, the author breaks into a two-page slow burn over the negative depiction of women in proverbial expressions. This looks suspiciously like a foreshadowing of Wade's later book-length treatment of the plight of women in *Woman, Past and Present* (1859). And then there is the curious *apologia* at the outset of the section on "Wisdom of the Ancients," which reads as if the author felt a need to justify the title's inclusion—at least to Jeremy Bentham, who would have found it a near oxymoron. It is perhaps no coincidence that Wade was an acquaintance and great admirer of the philosopher, a loan from whom financed Wade's trade union newspaper *The Gorgon* published from 1818 to 1819. Case closed.

Or is it? The claim for Ireland's authorship was first made by Stephan Jackson in a squib in *Notes and Queries* for Sept. 22, 1866.

“FIELDING’S PROVERBS”—The author of this very poor book was the late William Henry Ireland, of Shakespeare notoriety. The book was got up hastily, when Ireland, so far as finances were concerned, was *in extremis*. As Mr. Denham and other proverbialists have quoted Fielding, it may be as well to say that *Fielding’s Proverbs* has as much to do with the author of *Tom Jones* as *Vortigern* has with Shakespeare. Ireland was a man of very poor abilities; his ballads are rubbish, his romances plagiarism, his *Vortigern* a tissue of bombast. He had not even the skill of an imitator. (p. 228)

The claim was repeated in a second squib for Sept. 12, 1872, with Jackson adding:

The proverbs came out about the same time as Ireland’s translation of Voltaire’s *Pucelle d’Orleans*. The late M. A. Denham of Piersbridge, [*sic*] produced a very superior work on Proverbs. He quotes Fielding, not being aware that Ireland was the author, but supposing that the book was by the author of *Tom Jones* and *Jonathan Wild*. (p. 209)

Finally, in a third squib for Feb. 27, 1875, Jackson recorded the following.

The original publisher of *Select Proverbs of all Nations* was the late Mr. Fairburn, of Broadway, Ludgate Hill. I took an interest in the *Universal Songster*, and Moncrieff’s *Brilliant Songster*, which Mr. Fairburn was publishing at the same time, and so I formed a gossiping acquaintance with W. H. Ireland. I state as a positive fact, therefore, that Henry Fielding was a *nom de plume* assumed by Ireland, and at Mr. Fairburn’s suggestion, because Mr. Fairburn knew that the name of Ireland was not in good odour either with the Row or with the public at large. M. A. Denham’s book was originally a Percy Society publication . . . I do not think anything of his confounding the real Fielding with the sham one! (p. 170)

Jackson was no crank. His true identity was Dr. James Henry Dixon, L.L.D. (1803-1875) from Lausanne, a London solicitor whose real passion was for things literary, and who, when adopting his literary *persona*, frequently passed himself off as “Stephen Jackson, Esq., of the Flatts, Malham Moor.” He contributed much prose and poetry to Hone’s *Table Book*, wrote a long series of articles published posthumously as *Stories of the Craven Dales*, issued books on French songs and the English peasantry, and published *Voices of the Forest*, a translation from the German original, amongst other things. So we have the testimony here of a serious, intelligent, respected figure. And we have no reason to think he was either delusional or a liar.

Moreover, much of what he said is right.

- There was a John Fairburn (d. 1854) publishing books from various addresses on Broadway, Ludgate Hill, from 1813 until at least 1829 and probably well after that.
- Fairburn published *Universal Songster* and *Brilliant Songster* in 1827.
- Both Dixon and Ireland were in London at the time of their alleged acquaintance (1827 or later), Ireland having returned to England in 1823 after a nine-year self-imposed exile in France.
- Though Dixon’s assessment of Ireland is perhaps a bit harsh, he was undeniably a literary hack.
- Ireland was in dire financial straits for much of his life, including from the time of his return until his death.
- Fielding’s *Proverbs* does smack of something slapped together for commercial gain, “the scissors,” as another contributor to *Notes and Queries* put it on Dec. 3, 1898, “evidently [having] a larger share in it than the pen.”
- There was a Mr. Denham from Piersbridge (actually, Piersebridge or Pierse Bridge, depending upon which of Denham’s publications one consults)—Michael Aislabie Denham—whose *Collection of Proverbs and Popular Sayings related to the Seasons, the Weather, and Agricultural Pursuits* was published in 1846 by the Percy Society.
- Ireland was not averse to using a pseudonym, as he published under many of them.

- Ireland published a translation of *La Pucelle d'Orleans* in 1822.
- Ireland's *Life of Napoleon Bonaparte* was originally printed and issued by Fairburn in sixty-four parts between 1823 and 1827, and Fairburn also published Ireland's translations of two minor French memoirs in 1823, which means that there was a working relationship between the two individuals by the early 1820s.
- Fairburn's purported advice to Ireland is exactly what one would expect, given how reviled Ireland was in England.

Then there are details that, though unverified, are plausible enough.

- Dixon and Ireland did indeed meet. One can understand how Dixon might have gotten bollixed up on certain kinds of details. But it is unlikely that he would just imagine having met the infamous William Ireland, if he hadn't.
- Dixon did have an interest in the two songbooks (given his interest in music) and thus had at least some familiarity with Fairburn's offerings.

That having been said, there are several points that might appear to call Dixon's account into question. First, there is an apparent discrepancy in dates. On the one hand, Dixon recounts that the Fielding book was published "about the same time as" Ireland's translation of Voltaire, which would mean c. 1822. On the other hand, it's claimed that Fairburn was publishing the book along with the two songbooks at the same time, which would be 1827. But, of course, all Dixon might have meant is that, in 1827 or so, Fairburn's edition of *Select Proverbs* was still available, not that it was brought out that year.

Dixon's reference in the third squib to 'Henry Fielding' being a *nom de plume* is quite mystifying. It's *Thomas* Fielding's *Proverbs*, not *Henry's*. Is Dixon suggesting that Ireland published the book under the name 'Henry'? That would nicely explain Denham's alleged confusion. But the author's name would have to have been changed for later editions, which is hardly

plausible. Neither does this reading square with the occasion for the squib's publication. The note is a reply to a query of Nov. 21, 1874 in which Ophar Hamst points out the correct first name and asks for the basis of Dixon's attribution to Ireland. So Dixon, when writing this piece, knew perfectly well what name was on the book—or, at least, what Hamst believed it to be. Had Dixon thought otherwise, surely he would have expressed puzzlement and challenged the claim explicitly. Besides, given the grief visited upon Ireland by his appropriation of Shakespeare's name years earlier, it's most unlikely that Fairburn would have proposed using Henry Fielding's or that Ireland would have acquiesced in doing so.<sup>1</sup> I suggest that Dixon's reference to 'Henry Fielding' is a mere slip. Substitute 'Thomas' for 'Henry' and the squib makes complete sense.

But then what is one to make of Denham's confusion? How could he "quote" Fielding thinking this was a book by the novelist Henry Fielding? I suspect all Dixon meant is that Denham made reference to Fielding's *Proverbs*, not that he cited material from it. And this he could have done merely having seen mention of "Fielding's *Proverbs*" and jumping—gazelle-like—to the wrong conclusion. Denham was no academic but rather a shopkeeper and antiquarian who took an interest in local history, culture and lore. In the preface to his proverbs book, he makes a point of never having laid eyes on well known proverb collections of the day (specifically, Howell, Ray, Kelly, Fuller and Henderson). Denham knew these things were around, but he was evidently more interested in doing original fieldwork than in consulting his predecessors. Fielding could probably have been added to his list.

There's something more vexing, though. I have been unable to find a reference to Fielding anywhere in Denham's writings. There is none in his Percy Society publication, contrary to Dixon's implication, and neither is there any in *The Denham Tracts*, the collected works published by the Folklore Society in 1892. So where is this error Denham is supposed to have made?

My inability to trace it is not as damning, I think, as it might seem. Denham's proposed book would have been submitted to the Council of the Percy Society for consideration, and it is entirely conceivable that the reference was in *that* draft but omitted from the published version. Dixon, being on the Council at that

time, as he was, must have seen the original document. It's likely he would have informed Denham of his error, occasioning the removal of the reference if the only reason for it was the presumed connection between Henry Fielding and our book.

What we have, then, with just a dollop of charity, is a detailed, internally consistent story. Ireland compiled the book, publishing it under Fairburn's *imprimatur* c. 1822, the volume remaining on offer (though perhaps with low sales) until at least 1827 or so, when Dixon made Ireland's acquaintance. Dixon learned of Ireland's authorship directly from him or possibly from Fairburn. Then, having noticed a number of authors citing "Fielding's *Proverbs*" with the inclusion of no first name, Dixon penned his initial squib warning readers of *Notes and Queries* not to make Denham's mistake. To be sure, Dixon's account was published decades after the fact, and memories can play tricks. But too many details check out and the story hangs together too well for this to be an account that can be dismissed out of hand.

So where does this leave us?

In Wade's corner, we have a credible source well positioned to know whereof he speaks, and his testimony has a ring of truth. In Ireland's, we have the same thing—a credible source who was likewise well positioned to know whereof *he* speaks, and his testimony also rings true. That doesn't mean the two accounts are entirely on a par. Dixon's is hearsay, while Wade's is not. And Wade's testimony is much closer to the events at issue. The point is rather that, in light of Dixon's testimony, Wade's word alone is insufficient to warrant a confident attribution to him.

Even the brief for Wade's honesty in this matter is not *quite* as solid as I made it out to be. The risk to his reputation by lying would actually have been minimal had he known that Ireland was the author. (And we know Wade was acquainted with Fairburn, from whom such information could have been gleaned, since—in a twist too good to go unremarked—he was the original publisher of the *Black Book*.) For neither Ireland nor Fairburn is likely to have blown the whistle. By the early 1830s, when Wade first staked his claim, Fielding's *Proverbs* would have been well into Fairburn's past, and Ireland was now quietly living out the final years of his life. About the last thing either needed was to become embroiled in a new public dust-up over



William Ireland and the issue of authorship! Better to remain quiet and let sleeping dogs lie. Or Wades lie.

Of course, it's unclear what Wade's motivation would have been. His finances were often also *in extremis*, but there would be no financial gain in taking unearned credit. Nor any other advantage that one can see. His testimony, welcome though it might be, is not essential in any case. The other evidence in his favor is quite compelling on its own. His fingerprints, as it were, are all over this book.

Not so with Ireland's. William Ireland's interests ran almost exclusively to the literary—poetry, drama, fiction, memoirs, and the like. Authors such as David Hume, Thomas Reid and certain others referenced by Fielding in the Introduction are not those likely to have found their way onto Ireland's summer reading list. His writing style is quite unlike that found in the Fielding book, which is penned in short clauses and peppered with commas, colons and semi-colons. Ireland, by contrast, wrote with much less economy of style. As far as is known, he never exhibited any particular interest in justice apart from a perceived underappreciation of Napoleon Bonaparte and concern to clear his father's name from accusations of complicity in his son's Shakespearean frauds. And I am aware of no connection between Ireland and Bentham that would explain Fielding's solicitous attitude toward the latter. Except for its cut-and-paste nature, there is nothing between the covers of this book to support Dixon's account.

Also missing is any sign of a pre-1824 edition published by Fairburn. There is none in any major British public library, nor (as far as I know) is there a copy currently in the hands of any bookseller. Even a Google search comes up zilch—except for a listing under 'Ireland' of "Henry Fielding's Proverbs, 1822(?)" in the *Dictionary of National Biographies* (1897), and that one doesn't count. The entry was almost certainly composed by taking at face value three claims of Dixon's—that Ireland was the author, was using 'Henry Fielding' as a pseudonym, and that the book was published roughly at the same time as Ireland's translation of Voltaire. Fairburn's offerings seem to have run heavily to prints, music and radical tracts, and a collection of proverbs might have been a slow mover in his establishment. Moreover, if the book was issued in paper wrappers, it could have proven

quite ephemeral—"Read to death," as my friend Eric Johnson would put it. Still, the apparent lack of any surviving copies is troublesome, and it's hard to understand why one finds no contemporary references to this supposed edition. There were a number of publications at this date, such as the *London Literary Gazette* and *The British Catalogue of Books*, that routinely recorded and ran advertisements for new London releases. But not a word do we find linking Fairburn and Fielding's *Proverbs*.

The smart money would have to remain on Wade. How Dixon could have gotten it so wrong, as apparently he did, is a mystery likely to go unsolved. Perhaps his memory did fail. Or he never had it right in the first place, possibly due to some mistaken inference. Or maybe Ireland just told a whopper.

This is all in retrospect, however, and has nothing to do with how things went down historically. The bibliographic tradition assigning authorship to Wade would appear to rest upon a single piece of (hearsay) testimony. In Sir William Stirling-Maxwell's privately printed *An Essay Towards a Collection of Books Relating to Proverbs, Emblems, Apothegms, Epitaphs, and Ana, Being a Catalogue of Those at Keir* (1860), the entry for the Fielding book includes an "MS note" attributed to Isaac D'Israeli (1766-1848), the father of Benjamin Disraeli:

John Wade, author of the 'British History,' as he writes to me, June 1843, is the compiler of this volume.<sup>2</sup>

The quotation was picked up and repeated (with minor wording discrepancies) by a number of later bibliographers. The note appears, for example, in both J. Bartlett, *Catalogue of a Choice and Valuable Collection of Rare Books of Proverbs and Emblems, Dance of Death, Etc.* (1888) and S. Halkett and J. Laing, *Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous English Literature* (1926), in the first case with the clause identifying Wade left out and in the second embellished with '&c. &c.'. For his part, I. Bernstein, *Catalogue des Livres Parémiologiques* (1900) reports D'Israeli's attribution but without the quote, citing Stirling-Maxwell as the source. By the time one gets to W. Bonser, ed., *Proverb Literature. A Bibliography of Works relating to Proverbs* (1930) and O. E. Moll, *Sprichwörterbibliographie* (1958), the attribution is sufficiently well entrenched that the listing of

our book is now under Wade's name rather than 'Fielding', with 'Thomas Fielding' given as a pseudonym without explanation. More recent bibliographers follow suit, treating the Fielding-Wade connection as "common knowledge." Sometimes cataloguing is under one name, sometimes the other, the involvement of a pseudonym merely mentioned in passing. No other evidence of Wade's authorship is ever cited, though at some point his own published claims must have become known. In all fairness, of course, prior to the appearance of the first Ireland biography in 1938 and rise of the internet, it would have been difficult to do the forensic work lending credence to Wade's story and discrediting Dixon's. In any event, for whatever reason, the latter's account never received the critical scrutiny it deserved—and needed for a sound attribution—or played any role whatever in the identification of Fielding. The case for Ireland lost out, not on its merits but by simple neglect.

By the turn of the twentieth century, Dixon's account seems to have been forgotten, leaving in its wake only that unfortunate entry in the *Dictionary of National Biographies*. But never count out a bad idea. The myth of Henry Fielding's *Proverbs*, 1822(?) has been resurrected in the latest Ireland biography and from there leached into cyberspace.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Berger 1824

If not Fairburn, then who was the original publisher?

Relatively little is known of the Longman edition, apart from the fact that it was issued by the venerable publishing house in early 1824 at a cost of 5s and was aggressively advertised throughout 1824 and 1825. There is no mention of the book in the Longman Archive (now housed at the University of Reading), suggesting perhaps that the volume was not a commercial success. Alternatively, having recouped its initial outlay, Longman might have sold the stereographic plates, quite possibly to an American publisher.<sup>4</sup> However, there can be no serious doubt that this was the true First Edition. Longman was not in the business of picking up other's offerings. Furthermore, at the end of Wade's book *Woman, Past and Present*, under the heading "Other Works by the Author," the Fielding book is listed with a note that it was first published by Longman *et al.* Whether this information was compiled by the publisher, Charles Skeet, or by

Wade is unclear. In either case, we have here credible testimony. Skeet certainly had no reason to lie, and Wade, even if he could have fibbed with impunity about being the author (had Ireland actually assembled the collection), he could not have lied about the original publisher without risking being called out by anyone possessing a copy of the Fairburn edition.

A fair amount is recorded about George Berger (1796?-1868). He was a journeyman printer, publisher and bookseller operating out of Holywell Street near the Strand, a dicey corner of town known for prostitution and pornography. An enterprising sort, he published and widely distributed a plethora of “cheap literature”—radical tracts, unstamped periodicals, crime tabloids, books for mass consumption, the occasional pornographic novel, and the like—and was for a while the largest newsagent in London. He also had an unscrupulous side, trading freely on the labors of others. In 1844, he and some other London booksellers were sued by Charles Dickens for selling a pirated edition of *A Christmas Carol*. (Dickens eventually prevailed but collected little money and was hit with ruinous legal expenses.)

There is no publication date printed in the Berger edition, an indication that he might not have been a copyright holder. That edition has a unity and clarity of purpose not found in the Longman version, though clearly is derived from it. In addition to a few trivial improvements, the new edition omits the laborious four-page Table of Contents, as well as the idiosyncratic *apologia* to Bentham and complaint about the treatment of women. An indulgent Longman edition has been cleaned up for Berger’s mass market, shorn of what would most interest a Wade biographer and—apart from the occasional quirky take on certain proverbs—given a more generic look. These changes could have been made and the new edition released still in 1824. And Berger was certainly old enough to have been in business by that date, even though he worked for a handful of other publishers before launching his own operation. There are reasons to think, however, that the Fielding book was a later production.

Exactly when Berger set up shop in Holywell Street is uncertain. But I can find no evidence that he was there already in the 1820s. Standard histories of the nineteenth century London publishing trade and other publications record only that he was there

in the 1830s, and I have been able to track down no dated literature attributable to him before 1831. Once established in Holywell Street, it would make no sense to omit either his name or address from publications. And dates, though they might not appear on pirated books, would surely be included on such things as newspapers, periodicals, magazines, commissioned volumes, and so forth. Why, then, if he was there as early as 1824, do we find none of this from that decade?

The earliest reference to the Berger edition I have been able to trace is an advertisement found in *Leigh Hunt's London Journal* for July 2, 1834, on p. 112, which begins:

Only half the price of former Editions. A New Edition bound in clean Cloth. 2s.6d.

Clearly *something* new is on offer, though there's an ambiguity here due to the loose way in which 'edition' was employed at this time (and still is today in common parlance). There are three possibilities. If the word is being used in the strict sense of the term, then (1) the advertisement is announcing the initial release of the Berger edition. In that case, the correct publication date is 1834. On the other hand, if the word means something like printing or offering or version, Berger might be announcing only that his edition is being sold henceforth at half price. That could mean either (2) a simple price reduction (same item, 50% off) or (3) the edition is now available in a less expensive version, perhaps in a plainer binding. Of these, (2) is easily the least charitable. If all one were doing is announcing a simple price reduction, why not just say so? An unambiguous declaration that one could have a 5s book for a mere 2s.6d would surely have been more effective than an ambiguous one potentially leaving the impression that one can now buy a cheaper version for that amount. Moreover, the phrasing and capitalization of this advertisement is boilerplate, the language routinely used by publishers of the day when introducing a new edition. Such advertising copy would simply invite misinterpretation and thus fail to convey the intended message—that there's a bargain to be had. (3) is a more natural construal, though, like (2), it entails that the Berger edition was initially released at 5s. Such a price for a modest 216-page book might work for a publisher such as Longman, which catered to an upscale market. But for Berger, who focused

on inexpensive literature largely marketed to the working classes, that price would make no sense and is quite out of line with his pricing of other publications.<sup>5</sup> For him, cheaper editions were the name of the game. The odds are seriously in favor (1) as the correct reading.

What we have here, I suggest, is a pirated edition that only appeared ten years after its commonly accepted publication date. This hypothesis offers an easy explanation for the mistaken idea—if mistake it is—that there was an 1824 Berger edition. The ‘2’ is merely a slip, either a printer’s error or possibly a transcription error on the part of some author. Of course, the mistake could also have arisen from nothing more than a careless conflating of the Longman and Berger editions.

Who first assigned the earlier date is hard to pin down. What matters is that the idea of an 1824 Berger edition is now embedded in the paremiological literature, widely accepted amongst booksellers, and lodged in cyberspace.<sup>6</sup> That edition is more frequently cited, in fact, than is the Longman, no doubt due to greater availability. (At the end of *Woman, Past and Present*, even as one’s being told of the original publisher and despite the alterations, it’s the Berger edition that’s listed.) The myth of Berger 1824 could also be with us for a good while to come.<sup>7</sup>

*Notes:*

<sup>1</sup>I owe this point to Ryan Jordan.

<sup>2</sup>The purported letter from Wade to D’Israeli survives amongst the Benjamin Disraeli Papers at the Bodleian Library (Dep.Hughenden 245/5, fols. 1-2) and is dated June 23. Wade mentions having seen the footnote in *Curiosities of Literature*, 12th revised ed. (Edward Moxon, 1841) in which D’Israeli praises *Select Proverbs* as “an excellent book for popular reading” (p. 396). Upon finishing the letter, he likely placed the note in the margin of his copy next to that footnote or perhaps next to the same footnote in some other edition, such as the 9th revised ed. of 1834. Sir William was well acquainted with both father and son and presumably ran across the note during a visit either to D’Israeli’s rented house in Brandenham or to nearby Hughenden Manor, the country home of Benjamin, to which Isaac’s books were removed after his death. Unfortunately, this must remain a conjecture, as no edition of *Curiosities of Literature* containing the footnote or other reference to the Fielding book remains today at Hughenden.

Having revealed himself to be Thomas Fielding, Wade adds with the obligatory false modesty of his day:

The reason this nom de guerre was adopted I do not recollect, unless it arose from an impression on my part, or that of the booksellers that any name was preferable to that of one so obscure & unknown as the author.

(Obscure, perhaps, but unknown only by choice. His anonymously published Black Book, issued just four years earlier, was wildly popular, selling an astonishing 50,000 copies.)

<sup>3</sup> See P. Pierce, *The Great Shakespeare Fraud* (Sutton Publishing, 2004), p. 242 and the Wikipedia entry for Samuel Ireland (William's father).

<sup>4</sup> This intriguing suggestion I owe to Eric Johnson. I have not had the opportunity to do a close comparison between the Longman edition and that issued by P. Covert of New York in 1825 to see if they were printed off the same plates. The Covert edition is a reprinting of the Longman and appeared just as the latter drops off the radar screen.

<sup>5</sup> In Berger's *Tales of chivalry; or, Perils by flood and field* (1840), one finds a couple dozen of his books advertised. *Buffon's Natural History* "embellished with One Hundred Copper-plate Engravings" comes in at 6s.6d, while each of the three volumes of *Stapleton's Tales of War*, with "upwards of 150 superb Engravings, and Three beautifully executed Steel Portraits," is tagged at 5s. There are a few offerings at 2s.6d or 3s, with Berger's edition of Ireland's *Life of Napoleon Bonaparte*, illustrated with engravings by George Cruikshank, costing a mere 2s, and they go down from there. This pricing structure is the same as one finds in Berger's many other advertisements. Fielding's *Proverbs* at 2s.6d would seem just about right.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., W. Mieder, *Encyclopedia of World Proverbs* (Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1986), p. 569 and W. Mieder, R. A. Kingsley and K. B. Harder, eds., *A Dictionary of American Proverbs* (Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 696. See also the on-line reprint offering of Fielding on amazon.com, where one reads "Original Published by: G. Berger of Holywell Street in 1824."

<sup>7</sup> Verity Andrews, Hilary Clare, Amanpal Garcha, Colin Harris and Eric Johnson each helped fill in some piece of the puzzle. Ryan Jordan, my bowling buddy, cheerfully endured the evolution of this paper and offered useful comments on earlier drafts. Special thanks to Wolfgang Mieder for his warm encouragement, several references and spot-on advice.

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