

Ogden Nash

- poems -

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À Bas Ben Adhem

My fellow man I do not care for.
I often ask me, What's he there for?
The only answer I can find
Is, Reproduction of his kind.
If I'm supposed to swallow that,
Winnetka is my habitat.
Isn't it time to carve Hic Jacet
Above that Reproduction racket?

To make the matter more succinct:
Suppose my fellow man extinct.
Why, who would not approve the plan
Save possibly my fellow man?
Yet with a politician's voice
He names himself as Nature's choice.

The finest of the human race
Are bad in figure, worse in face.
Yet just because they have two legs
And come from storks instead of eggs
They count the spacious firmament
As something to be charged and sent.

Though man created cross-town traffic,
The Daily Mirror, News and Graphic,
The pastoral fight and fighting pastor,
And Queen Marie and Lady Astor,
He hails himself with drum and fife
And bullies lower forms of life.

Not that I think much depends
On how we treat our feathered friends,
Or hold the wrinkled elephant
A nobler creature than my aunt.
It's simply that I'm sure I can
Get on without my fellow man.

Ogden Nash

A Caution To Everybody

Consider the auk;
Becoming extinct because he forgot how to fly, and could only walk.
Consider man, who may well become extinct
Because he forgot how to walk and learned how to fly before he thought.

Ogden Nash

A Drink With Something In It

There is something about a Martini,
A tingle remarkably pleasant;
A yellow, a mellow Martini;
I wish I had one at present.
There is something about a Martini,
Ere the dining and dancing begin,
And to tell you the truth,
It is not the vermouth--
I think that perhaps it's the gin.

Ogden Nash

A Lady Who Thinks She Is Thirty

Unwillingly Miranda wakes,
Feels the sun with terror,
One unwilling step she takes,
Shuddering to the mirror.

Miranda in Miranda's sight
Is old and gray and dirty;
Twenty-nine she was last night;
This morning she is thirty.

Shining like the morning star,
Like the twilight shining,
Haunted by a calendar,
Miranda is a-pining.

Silly girl, silver girl,
Draw the mirror toward you;
Time who makes the years to whirl
Adorned as he adored you.

Time is timelessness for you;
Calendars for the human;
What's a year, or thirty, to
Loveliness made woman?

Oh, Night will not see thirty again,
Yet soft her wing, Miranda;
Pick up your glass and tell me, then--
How old is Spring, Miranda?

Ogden Nash

A Tale Of The Thirteenth Floor

The hands of the clock were reaching high
In an old midtown hotel;
I name no name, but its sordid fame
Is table talk in hell.
I name no name, but hell's own flame
Illumes the lobby garish,
A gilded snare just off Times Square
For the maidens of the parish.

The revolving door swept the grimy floor
Like a crinoline grotesque,
And a lowly bum from an ancient slum
Crept furtively past the desk.
His footsteps sift into the lift
As a knife in the sheath is slipped,
Stealthy and swift into the lift
As a vampire into a crypt.

Old Maxie, the elevator boy,
Was reading an ode by Shelley,
But he dropped the ode as it were a toad
When the gun jammed into his belly.
There came a whisper as soft as mud
In the bed of an old canal:
"Take me up to the suite of Pinball Pete,
The rat who betrayed my gal."

The lift doth rise with groans and sighs
Like a duchess for the waltz,
Then in middle shaft, like a duchess daft,
It changes its mind and halts.
The bum bites lip as the landlocked ship
Doth neither fall nor rise,
But Maxie the elevator boy
Regards him with burning eyes.
"First, to explore the thirteenth floor,"
Says Maxie, "would be wise."

Quoth the bum, "There is moss on your double cross,
I have been this way before,
I have cased the joint at every point,
And there is no thirteenth floor.
The architect he skipped direct
From twelve unto fourteen,
There is twelve below and fourteen above,
And nothing in between,
For the vermin who dwell in this hotel
Could never abide thirteen."

Said Max, "Thirteen, that floor obscene,
Is hidden from human sight;
But once a year it doth appear,

On this Walpurgis Night.
Ere you peril your soul in murderer's role,
Heed those who sinned of yore;
The path they trod led away from God,
And onto the thirteenth floor,
Where those they slew, a grisly crew,
Reproach them forevermore.

"We are higher than twelve and below fourteen,"
Said Maxie to the bum,
"And the sickening draft that taints the shaft
Is a whiff of kingdom come.
The sickening draft that taints the shaft
Blows through the devil's door!"
And he squashed the latch like a fungus patch,
And revealed the thirteenth floor.

It was cheap cigars like lurid scars
That glowed in the rancid gloom,
The murk was a-boil with fusel oil
And the reek of stale perfume.
And round and round there dragged and wound
A loathsome conga chain,
The square and the hep in slow lock step,
The slayer and the slain.
(For the souls of the victims ascend on high,
But their bodies below remain.)

The clean souls fly to their home in the sky,
But their bodies remain below
To pursue the Cain who each has slain
And harry him to and fro.
When life is extinct each corpse is linked
To its gibbering murderer,
As a chicken is bound with wire around
The neck of a killer cur.

Handcuffed to Hate come Doctor Waite
(He tastes the poison now),
And Ruth and Judd and a head of blood
With horns upon its brow.
Up sashays Nan with her feathery fan
From Floradora bright;
She never hung for Caesar Young
But she's dancing with him tonight.

Here's the bulging hip and the foam-flecked lip
Of the mad dog, Vincent Coll,
And over there that ill-met pair,
Becker and Rosenthal,
Here's Legs and Dutch and a dozen such
Of braggart bullies and brutes,

And each one bends 'neath the weight of friends
Who are wearing concrete suits.

Now the damned make way for the double-damned
Who emerge with shuffling pace
From the nightmare zone of persons unknown,
With neither name nor face.
And poor Dot King to one doth cling,
Joined in a ghastly jig,
While Elwell doth jape at a goblin shape
And tickle it with his wig.

See Rothstein pass like breath on a glass,
The original Black Sox kid;
He riffles the pack, riding piggyback
On the killer whose name he hid.
And smeared like brine on a slaving swine,
Starr Faithful, once so fair,
Drawn from the sea to her debauchee,
With the salt sand in her hair.

And still they come, and from the bum
The icy sweat doth spray;
His white lips scream as in a dream,
"For God's sake, let's away!
If ever I meet with Pinball Pete
I will not seek his gore,
Lest a treadmill grim I must trudge with him
On the hideous thirteenth floor."

"For you I rejoice," said Maxie's voice,
"And I bid you go in peace,
But I am late for a dancing date
That nevermore will cease.
So remember, friend, as your way you wend,
That it would have happened to you,
But I turned the heat on Pinball Pete;
You see - I had a daughter, too!"

The bum reached out and he tried to shout,
But the door in his face was slammed,
And silent as stone he rode down alone
From the floor of the double-damned.

Ogden Nash

A Word to Husbands

To keep your marriage brimming
With love in the loving cup,
Whenever you're wrong, admit it;
Whenever you're right, shut up.

Ogden Nash

Adventures Of Isabel

Isabel met an enormous bear,
Isabel, Isabel, didn't care;
The bear was hungry, the bear was ravenous,
The bear's big mouth was cruel and cavernous.
The bear said, Isabel, glad to meet you,
How do, Isabel, now I'll eat you!
Isabel, Isabel, didn't worry.
Isabel didn't scream or scurry.
She washed her hands and she straightened her hair up,
Then Isabel quietly ate the bear up.
Once in a night as black as pitch
Isabel met a wicked old witch.
the witch's face was cross and wrinkled,
The witch's gums with teeth were sprinkled.
Ho, ho, Isabel! the old witch crowed,
I'll turn you into an ugly toad!
Isabel, Isabel, didn't worry,
Isabel didn't scream or scurry,
She showed no rage and she showed no rancor,
But she turned the witch into milk and drank her.
Isabel met a hideous giant,
Isabel continued self reliant.
The giant was hairy, the giant was horrid,
He had one eye in the middle of his forehead.
Good morning, Isabel, the giant said,
I'll grind your bones to make my bread.
Isabel, Isabel, didn't worry,
Isabel didn't scream or scurry.
She nibbled the zwieback that she always fed off,
And when it was gone, she cut the giant's head off.
Isabel met a troublesome doctor,
He punched and he poked till he really shocked her.
The doctor's talk was of coughs and chills
And the doctor's satchel bulged with pills.
The doctor said unto Isabel,
Swallow this, it will make you well.
Isabel, Isabel, didn't worry,
Isabel didn't scream or scurry.
She took those pills from the pill concocter,
And Isabel calmly cured the doctor.

Ogden Nash

Always Marry An April Girl

Praise the spells and bless the charms,
I found April in my arms.
April golden, April cloudy,
Gracious, cruel, tender, rowdy;
April soft in flowered languor,
April cold with sudden anger,
Ever changing, ever true --
I love April, I love you.

Ogden Nash

Bankers Are Just Like Anybody Else, Except Richer

This is a song to celebrate banks,
Because they are full of money and you go into them and all
you hear is clinks and clanks,
Or maybe a sound like the wind in the trees on the hills,
Which is the rustling of the thousand dollar bills.
Most bankers dwell in marble halls,
Which they get to dwell in because they encourage deposits
and discourage withdrawals,
And particularly because they all observe one rule which woe
betides the banker who fails to heed it,
Which is you must never lend any money to anybody unless
they don't need it.
I know you, you cautious conservative banks!
If people are worried about their rent it is your duty to deny
them the loan of one nickel, yes, even one copper engraving
of the martyred son of the late Nancy Hanks;
Yes, if they request fifty dollars to pay for a baby you must
look at them like Tarzan looking at an uppity ape in the
jungle,
And tell them what do they think a bank is, anyhow, they had
better go get the money from their wife's aunt or uncle.
But suppose people come in and they have a million and they
want another million to pile on top of it,
Why, you brim with the milk of human kindness and you
urge them to accept every drop of it,
And you lend them the million so then they have two million
and this gives them the idea that they would be better off
with four,
So they already have two million as security so you have no
hesitation in lending them two more,
And all the vice-presidents nod their heads in rhythm,
And the only question asked is do the borrowers want the
money sent or do they want to take it withm.
Because I think they deserve our appreciation and thanks,
the jackasses who go around saying that health and happi-
ness are everything and money isn't essential,
Because as soon as they have to borrow some unimportant
money to maintain their health and happiness they starve
to death so they can't go around any more sneering at good
old money, which is nothing short of providential.

Ogden Nash

Biological Reflection

A girl whose cheeks are covered with paint
Has an advantage with me over one whose ain't.

Ogden Nash

Celery

Celery, raw
Develops the jaw,
But celery, stewed,
Is more quietly chewed.

Ogden Nash

Children's Party

May I join you in the doghouse, Rover?
I wish to retire till the party's over.
Since three o'clock I've done my best
To entertain each tiny guest. My conscience now I've left behind me,
And if they want me, let them find me.
I blew their bubbles, I sailed their boats,
I kept them from each other's throats. I told them tales of magic lands,
I took them out to wash their hands.
I sorted their rubbers and tied their laces,
I wiped their noses and dried their faces. Of similarities there's lots
Twixt tiny tots and Hottentots.
I've earned repose to heal the ravages
Of these angelic-looking savages. Oh, progeny playing by itself
Is a lonely little elf,
But progeny in roistering batches
Would drive St. Francis from here to Natchez. Shunned are the games a parent
proposes,
They prefer to squirt each other with hoses,
Their playmates are their natural foemen
And they like to poke each other's abdomen. Their joy needs another woe's to cushion
it,
Say a puddle, and someone littler to push in it.
They observe with glee the ballistic results
Of ice cream with spoons for catapults, And inform the assembly with tears and glares
That everyone's presents are better than theirs.
Oh, little women and little men,
Someday I hope to love you again, But not till after the party's over,
So give me the key to the doghouse, Rover

Ogden Nash

Columbus

Once upon a time there was an Italian,
And some people thought he was a rascalion,
But he wasn't offended,
Because other people thought he was splendid,
And he said the world was round,
And everybody made an uncomplimentary sound,
But he went and tried to borrow some money from Ferdinand
But Ferdinand said America was a bird in the bush and he'd rather have a berdinand,
But Columbus' brain was fertile, it wasn't arid,
And he remembered that Ferdinand was married,
And he thought, there is no wife like a misunderstood one,
Because if her husband thinks something is a terrible idea she is bound to think it a good one,
So he perfumed his handkerchief with bay rum and citronella,
And he went to see Isabella,
And he looked wonderful but he had never felt sillier,
And she said, I can't place the face but the aroma is familiar,
And Columbus didn't say a word,
All he said was, I am Columbus, the fifteenth-century Admiral Byrd,
And, just as he thought, her disposition was very malleable,
And she said, Here are my jewels, and she wasn't penurious like Cornelia the mother of the Gracchi, she wasn't referring to her children, no, she was referring to her jewels, which were very very valuable,
So Columbus said, Somebody show me the sunset and somebody did and he set sail for it,
And he discovered America and they put him in jail for it,
And the fetters gave him welts,
And they named America after somebody else,
So the sad fate of Columbus ought to be pointed out to every child and every voter,
Because it has a very important moral, which is, Don't be a discoverer, be a promoter.

Ogden Nash

Come On In, The Senility Is Fine

People live forever in Jacksonville and St. Petersburg and Tampa,
But you don't have to live forever to become a grampa.
The entrance requirements for grampahood are comparatively mild,
You only have to live until your child has a child.
From that point on you start looking both ways over your shoulder,
Because sometimes you feel thirty years younger and sometimes
thirty years older.
Now you begin to realize who it was that reached the height of
imbecility,
It was whoever said that grandparents have all the fun and none of
the responsibility.
This is the most enticing spiderwebs of a tarradiddle ever spun,
Because everybody would love to have a baby around who was no
responsibility and lots of fun,
But I can think of no one but a mooncalf or a gaby
Who would trust their own child to raise a baby.
So you have to personally superintend your grandchild from diapers
to pants and from bottle to spoon,
Because you know that your own child hasn't sense enough to come
in out of a typhoon.
You don't have to live forever to become a grampa, but if you do
want to live forever,
Don't try to be clever;
If you wish to reach the end of the trail with an uncut throat,
Don't go around saying Quote I don't mind being a grampa but I
hate being married to a grandma Unquote.

Ogden Nash

Common Cold

Go hang yourself, you old M.D.!
You shall not sneer at me.
Pick up your hat and stethoscope,
Go wash your mouth with laundry soap;
I contemplate a joy exquisite
I'm not paying you for your visit.
I did not call you to be told
My malady is a common cold.

By pounding brow and swollen lip;
By fever's hot and scaly grip;
By those two red redundant eyes
That weep like woeful April skies;
By racking snuffle, snort, and sniff;
By handkerchief after handkerchief;
This cold you wave away as naught
Is the damndest cold man ever caught!

Give ear, you scientific fossil!
Here is the genuine Cold Colossal;
The Cold of which researchers dream,
The Perfect Cold, the Cold Supreme.
This honored system humbly holds
The Super-cold to end all colds;
The Cold Crusading for Democracy;
The Führer of the Streptococcracy.

Bacilli swarm within my portals
Such as were ne'er conceived by mortals,
But bred by scientists wise and hoary
In some Olympic laboratory;
Bacteria as large as mice,
With feet of fire and heads of ice
Who never interrupt for slumber
Their stamping elephantine rumba.

A common cold, gadzooks, forsooth!
Ah, yes. And Lincoln was jostled by Booth;
Don Juan was a budding gallant,
And Shakespeare's plays show signs of talent;
The Arctic winter is fairly coolish,
And your diagnosis is fairly foolish.
Oh what a derision history holds
For the man who belittled the Cold of Colds!

Ogden Nash

Crossing The Border

Senescence begins
And middle age ends
The day your descendents
Outnumber your friends.

Ogden Nash

Everybody Tells Me Everything

I find it very difficult to enthuse

Over the current news.

Just when you think that at least the outlook is so black that it can grow no blacker, it worsens,

And that is why I do not like the news, because there has never been an era when so many things were going so right for so many of the wrong persons.

Ogden Nash

Family Court

One would be in less danger
From the wiles of a stranger
If one's own kin and kith
Were more fun to be with.

Ogden Nash

First Child ... Second Child

FIRST

Be it a girl, or one of the boys,
It is scarlet all over its avoirdupois,
It is red, it is boiled; could the obstetrician
Have possibly been a lobstertrician?
His degrees and credentials were hunky-dory,
But how's for an infantile inventory?
Here's the prodigy, here's the miracle!
Whether its head is oval or spherical,
You rejoice to find it has only one,
Having dreaded a two-headed daughter or son;
Here's the phenomenon all complete,
It's got two hands, it's got two feet,
Only natural, but pleasing, because
For months you have dreamed of flippers or claws.
Furthermore, it is fully equipped:
Fingers and toes with nails are tipped;
It's even got eyes, and a mouth clear cut;
When the mouth comes open the eyes go shut,
When the eyes go shut, the breath is loosed
And the presence of lungs can be deduced.
Let the rockets flash and the cannon thunder,
This child is a marvel, a matchless wonder.
A staggering child, a child astounding,
Dazzling, diaperless, dumbfounding,
Stupendous, miraculous, unsurpassed,
A child to stagger and flabbergast,
Bright as a button, sharp as a thorn,
And the only perfect one ever born.

SECOND

Arrived this evening at half-past nine.
Everybody is doing fine.
Is it a boy, or quite the reverse?
You can call in the morning and ask the nurse.

Ogden Nash

Fleas

Adam
Had'em

Ogden Nash

Further Reflections on Parsley

Parsley
Is gharsley.

Ogden Nash

Good-By Now or Pardon My Gauntlet

Bring down the moon for genteel Janet;
She's too refined for this gross planet.
She wears garments and you wear clothes,
You buy stockings, she purchases hose.
She say That is correct, and you say Yes,
And she disrobes and you undress.
Confronted by a mouse or moose,
You turn green, she turns chartreuse.
Her speech is new-minted, freshly quarried;
She has a fore-head, you have a forehead.
Nor snake nor slowworm draweth nigh her;
You go to bed, she doth retire.
To Janet, births are blessed events,
And odors that you smell she scents.
Replete she feels, when her food is yummy,
Not in the stomach but the tummy.
If urged some novel step to show,
You say Like this, she says Like so.
Her dear ones don't die, but pass away;
Beneath her formal is lonjeray.
Of refinement she's a fount, or fountess,
And that is why she's now a countess.
She was asking for the little girls' room
And a flunky though she said the earl's room.

Ogden Nash

Goody for Our Side and Your Side Too

Foreigners are people somewhere else,
Natives are people at home;
If the place you're at
Is your habitat,
You're a foreigner, say in Rome.
But the scales of Justice balance true,
And tit leads into tat,
So the man who's at home
When he stays in Rome
Is abroad when he's where you're at.

When we leave the limits of the land in which
Our birth certificates sat us,
It does not mean
Just a change of scene,
But also a change of status.
The Frenchman with his fetching beard,
The Scot with his kilt and sporran,
One moment he
May a native be,
And the next may find him foreign.

There's many a difference quickly found
Between the different races,
But the only essential
Differential
Is living different places.
Yet such is the pride of prideful man,
From Austrians to Australians,
That wherever he is,
He regards as his,
And the natives there, as aliens.

Oh, I'll be friends if you'll be friends,
The foreigner tells the native,
And we'll work together for our common ends
Like a preposition and a dative.
If our common ends seem mostly mine,
Why not, you ignorant foreigner?
And the native replies
Contrariwise;
And hence, my dears, the coroner.

So mind your manners when a native, please,
And doubly when you visit
And between us all
A rapport may fall
Ecstatically exquisite.
One simple thought, if you have it pat,
Will eliminate the coroner:
You may be a native in your habitat,
But to foreigners you're just a foreigner.

Ogden Nash

Grandpa Is Ashamed

A child need not be very clever
To learn that "Later, dear" means "Never."

Ogden Nash

I Didn't Go To Church Today

I didn't go to church today,
I trust the Lord to understand.
The surf was swirling blue and white,
The children swirling on the sand.
He knows, He knows how brief my stay,
How brief this spell of summer weather,
He knows when I am said and done
We'll have plenty of time together.

Ogden Nash

I Do, I Will, I Have

How wise I am to have instructed the butler
to instruct the first footman to instruct the second
footman to instruct the doorman to order my carriage;
I am about to volunteer a definition of marriage.
Just as I know that there are two Hagens, Walter and Copen,
I know that marriage is a legal and religious alliance entered
into by a man who can't sleep with the window shut and a
woman who can't sleep with the window open.
Moreover, just as I am unsure of the difference between
flora and fauna and flotsam and jetsam,
I am quite sure that marriage is the alliance of two people
one of whom never remembers birthdays and the other
never forgetsam,
And he refuses to believe there is a leak in the water pipe or
the gas pipe and she is convinced she is about to asphyxiate
or drown,
And she says Quick get up and get my hairbrushes off the
windowsill, it's raining in, and he replies Oh they're all right,
it's only raining straight down.
That is why marriage is so much more interesting than divorce,
Because it's the only known example of the happy meeting of
the immovable object and the irresistible force.
So I hope husbands and wives will continue to debate and
combat over everything debatable and combatable,
Because I believe a little incompatibility is the spice of life,
particularly if he has income and she is patable.

Ogden Nash

If He Were Alive Today, Mayhap, Mr. Morgan Would Sit on the Midget's Lap

*"Beep-beep.
BANKERS TRUST AUTOMOBILE LOAN
You'll find a banker at Bankers Trust"*
Advertisement in N.Y. Times

When comes my second childhood,
As to all men it must,
I want to be a banker
Like the banker at Bankers Trust.
I wouldn't ask to be president
Or even assistant veep,
I'd only ask for a kiddie car
And permission to go beep-beep.

The banker at Chase Manhattan,
He bids a polite Good-day;
The banker at Immigrant Savings
Cries Scusi! and Oléacute;!
But I'd be a sleek Ferrari
Or perhaps a joggly jeep,
And scooting around at Bankers Trust,
Beep-beep, I'd go, beep-beep.

The trolley car used to say clang-clang
And the choo-choo said toot-toot,
But the beep of the banker at Bankers Trust
Is every bit as cute.
Miaow, says the cuddly kitten,
Baa, says the woolly sheep,
Oink, says the piggy-wiggy,
And the banker says beep-beep.

So I want to play at Bankers Trust
Like a hippety-hoppety bunny,
And best of all, oh best of all,
With really truly money.
Now grown-ups dear, it's nightie-night
Until my dream comes true,
And I bid you a happy boop-a-doop
And a big beep-beep adieu.

Ogden Nash

Introspective Reflection

I would live all my life in nonchalance and insouciance
Were it not for making a living, which is rather a nounciance.

Ogden Nash

Just Keep Quiet and Nobody Will Notice

There is one thing that ought to be taught in all the colleges,
Which is that people ought to be taught not to go around always making apologies.
I don't mean the kind of apologies people make when they run over you or borrow five
dollars or step on your feet,
Because I think that is sort of sweet;
No, I object to one kind of apology alone,
Which is when people spend their time and yours apologizing for everything they own.
You go to their house for a meal,
And they apologize because the anchovies aren't caviar or the partridge is veal;
They apologize privately for the crudeness of the other guests,
And they apologize publicly for their wife's housekeeping or their husband's jests;
If they give you a book by Dickens they apologize because it isn't by Scott,
And if they take you to the theater, they apologize for the acting and the dialogue and
the plot;
They contain more milk of human kindness than the most capacious diary can,
But if you are from out of town they apologize for everything local and if you are a
foreigner they apologize for everything American.
I dread these apologizers even as I am depicting them,
I shudder as I think of the hours that must be spend in contradicting them,
Because you are very rude if you let them emerge from an argument victorious,
And when they say something of theirs is awful, it is your duty to convince them
politely that it is magnificent and glorious,
And what particularly bores me with them,
Is that half the time you have to politely contradict them when you rudely agree with
them,
So I think there is one rule every host and hostess ought to keep with the comb and
nail file and bicarbonate and aromatic spirits on a handy shelf,
Which is don't spoil the denouement by telling the guests everything is terrible, but let
them have the thrill of finding it out for themselves.

Ogden Nash

Kipling's Vermont

The summer like a rajah dies,
And every widowed tree
Kindles for Congregationalist eyes
An alien suttee.

Ogden Nash

Lather As You Go

Beneath this slab
John Brown is stowed.
He watched the ads
And not the road.

Ogden Nash

Lines Indited With All The Depravity Of Poverty

One way to be very happy is to be very rich
For then you can buy orchids by the quire and bacon by the flitch.
And yet at the same time People don't mind if you only tip them a dime,
Because it's very funny
But somehow if you're rich enough you can get away with spending
water like money
While if you're not rich you can spend in one evening your salary for
the year
And everybody will just stand around and jeer.
If you are rich you don't have to think twice about buying a judge or a
horse,
Or a lower instead of an upper, or a new suit, or a divorce,
And you never have to say When,
And you can sleep every morning until nine or ten,
All of which
Explains why I should like very, very much to be very, very rich.

Ogden Nash

Lines On Facing Forty

I have a bone to pick with Fate.
Come here and tell me, girlie,
Do you think my mind is maturing late,
Or simply rotted early?

Ogden Nash

Lines To Be Embroidered On A Bib

OR

The Child Is Father Of The Man, But Not For Quite A While

So Thomas Edison
Never drank his medicine;
So Blackstone and Hoyle
Refused cod-liver oil;
So Sir Thomas Malory
Never heard of a calory;
So the Earl of Lennox
Murdered Rizzio without the aid of vitamins or calisthenox;
So Socrates and Plato
Ate dessert without finishing their potato;
So spinach was too spinachy
For Leonardo da Vinaci;
Well, it's all immaterial,
So eat your nice cereal,
And if you want to name your ration,
First go get a reputation.

Ogden Nash

Listen...

There is a knocking in the skull,
An endless silent shout
Of something beating on a wall,
And crying, "Let me out!"

That solitary prisoner
Will never hear reply.
No comrade in eternity
Can hear the frantic cry.

No heart can share the terror
That haunts his monstrous dark.
The light that filters through the chinks
No other eye can mark.

When flesh is linked with eager flesh,
And words run warm and full,
I think that he is loneliest then,
The captive in the skull.

Caught in a mesh of living veins,
In cell of padded bone,
He loneliest is when he pretends
That he is not alone.

We'd free the incarcerated race of man
That such a doom endures
Could only you unlock my skull,
Or I creep into yours.

Ogden Nash

Look What You Did, Christopher!

In fourteen hundred and ninety-two,
Someone sailed the ocean blue.
Somebody borrowed the fare in Spain
For a business trip on the bounding main,
And to prove to the people, by actual test,
You could get to the East by sailing West.
Somebody said, Sail on! Sail on!
And studied China and China's lingo,
And cried from the bow, There's China now!
And promptly bumped into San Domingo.
Somebody murmured, Oh dear, oh dear!
I've discovered the Western Hemisphere.

And that, you may think, my friends, was that.
But it wasn't. Not by a fireman's hat.
Well enough wasn't left alone,
And Columbus was only a cornerstone.
There came the Spaniards,
There came the Greeks,
There came the Pilgrims in leather breeks.
There came the Dutch,
And the Poles and Swedes,
The Persians, too,
And perhaps the Medes,
The Letts, the Lapps, and the Lithuanians,
Regal Russians, and ripe Roumanians.
There came the French
And there came the Finns,
And the Japanese
With their formal grins.
The Tartars came,
And the Terrible Turks -
In a word, humanity shot the works.
And the country that should have been Cathay
Decided to be
The U.S.A.

And that, you may think, my friends, was that.
But it wasn't. Not by a fireman's hat.
Christopher C. was the cornerstone,
And well enough wasn't left alone.
For those who followed
When he was through,
They burned to discover something, too.
Somebody, bored with rural scenery,
Went to work and invented machinery,
While a couple of other mental giants
Got together
And thought up Science.
Platinum blondes
(They were once peroxide),
Peruvian bonds

And carbon monoxide,
Tax evaders
And Vitamin A,
Vice crusaders,
And tattletale gray -
These, with many another phobia,
We owe to that famous Twelfth of Octobia.
O misery, misery, mumble and moan!
Someone invented the telephone,
And interrupted a nation's slumbers,
Ringing wrong but similar numbers.
Someone devised the silver screen
And the intimate Hollywood magazine,
And life is a Hades
Of clicking cameras,
And foreign ladies
Behaving amorous.
Gags have erased
Amusing dialog,
As gas has replaced
The crackling firelog.
All that glitters is sold as gold,
And our daily diet grows odder and odder,
And breakfast foods are dusty and cold -
It's a wise child
That knows its fodder.
Someone invented the automobile,
And good Americans took the wheel
To view American rivers and rills
And justly famous forests and hills -
But someone equally enterprising
Had invented billboard advertising.
You linger at home
In dark despair,
And wistfully try the electric air.
You hope against hope for a quiz imperial,
And what do they give you?
A doctor serial.
Oh, Columbus was only a cornerstone,
And well enough wasn't left alone,
For the Inquisition was less tyrannical
Than the iron rules of an age mechanical,
Which, because of an error in '92,
Are clamped like corsets on me and you,
While Children of Nature we'd be today
If San Domingo
Had been Cathay.

And that, you may think, my friends, is that.
But it isn't - not by a fireman's hat.
The American people,
With grins jocose,

Always survive the fatal dose.
And though our systems are slightly wobbly,
We'll fool the doctor this time, probly.

Ogden Nash

More About People

When people aren't asking questions
They're making suggestions
And when they're not doing one of those
They're either looking over your shoulder or stepping on your toes
And then as if that weren't enough to annoy you
They employ you.
Anybody at leisure
Incurs everybody's displeasure.
It seems to be very irking
To people at work to see other people not working,
So they tell you that work is wonderful medicine,
Just look at Firestone and Ford and Edison,
And they lecture you till they're out of breath or something
And then if you don't succumb they starve you to death or something.
All of which results in a nasty quirk:
That if you don't want to work you have to work to earn enough money so that you
won't have to work.

Ogden Nash

My Dream

This is my dream,
It is my own dream,
I dreamt it.
I dreamt that my hair was kempt.
Then I dreamt that my true love unkempt it.

Ogden Nash

No Doctor's Today, Thank You

They tell me that euphoria is the feeling of feeling wonderful,
well, today I feel euphorian,
Today I have the agility of a Greek god and the appetite of a
Victorian.
Yes, today I may even go forth without my galoshes,
Today I am a swashbuckler, would anybody like me to buckle
any swashes?
This is my euphorian day,
I will ring welkins and before anybody answers I will run away.
I will tame me a caribou
And bedeck it with marabou.
I will pen me my memoirs.
Ah youth, youth! What euphorian days them was!
I wasn't much of a hand for the boudoirs,
I was generally to be found where the food was.
Does anybody want any flotsam?
I've gotsam.
Does anybody want any jetsam?
I can getsam.
I can play chopsticks on the Wurlitzer,
I can speak Portuguese like a Berlitzer.
I can don or doff my shoes without tying or untying the laces because
I am wearing moccasins,
And I practically know the difference between serums and antitoccasins.
Kind people, don't think me purse-proud, don't set me down as
vainglorious,
I'm just a little euphorious.

Ogden Nash

No, You Be A Lone Eagle

I find it very hard to be fair-minded
About people who go around being air-minded.
I just can't see any fun
In soaring up up up into the sun
When the chances are still a fresh cool orchid to a paper geranium
That you'll unsoar down down down onto your (to you) invaluable
 cranium.
I know the constant refrain
About how safer up in God's trafficless heaven than in an automobile
 or a train
But ...
My God, have you ever taken a good look at a strut?
Then that one about how you're in Boston before you can say antidis-
 establishmentarianism
So that preferring to take five hours by rail is a pernicious example of
 antiquarianism.
At least when I get on the Boston train I have a good chance of landing
 in the South Station
And not in that part of the daily press which is reserved for victims of
 aviation.
Then, despite the assurance that aeroplanes are terribly comfortable I
 notice that when you are railroading or automobiling
You don't have to take a paper bag along just in case of a funny feeling.
It seems to me that no kind of depravity
Brings such speedy retribution as ignoring the law of gravity.
Therefore nobody could possibly indict me for perjury
When I swear that I wish the Wright brothers had gone in for silver
 fox farming or tree surgery.

Ogden Nash

Oh To Be Odd!

Hypochondriacs

Spend the winter at the bottom of Florida and the summer on top of
the Adirondriacs.

You go to Paris and live on champagne wine and cognac

If you're dipsomognac.

If you're a manic-depressive

You don't go anywhere where you won't be cheered up, and people say
"There, there!" if your bills are excessive.

But you stick around and work day and night and night and day with
your nose to the sawmill.

If you're nawmill.

Note: Dipsomaniac -- alcoholic

Ogden Nash

Old Dr. Valentine To His Son

Your hopeless patients will live,
Your healthy patients will die.
I have only this word to give:
Wonder, and find out why

Ogden Nash

Old Men

People expect old men to die,
They do not really mourn old men.
Old men are different. People look
At them with eyes that wonder when...
People watch with unshocked eyes;
But the old men know when an old man dies.

Ogden Nash

One From One Leaves Two

Higgledy piggledy, my black hen,
She lays eggs for gentlemen.
Gentlemen come every day
To count what my black hen doth lay.
If perchance she lays too many,
They fine my hen a pretty penny;
If perchance she fails to lay,
The gentlemen a bonus pay.

Mumbledy pumbledy, my red cow,
She's cooperating now.
At first she didn't understand
That milk production must be planned;
She didn't understand at first
She either had to plan or burst,
But now the government reports
She's giving pints instead of quarts.

Fiddle de dee, my next-door neighbors,
They are giggling at their labors.
First they plant the tiny seed,
Then they water, then they weed,
Then they hoe and prune and lop,
They they raise a record crop,
Then they laugh their sides asunder,
And plow the whole caboodle under.

Abracadabra, thus we learn
The more you create, the less you earn.
The less you earn, the more you're given,
The less you lead, the more you're driven,
The more destroyed, the more they feed,
The more you pay, the more they need,
The more you earn, the less you keep,
And now I lay me down to sleep.
I pray the Lord my soul to take
If the tax-collector hasn't got it before I wake.

Ogden Nash

One Third Of The Calendar

In January everything freezes.
We have two children. Both are she'ses.
This is our January rule:
One girl in bed, and one in school.

In February the blizzard whirls.
We own a pair of little girls.
Blessings upon of each the head ----
The one in school and the one in bed.

March is the month of cringe and bluster.
Each of our children has a sister.
They cling together like Hansel and Gretel,
With their noses glued to the benzoin kettle.

April is made of impetuous waters
And doctors looking down throats of daughters.
If we had a son too, and a thoroughbred,
We'd have a horse,
And a boy,
And two girls
In bed.

Ogden Nash

Peekabo, I Almost See You

Middle-aged life is merry, and I love to
lead it,
But there comes a day when your eyes
are all right but your arm isn't long
enough
to hold the telephone book where you can read it,
And your friends get jocular, so you go
to the oculist,
And of all your friends he is the joculist,
So over his facetiousness let us skim,
Only noting that he has been waiting for you ever since
you said Good evening to his grandfather clock under
the impression that it was him,
And you look at his chart and it says SHRDLU QWERTYOP,
and you say Well, why SHRDNTLU QWERTYOP? and he
says one set of glasses won't do.
You need two.
One for reading Erle Stanley Gardner's Perry Mason and
Keats's "Endymion" with,
And the other for walking around without saying Hello
to strange wymion with.
So you spend your time taking off your seeing glasses to put
on your reading glasses, and then remembering that your
reading glasses are upstairs or in the car,
And then you can't find your seeing glasses again because
without them on you can't see where they are.
Enough of such mishaps, they would try the patience of an
ox,
I prefer to forget both pairs of glasses and pass my declining
years saluting strange women and grandfather clocks.

Ogden Nash

PG Wooster, Just as he Useter

Bound to your bookseller, leap to your library,
Deluge your dealer with bakshish and bribery,
Lean on the counter and never say when,
Wodehouse and Wooster are with us again.

Flourish the fish-slice, your buttons unloosing,
Prepare for the fabulous browsing and sluicing,
And quote, til you're known as the neighborhood nuisance,
The gems that illumine the browsance and sluicance.

Oh, fondle each gem, and after you quote it,
Kindly inform me just who wrote it.

Which came first, the egg or the rooster?
P.G.Wodehouse or Bertram Wooster?
I know hawk from handsaw, and Finn from Fiji,
But I can't disentangle Bertram from PG.

I inquire in the school room, I ask in the road house,
Did Wodehouse write Wooster, or Wooster Wodehouse?
Bertram Wodehouse and PG Wooster,
They are linked in my mind like Simon and Schuster.

No matter which fumbled in '41,
Or which the weebegone figure of fun.
I deduce how the faux pas came about,
It was clearly Jeeves's afternoon out.

Now Jeeves is back, and my cheeks are crumpley
From watching him glide through Steeple Bumbleigh.

Ogden Nash

Portrait of the Artist as a Prematurely Old Man

It is common knowledge to every schoolboy and even every Bachelor of Arts,
That all sin is divided into two parts.

One kind of sin is called a sin of commission, and that is very important,
And it is what you are doing when you are doing something you ortant,
And the other kind of sin is just the opposite and is called a sin of omission
and is equally bad in the eyes of all right-thinking people, from
Billy Sunday to Buddha,

And it consists of not having done something you shuddha.

I might as well give you my opinion of these two kinds of sin as long as,
in a way, against each other we are pitting them,
And that is, don't bother your head about the sins of commission because
however sinful, they must at least be fun or else you wouldn't be
committing them.

It is the sin of omission, the second kind of sin,
That lays eggs under your skin.

The way you really get painfully bitten

Is by the insurance you haven't taken out and the checks you haven't added up
the stubs of and the appointments you haven't kept and the bills you
haven't paid and the letters you haven't written.

Also, about sins of omission there is one particularly painful lack of beauty,
Namely, it isn't as though it had been a riotous red-letter day or night every
time you neglected to do your duty;

You didn't get a wicked forbidden thrill

Every time you let a policy lapse or forget to pay a bill;

You didn't slap the lads in the tavern on the back and loudly cry Whee,
Let's all fail to write just one more letter before we go home, and this round
of unwritten letters is on me.

No, you never get any fun

Out of things you haven't done,

But they are the things that I do not like to be amid,

Because the suitable things you didn't do give you a lot more trouble than the
unsuitable things you did.

The moral is that it is probably better not to sin at all, but if some kind of
sin you must be pursuing,

Well, remember to do it by doing rather than by not doing.

Ogden Nash

Possessions Are Nine Points Of Conversation

Some people, and it doesn't matter whether they are paupers or millionaires, Think that anything they have is the best in the world just because it is theirs. If they happen to own a 1921 jalopy, They look at their neighbor's new de luxe convertible like the wearer of a 57th Street gown at a 14th Street copy. If their seventeen-year-old child is still in the third grade they sneer at the graduation of the seventeen-year-old children of their friends, Claiming that prodigies always come to bad ends, And if their roof leaks, It's because the shingles are antiques. Other people, and it doesn't matter if they are Scandinavians or Celts, Think that anything is better than theirs just because it belongs to somebody else. If you congratulate them when their blue-blooded Doberman pinscher wins the obedience championship, they look at you like a martyr, And say that the garbage man's little Rover is really infinitely smarter; And if they smoke fifteen-cent cigars they are sure somebody else gets better cigars for a dime. And if they take a trip to Paris they are sure their friends who went to Old Orchard had a better time. Yes, they look on their neighbor's ox and ass with covetousness and their own ox and ass with abhorrence, And if they are wives they want their husband to be like Florence's Freddie, and if they are husbands they want their wives to be like Freddie's Florence. I think that comparisons are truly odious, I do not approve of this constant proud or envious to-do; And furthermore, dear friends, I think that you and yours are delightful and I also think that me and mine are delightful too.

Ogden Nash

Pretty Halcyon Days

How pleasant to sit on the beach,
On the beach, on the sand, in the sun,
With ocean galore within reach,
And nothing at all to be done!

 No letters to answer,
 No bills to be burned,
 No work to be shirked,
 No cash to be earned,

It is pleasant to sit on the beach
With nothing at all to be done!

How pleasant to look at the ocean,
Democratic and damp; indiscriminate;
It fills me with noble emotion
To think I am able to swim in it.

 To lave in the wave,
 Majestic and chilly,
 Tomorrow I crave;
 But today it is silly.

It is pleasant to look at the ocean;
Tomorrow, perhaps, I shall swim in it.

How pleasant to gaze at the sailors
As their sailboats they manfully sail
With the vigor of vikings and whalers
In the days of the vikings and whale.

 They sport on the brink
 Of the shad and the shark;
 If it's windy, they sink;
 If it isn't, they park.

It is pleasant to gaze at the sailors,
To gaze without having to sail.

How pleasant the salt anesthetic
Of the air and the sand and the sun;
Leave the earth to the strong and athletic,
And the sea to adventure upon.

 But the sun and the sand
 No contractor can copy;
 We lie in the land
 Of the lotus and poppy;

We vegetate, calm and aesthetic,
On the beach, on the sand, in the sun.

Ogden Nash

Reflection On A Wicked World

Purity
Is obscurity.

Ogden Nash

Reflection On Babies

A bit of talcum
Is always walcum.

Ogden Nash

Reflection On Caution

Affection is a noble quality;
It leads to generosity and jollity.
But it also leads to breach of promise
If you go around lavishing it on red-hot momise.

Ogden Nash

Reflection On The Fallibility Of Nemesis

He who is ridden by a conscience
Worries about a lot of nonscience;
He without benefit of scruples
His fun and income soon quadruples.

Ogden Nash

Reflections On Ice Breaking

Candy
Is dandy
But liquor
Is quicker

Ogden Nash

Reflections On Ice-Breaking

Candy
Is Dandy
But liquor
Is quicker.

Ogden Nash

Requiem

There was a young belle of Natchez
Whose garments were always in patchez.
When comment arose
On the state of her clothes,
She drawled, When Ah itchez, Ah scratchez!

Ogden Nash

Samson Agonistes

I test my bath before I sit,
And I'm always moved to wonderment
That what chills the finger not a bit
Is so frigid upon the fundament.

Ogden Nash

So Does Everybody Else, Only Not So Much

O all ye exorcizers come and exorcize now, and ye clergymen draw nigh and clerge,
For I wish to be purged of an urge. It is an irksome urge, compounded of nettles and
glue, And it is turning all my friends back into acquaintances, and all my
acquaintances into people who look the other way when I heave into view. It is an
indication that my mental buttery is butterless and my mental larder lardless, And it
consists not of "Stop me if you've heard this one," but of "I know
you've heard this one because I told it to you myself, but I'm going to tell it to you
again regardless," Yes I fear I am living beyond my mental means. When I
realize that it is not only anecdotes that I reiterate but what is far worse, summaries of
radio programs and descriptions of caroons in newspapers and magazines. I want to
resist but I cannot resist recounting the bright sayings of celebrities that everybody
already is familiar with every word of; I want to refrain but cannot refrain from telling
the same audience on two successive evenings the same little snatches of domestic
gossip about people I used to know that they have never heard of. When I remember
some titlating episode of my childhood I figure that if it's worth narrating once it's
worth narrating twice, in spite of lackluster eyes and dropping jaws, And indeed I have
now worked my way backward from titllating episodes in my own childhood to titillating
episodes in the childhood of my parents or even my parents-in-laws, And what really
turns my corpuscles to ice, I carry around clippings and read them to people twice.
And I know what I am doing while I am doing it and I don't want to do it but I can't
help doing it and I am just another Ancient Mariner, And the prospects for my future
social life couldn't possibly be barrener. Did I tell you that the prospects for my future
social life couldn't be barrener?

Ogden Nash

Soliloquy in Circles

Being a father
Is quite a bother.

You are as free as air
With time to spare,

You're a fiscal rocket
With change in your pocket,

And then one morn
A child is born.

Your life has been runcible,
Irresponsible,

Like an arrow or javelin
You've been constantly travelin'.

But mostly, I daresay,
Without a chaise percée,

To which by comparison
Nothing's embarison.

But all children matures,
Maybe even yours.

You improve them mentally
And straighten them dentally,

They grow tall as a lancer
And ask questions you can't answer,

And supply you with data
About how everybody else wears lipstick sooner and stays up later,

And if they are popular,
The phone they monopular.

They scorn the dominion
Of their parent's opinion,

They're no longer corralable
Once they find that you're fallible

But after you've raised them and educated them and gowned them,
They just take their little fingers and wrap you around them.

Being a father Is quite a bother,
But I like it, rather.

Ogden Nash

Song of the Open Road

I think that I shall never see
A billboard lovely as a tree
Indeed, unless the billboards fall
I'll never see a tree at all.

Ogden Nash

Song To Be Sung by the Father of Infant Female Children

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky;
Contrariwise, my blood runs cold
When little boys go by.
For little boys as little boys,
No special hate I carry,
But now and then they grow to men,
And when they do, they marry.
No matter how they tarry,
Eventually they marry.
And, swine among the pearls,
They marry little girls.

Oh, somewhere, somewhere, an infant plays,
With parents who feed and clothe him.
Their lips are sticky with pride and praise,
But I have begun to loathe him.
Yes, I loathe with loathing shameless
This child who to me is nameless.
This bachelor child in his carriage
Gives never a thought to marriage,
But a person can hardly say knife
Before he will hunt him a wife.

I never see an infant (male),
A-sleeping in the sun,
Without I turn a trifle pale
And think is he the one?
Oh, first he'll want to crop his curls,
And then he'll want a pony,
And then he'll think of pretty girls,
And holy matrimony.
A cat without a mouse
Is he without a spouse.

Oh, somewhere he bubbles bubbles of milk,
And quietly sucks his thumbs.
His cheeks are roses painted on silk,
And his teeth are tucked in his gums.
But alas the teeth will begin to grow,
And the bubbles will cease to bubble;
Given a score of years or so,
The roses will turn to stubble.
He'll sell a bond, or he'll write a book,
And his eyes will get that acquisitive look,
And raging and ravenous for the kill,
He'll boldly ask for the hand of Jill.
This infant whose middle
Is diapered still
Will want to marry My daughter Jill.

Oh sweet be his slumber and moist his middle!

My dreams, I fear, are infanticiddle.
A fig for embryo Lohengrins!
I'll open all his safety pins,
I'll pepper his powder, and salt his bottle,
And give him readings from Aristotle.
Sand for his spinach I'll gladly bring,
And Tabasco sauce for his teething ring.
Then perhaps he'll struggle though fire and water
To marry somebody else's daughter.

Ogden Nash

Spring Comes To Murray Hill

I sit in an office at 244 Madison Avenue
And say to myself You have a responsible job havenue?
Why then do you fritter away your time on this doggerel?
If you have a sore throat you can cure it by using a good goggeral,
If you have a sore foot you can get it fixed by a chiropodist,
And you can get your original sin removed by St. John the Bopodist,
Why then should this flocculent lassitude be incurable?
Kansas City, Kansas, proves that even Kansas City needn't always be
Missourible.
Up up my soul! This inaction is abominable.
Perhaps it is the result of disturbances abdominable.
The pilgrims settled Massachusetts in 1620 when they landed on a stone
hummock.
Maybe if they were here now they would settle my stomach.
Oh, if I only had the wings of a bird
Instead of being confined on Madison Avenue I could soar in a jiffy to
Second or Third.

Ogden Nash

Tableau at Twilight

I sit in the dusk. I am all alone.
Enter a child and an ice-cream cone.

A parent is easily beguiled
By sight of this coniferous child.

The friendly embers warmer gleam,
The cone begins to drip ice cream.

Cones are composed of many a vitamin.
My lap is not the place to bitamin.

Although my raiment is not chinchilla,
I flinch to see it become vanilla.

Coniferous child, when vanilla melts
I'd rather it melted somewhere else.

Exit child with remains of cone.
I sit in the dusk. I am all alone,

Muttering spells like an angry Druid,
Alone, in the dusk, with the cleaning fluid.

Ogden Nash

The Abominable Snowman

I've never seen an abominable snowman,
I'm hoping not to see one,
I'm also hoping, if I do,
That it will be a wee one.

Ogden Nash

The Ant

The ant has made herself illustrious
By constant industry industrious.
So what? Would you be calm and placid
If you were full of formic acid?

Ogden Nash

The Bargain

As I was going to St. Ives
I met a man with seven lives;
Seven lives,
In seven sacks,
Like seven beeves
On seven racks.
These seven lives
He offered to sell,
But which was best
He couldn't tell.
He swore with any
I'd be happy forever;
I bought all seven
And thought I was clever,
But his parting words
I can't forget:
Forever
Isn't over yet.

Ogden Nash

The Boy Who Laughed At Santa Claus

In Baltimore there lived a boy.
He wasn't anybody's joy.
Although his name was Jabez Dawes,
His character was full of flaws. In school he never led his classes,
He hid old ladies' reading glasses,
His mouth was open when he chewed,
And elbows to the table glued.
He stole the milk of hungry kittens,
And walked through doors marked NO ADMITTANCE.
He said he acted thus because
There wasn't any Santa Claus.

Ogden Nash

The Camel

The camel has a single hump;
The dromedary , two;
Or else the other way around.
I'm never sure. Are you?

Ogden Nash

The Cantaloupe

One cantaloupe is ripe and lush,
Another's green, another's mush.
I'd buy a lot more cantaloupe
If I possessed a fluoroscope.

Ogden Nash

The Catsup Bottle

First a little
Then a lottle

Ogden Nash

The Centipede

I objurgate the centipede,
A bug we do not really need.
At sleepy-time he beats a path
Straight to the bedroom or the bath.
You always wallop where he's not,
Or, if he is, he makes a spot.

Ogden Nash

The Chipmunk

My friends all know that I am shy,
But the chipmunk is twice as shy and I.
He moves with flickering indecision
Like stripes across the television.
He's like the shadow of a cloud,
Or Emily Dickinson read aloud.

Ogden Nash

The Clean Plater

Some singers sing of ladies' eyes,
And some of ladies lips,
Refined ones praise their ladylike ways,
And course ones hymn their hips.
The Oxford Book of English Verse
Is lush with lyrics tender;
A poet, I guess, is more or less
Preoccupied with gender.
Yet I, though custom call me crude,
Prefer to sing in praise of food.
Food,
Yes, food,
Just any old kind of food.
Pheasant is pleasant, of course,
And terrapin, too, is tasty,
Lobster I freely endorse,
In pate or patty or pasty.
But there's nothing the matter with butter,
And nothing the matter with jam,
And the warmest greetings I utter
To the ham and the yam and the clam.
For they're food,
All food,
And I think very fondly of food.
Through I'm broody at times
When bothered by rhymes,
I brood
On food.
Some painters paint the sapphire sea,
And some the gathering storm.
Others portray young lambs at play,
But most, the female form.
"Twas trite in that primeval dawn
When painting got its start,
That a lady with her garments on
Is Life, but is she Art?
By undraped nymphs
I am not wooed;
I'd rather painters painted food.
Food,
Just food,
Just any old kind of food.
Go purloin a sirloin, my pet,
If you'd win a devotion incredible;
And asparagus tips vinaigrette,
Or anything else that is edible.
Bring salad or sausage or scrapple,
A berry or even a beet.
Bring an oyster, an egg, or an apple,
As long as it's something to eat.
If it's food,
It's food;

Never mind what kind of food.
When I ponder my mind
I consistently find
It is glued
On food.

Ogden Nash

The Cow

The cow is of the bovine ilk;
One end is moo, the other, milk.

Ogden Nash

The Cuckoo

Cuckoos lead Bohemian lives,
They fail as husbands and as wives,
Therefore they cynically disparage
Everybody else's marriage.

Ogden Nash

The Dog

The truth I do not stretch or shove
When I state that the dog is full of love.
I've also found, by actual test,
A wet dog is the lovingest.

Ogden Nash

The Duck

Behold the duck.
It does not cluck.
A cluck it lacks.
It quacks.
It is specially fond
Of a puddle or pond.
When it dines or sups,
It bottoms ups.

Ogden Nash

The Eel

I don't mind eels
Except as meals.

Ogden Nash

The Firefly

The firefly's flame
Is something for which science has no name
I can think of nothing eerier
Than flying around with an unidentified glow on a
person's posteerier.

Ogden Nash

The Fly

God in his wisdom made the fly
And then forgot to tell us why.

Ogden Nash

The Germ

A mighty creature is the germ,
Though smaller than the pachyderm.
His customary dwelling place
Is deep within the human race.
His childish pride he often pleases
By giving people strange diseases.
Do you, my poppet, feel infirm?
You probably contain a germ.

Ogden Nash

The Guppy

Whales have calves,
Cats have kittens,
Bears have cubs,
Bats have bittens,
Swans have cygnets,
Seals have puppies,
But guppies just have little guppies.

Ogden Nash

The Hippopotamus

Behold the hippopotamus!
We laugh at how he looks to us,
And yet in moments dank and grim,
I wonder how we look to him.

Peace, peace, thou hippopotamus!
We really look all right to us,
As you no doubt delight the eye
Of other hippopotami.

Ogden Nash

The Hunter

The hunter crouches in his blind
'Neath camouflage of every kind
And conjures up a quacking noise
To lend allure to his decoys
This grown-up man, with pluck and luck
is hoping to outwit a duck

Ogden Nash

The Jellyfish

Who wants my jellyfish?
I'm not sellyfish!

Ogden Nash

The Joyous Malingerer

Who is the happy husband? Why, indeed,
'Tis he who's useless in the time of need;
Who, asked to unclasp a bracelet or a neckless,
Contrives to be utterly futile, fumbling, feckless,
Or when a zipper nips his loved one's back
Cannot restore the zipper to its track.
Another time, not wishing to be flayed,
She will not use him as a lady's maid.

Stove-wise he's the perpetual backward learner
Who can't turn on or off the proper burner.
If faced with washing up he never gripes,
But simply drops more dishes than he wipes.
She finds his absence preferable to his aid,
And thus all mealtime chores doth he evade.

He can, attempting to replace a fuse,
Black out the coast from Boston to Newport News,
Or, hanging pictures, be the rookie wizard
Who fills the parlor with a plaster blizzard.
He'll not again be called to competition
With decorator or with electrician.

At last it dawns upon his patient spouse
He's better at his desk than round the house.

Ogden Nash

The Lion

Oh, weep for Mr. and Mrs. Bryan!
He was eaten by a lion;
Following which, the lion's lioness
Up and swallowed Bryan's Bryanness.

Ogden Nash

The Middle

When I remember bygone days
I think how evening follows morn;
So many I loved were not yet dead,
So many I love were not yet born.

Ogden Nash

The Octopus

Tell me, O Octopus, I begs
Is those things arms, or is they legs?
I marvel at thee, Octopus;
If I were thou, I'd call me Us.

Ogden Nash

The Ostrich

The ostrich roams the great Sahara.
Its mouth is wide, its neck is narra.
It has such long and lofty legs,
I'm glad it sits to lay its eggs.

Ogden Nash

The Parent

Children aren't happy with nothing to ignore,
And that's what parents were created for.

Ogden Nash

The People Upstairs

The people upstairs all practise ballet
Their living room is a bowling alley
Their bedroom is full of conducted tours.
Their radio is louder than yours,
They celebrate week-ends all the week.
When they take a shower, your ceilings leak.
They try to get their parties to mix
By supplying their guests with Pogo sticks,
And when their fun at last abates,
They go to the bathroom on roller skates.
I might love the people upstairs more
If only they lived on another floor.

Ogden Nash

The Perfect Husband

He tells you when you've got on
too much lipstick
And helps you with your girdle
when your hips stick.

Ogden Nash

The Porcupine

Any hound a porcupine nudges
Can't be blamed for harboring grudges.
I know one hound that laughed all winter
At a porcupine that sat on a splinter.

Ogden Nash

The Praying Mantis

From whence arrived the praying mantis?
From outer space, or lost Atlantis?
glimpse the grin, green metal mug
at masks the pseudo-saintly bug,
Orthopterous, also carnivorous,
And faintly whisper, Lord deliver us.

Ogden Nash

The Purist

I give you now Professor Twist,
A conscientious scientist,
Trustees exclaimed, "He never bungles!"
And sent him off to distant jungles.
Camped on a tropic riverside,
One day he missed his loving bride.
She had, the guide informed him later,
Been eaten by an alligator.
Professor Twist could not but smile.
"You mean," he said, "a crocodile."

Ogden Nash

The Rhinoceros

The rhino is a homely beast,
For human eyes he's not a feast.
Farwell, farewell, you old rhinoceros,
I'll stare at something less prepoceros.

Ogden Nash

The Romantic Age

This one is entering her teens,
Ripe for sentimental scenes,
Has picked a gangling unripe male,
Sees herself in bridal veil,
Presses lips and tosses head,
Declares she's not too young to wed,
Informs you pertly you forget
Romeo and Juliet.
Do not argue, do not shout;
Remind her how that one turned out.

Ogden Nash

The Shrimp

A shrimp who sought his lady shrimp
Could catch no glimpse
Not even a glimp.
At times, translucence
Is rather a nuisance.

Ogden Nash

The Sniffle

In spite of her sniffle
Isabel's chiffle.
Some girls with a sniffle
Would be weepy and tiffle;
They would look awful,
Like a rained-on waffle,
But Isabel's chiffle
In spite of her sniffle.
Her nose is more red
With a cold in her head,
But then, to be sure,
Her eyes are bluer.
Some girls with a snuffle,
Their tempers are uffle.
But when Isabel's snively
She's snively civilly,
And when she's snuffly
She's perfectly luffly.

Ogden Nash

The Solitary Huntsman

The solitary huntsman
No coat of pink doth wear,
But midnight black from cap to spur
Upon his midnight mare.
He drones a tuneless jingle
In lieu of tally-ho:
"I'll catch a fox
And put him in a box
And never let him go."

The solitary huntsman,
He follows silent hounds.
No horn proclaims his joyless sport,
And never a hoofbeat sounds.
His hundred hounds, his thousands,
Their master's will they know:
To catch a fox
And put him in a box
And never let him go.

For all the fox's doubling
They track him to his den.
The chase may fill a morning,
Or threescore years and ten.
The huntsman never sated
Screaks to his saddlebow,
"I'll catch another fox
And put him in a box
And never let him go."

Ogden Nash

The Squab

Toward a better world I contribute my modest smidgin;
I eat the squab, lest it become a pigeon.

Ogden Nash

The Sunset Years of Samuel Shy

Master I may be,
But not of my fate.
Now come the kisses, too many too late.
Tell me, O Parcae,
For fain would I know,
Where were these kisses three decades ago?
Girls there were plenty,
Mint julep girls, beer girls,
Gay younger married and headstrong career girls,
The girls of my friends
And the wives of my friends,
Some smugly settled and some at loose ends,
Sad girls, serene girls,
Girls breathless and turbulent,
Debs cosmopolitan, matrons suburbulent,
All of them amiable,
All of them cordial,
Innocent rousers of instincts primordial,
But even though health and wealth
Hadn't yet missed me,
None of them,
Not even Jenny,
Once kissed me.

These very same girls
Who with me have grown older
Now freely relax with a head on my shoulder,
And now come the kisses,
A flood in full spate,
The meaningless kisses, too many too late.
They kiss me hello,
They kiss me goodbye,
Should I offer a light, there's a kiss for reply.
They kiss me at weddings,
They kiss me at wakes,
The drop of a hat is less than it takes.
They kiss me at cocktails,
They kiss me at bridge,
It's all automatic, like slapping a midge.
The sound of their kisses
Is loud in my ears
Like the locusts that swarm every seventeen years.

I'm arthritic, dyspeptic,
Potentially ulcery,
And weary of kisses by custom compulsory.
Should my dear ones commit me
As senile demential,
It's from kisses perfunctory, inconsequential.
Answer, O Parcae,
For fain would I know,
Where were these kisses three decades ago?

Ogden Nash

The Tale of Custard the Dragon

Belinda lived in a little white house,
With a little black kitten and a little gray mouse,
And a little yellow dog and a little red wagon,
And a realio, trulio, little pet dragon. Now the name of the little black kitten was Ink,
And the little gray mouse, she called him Blink,
And the little yellow dog was sharp as Mustard,
But the dragon was a coward, and she called him Custard.

Ogden Nash

The Termite

Some primal termite knocked on wood
And tasted it, and found it good!
And that is why your Cousin May
Fell through the parlor floor today.

Ogden Nash

The Terrible People

Ogden Nash

The Turtle

The turtle lives 'twixt plated decks
Which practically conceal its sex.
I think it clever of the turtle
such a fix to be so fertile.

Ogden Nash

The Wasp

The wasp and all his numerous family
I look upon as a major calamity.
He throws open his nest with prodigality,
But I distrust his waspitality.

Ogden Nash

Tin Wedding Whistle

Though you know it anyhow
Listen to me, darling, now,

Ogden Nash

To A Small Boy Standing On My Shoes While I Am Wearing Them

Let's straighten this out, my little man,
And reach an agreement if we can.
I entered your door as an honored guest.
My shoes are shined and my trousers are pressed,
And I won't stretch out and read you the funnies
And I won't pretend that we're Easter bunnies.
If you must get somebody down on the floor,
What in the hell are your parents for?
I do not like the things that you say
And I hate the games that you want to play.
No matter how frightfully hard you try,
We've little in common, you and I.
The interest I take in my neighbor's nursery
Would have to grow, to be even cursory,
And I would that performing sons and nephews
Were carted away with the daily refuse,
And I hold that frolicsome daughters and nieces
Are ample excuse for breaking leases.
You may take a sock at your daddy's tummy
Or climb all over your doting mummy,
But keep your attentions to me in check,
Or, sonny boy, I will wring your neck.
A happier man today I'd be
Had someone wrung it ahead of me.

Ogden Nash

To My Valentine

More than a catbird hates a cat,
Or a criminal hates a clue,
Or the Axis hates the United States,
That's how much I love you.

I love you more than a duck can swim,
And more than a grapefruit squirts,
I love you more than a gin rummy is a bore,
And more than a toothache hurts.

As a shipwrecked sailor hates the sea,
Or a juggler hates a shove,
As a hostess detests unexpected guests,
That's how much you I love.

I love you more than a wasp can sting,
And more than the subway jerks,
I love you as much as a beggar needs a crutch,
And more than a hangnail irks.

I swear to you by the stars above,
And below, if such there be,
As the High Court loathes perjurious oaths,
That's how you're love by me.

Ogden Nash

Two Dogs Have I

For years we've had a little dog,
Last year we acquired a big dog;
He wasn't big when we got him,
He was littler than the dog we had.
We thought our little dog would love him,
Would help him to become a trig dog,
But the new little dog got bigger,
And the old little dog got mad.

Now the big dog loves the little dog,
But the little dog hates the big dog,
The little dog is eleven years old,
And the big dog only one;
The little dog calls him *Schweinhund*,
The little dog calls him Pig-dog,
She grumbles broken curses
As she dreams in the August sun.

The big dog's teeth are terrible,
But he wouldn't bite the little dog;
The little dog wants to grind his bones,
But the little dog has no teeth;
The big dog is acrobatic,
The little dog is a brittle dog;
She leaps to grip his jugular,
And passes underneath.

The big dog clings to the little dog
Like glue and cement and mortar;
The little dog is his own true love;
But the big dog is to her
Like a scarlet rag to a Longhorn,
Or a suitcase to a porter;
The day he sat on the hornet
I distinctly heard her purr.

Well, how can you blame the little dog,
Who was once the household darling?
He romps like a young Adonis,
She droops like an old mustache;
No wonder she steals his corner,
No wonder she comes out snarling,
No wonder she calls him *Cochon*
And even *Espèce de vache*.

Yet once I wanted a sandwich,
Either caviar or cucumber,
When the sun had not yet risen
And the moon had not yet sank;
As I tiptoed through the hallway
The big dog lay in slumber,
And the little dog slept by the big dog,

And her head was on his flank.

Ogden Nash

Very Like a Whale

One thing that literature would be greatly the better for
Would be a more restricted employment by the authors of simile and metaphor.

Authors of all races, be they Greeks, Romans, Teutons or Celts,
Can't seem just to say that anything is the thing it is but have to go out of their way to say that it is like something else.

What does it mean when we are told

That that Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold?

In the first place, George Gordon Byron had enough experience
To know that it probably wasn't just one Assyrian, it was a lot of Assyrians.

However, as too many arguments are apt to induce apoplexy and thus hinder longevity.

We'll let it pass as one Assyrian for the sake of brevity.

Now then, this particular Assyrian, the one whose cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold,

Just what does the poet mean when he says he came down like a wold on the fold?

In heaven and earth more than is dreamed of in our philosophy there are great many things.

But I don't imagine that among them there is a wolf with purple and gold cohorts or purple and gold anythings.

No, no, Lord Byron, before I'll believe that this Assyrian was actually like a wolf I must have some kind of proof;

Did he run on all fours and did he have a hairy tail and a big red mouth and big white teeth and did he say Woof Woof?

Frankly I think it is very unlikely, and all you were entitled to say, at the very most,

Was that the Assyrian cohorts came down like a lot of Assyrian cohorts about to destroy the Hebrew host.

But that wasn't fancy enough for Lord Byron, oh dear me no, he had to invent a lot of figures of speech and then interpolate them, With the result that whenever you mention Old Testament soldiers to people they say Oh yes, they're the ones that a lot of wolves dressed up in gold and purple ate them.

That's the kind of thing that's being done all the time by poets, from Homer to Tennyson;

They're always comparing ladies to lilies and veal to venison, And they always say things like that the snow is a white blanket after a winter storm.

Oh it is, is it, all right then, you sleep under a six-inch blanket of snow and I'll sleep under a half-inch blanket of unpoetical blanket material and we'll see which one keeps warm, And after that maybe you'll begin to comprehend dimly What I mean by too much metaphor and simile.

Ogden Nash

What Almost Every Woman Knows Sooner Or Later

Husbands are things that wives have to get used to putting up with.
And with whom they breakfast with and sup with.
They interfere with the discipline of nurseries,
And forget anniversaries,
And when they have been particularly remiss
They think they can cure everything with a great big kiss,
And when you tell them about something awful they have done they just
look unbearably patient and smile a superior smile,
And think, Oh she'll get over it after a while.
And they always drink cocktails faster than they can assimilate them,
And if you look in their direction they act as if they were martyrs and
you were trying to sacrifice, or immolate them,
And when it's a question of walking five miles to play golf they are very
energetic but if it's doing anything useful around the house they are
very lethargic,
And then they tell you that women are unreasonable and don't know
anything about logic,
And they never want to get up or go to bed at the same time as you do,
And when you perform some simple common or garden rite like putting
cold cream on your face or applying a touch of lipstick they seem to
think that you are up to some kind of black magic like a priestess of Voodoo.
And they are brave and calm and cool and collected about the ailments
of the person they have promised to honor and cherish,
But the minute they get a sniffle or a stomachache of their own, why
you'd think they were about to perish,
And when you are alone with them they ignore all the minor courtesies
and as for airs and graces, they utterly lack them,
But when there are a lot of people around they hand you so many chairs
and ashtrays and sandwiches and butter you with such bowings and
scrapings that you want to smack them.
Husbands are indeed an irritating form of life,
And yet through some quirk of Providence most of them are really very
deeply ensconced in the affection of their wife.

Ogden Nash

What's The Use?

Sure, deck your limbs in pants,
Yours are the limbs, my sweetening.
You look divine as you advance . . .
Have you seen yourself retreating?

Ogden Nash

Will Consider Situation

There here are words of radical advice for a young man looking for a job;
Young man, be a snob.
Yes, if you are in search of arguments against starting at the bottom,
Why I've gottem.
Let the personnel managers differ;
It,s obvious that you will get on faster at the top than at the bottom because
there are more people at the bottom than at the top so naturally the competition
at the bottom is stiffer.
If you need any further proof that my theory works
Well, nobody can deny that presidents get paid more than vice-presidents and
vice-presidents get paid more than clerks.
Stop looking at me quizzically;
I want to add that you will never achieve fortune in a job that makes you
uncomfortable physically.
When anybody tells you that hard jobs are better for you than soft jobs be sure
to repeat this text to them,
Postmen tramp around all day through rain and snow just to deliver other
people's in cozy air-conditioned offices checks to them.
You don't need to interpret tea leaves stuck in a cup
To understand that people who work sitting down get paid more than people who
work standing up.
Another thing about having a comfortable job is you not only accommodate more
treasure;
You get more leisure.
So that when you find you have worked so comfortably that your waistline is a
menace,
You correct it with golf or tennis.
Whereas is in an uncomfortable job like piano-moving or stevedoring you
indulge,
You have no time to exercise, you just continue to bulge.
To sum it up, young man, there is every reason to refuse a job that will make
heavy demands on you corporally or manually,
And the only intelligent way to start your career is to accept a sitting
position paying at least twenty-five thousand dollars annually.

Ogden Nash

Winter Complaint

Now when I have a cold
I am careful with my cold,
I consult a physician
And I do as I am told.
I muffle up my torso
In woolly woolly garb,
And I quaff great flagons
Of sodium bicarb.
I munch on aspirin,
I lunch on water,
And I wouldn't dream of osculating
Anybody's daughter,
And to anybody's son
I wouldn't say howdy,
For I am a sufferer
Magna cum laude.
I don't like germs,
But I'll keep the germs I've got.
Will I take a chance of spreading them?
Definitely not.
I sneeze out the window
And I cough up the flue,
And I live like a hermit
Till the germs get through.
And because I'm considerate,
Because I'm wary,
I am treated by my friends
Like Typhoid Mary.

Now when you have a cold
You are careless with your cold,
You are cocky as a gangster
Who has just been paroled.
You ignore your physician,
You eat steaks and oxtails,
You stuff yourself with starches,
You drink lots of cocktails,
And you claim that gargling
Is a time of waste,
And you won't take soda
For you don't like the taste,
And you prow around parties
Full of selfish bliss,
And greet your hostess
With a genial kiss.
You convert yourself
Into a deadly missile,
You exhale Hello's
Like a steamboat whistle.
You sneeze in the subway
And you cough at dances,
And let everybody else

Take their own good chances.
You're a bronchial boor,
A bacterial blighter,
And you get more invitations
Than a gossip writer.

Yes, your throat is froggy,
And your eyes are swimmy,
And you hand is clammy,
And you nose is brimmy,
But you woo my girls
And their hearts you jimmy
While I sit here
With the cold you gimmy.

Ogden Nash

You Can Be A Republican, I'm A Genocrat

Oh, "rorty" was a mid-Victorian word
Which meant "fine, splendid, jolly,"
And often to me it has reoccurred
In moments melancholy.
For instance, children, I think it rorty
To be with people over forty.

I can't say which, come eventide,
More tedious I find;
Competing with the juvenile stride,
Or meeting the juvenile mind.
So I think it rorty, yes, and nifty,
To be with people over fifty.

The pidgin talk the youthful use
Bypasses conversation.
I can't believe the code they choose
Is a means of communication.
Oh to be with people over sixty
Despite their tendency to prolixity!

The hours a working parent keeps
Mean less than Latin to them,
Wherefore they disappear in jeeps
Till three and four A.M.
Oh, to be with people you pour a cup for
Instead of people you have to wait up for!

I've tried to read young mumbling lips
Till I've developed a slant-eye,
And my hearing fails at the constant wails
Of, If I can't, why can't I?
Oh, to be beside a septuagenarian,
Silent upon a peak in Darien!

They don't know Hagen from Bobby Jones,
They never heard of Al Smith,
Even Red Grange is beyond their range,
And Dempsey is a myth.
Oh golly, to gabble upon the shoulder
Of someone my own age, or even older!

I'm tired of defining hadn't oughts.
To opposition mulish,
The thoughts of youth are long long thoughts,
And Jingo! Aren't they foolish!
All which is why, in case you've wondered
I'd like a companion aged one hundred.

Ogden Nash