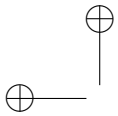
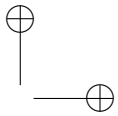
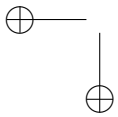
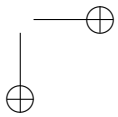
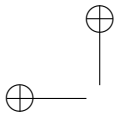
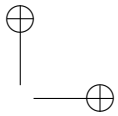
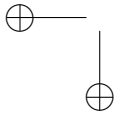
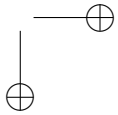



# WHO ME?

# WHO ME?

*Ethel Jacobson*

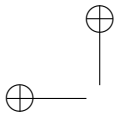
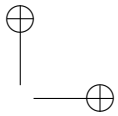
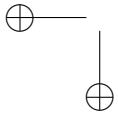
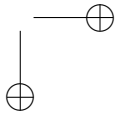
IWP

2026
First Published, 1970

FOR TERRY, JERRY, AND PAMELA

AND

STEPHANIE, LAURIE, AND JAMIE

**CONTENTS**

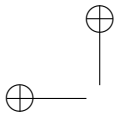
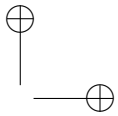
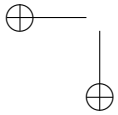
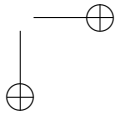
*Who, Me?* . . . . . 1
*Trigger Word* . . . . . 2
*Pyromaniacs* . . . . . 3
*Outraged Confidante* . . . . . 4
*Who Wants to Throw the First Stone?* . . . . . 5
*Conversational Chimera* . . . . . 6
*Perfect Performance* . . . . . 7
*They Never Get to the Real Nitty-Gritty* . . . . 8
*United Domestic Front* . . . . . 9
*Safari Sidelight* . . . . . 10
*Progress Note* . . . . . 11
*Dental Hazard* . . . . . 12
*Travelers* . . . . . 13
*Deposition at Dawn* . . . . . 14
*Brief History of Feminine Emancipation* . . . . 15
*Lady Alone* . . . . . 16
*Olive* . . . . . 17
*Nouveau Pauvre* . . . . . 18

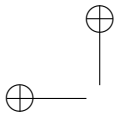
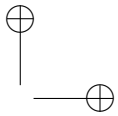
*Legacies* . . . . . 19
*Rope'S End* . . . . . 20
*Vacation Vacuity* . . . . . 21
*Worried Capitalist* . . . . . 22
*Successful Politico* . . . . . 23
*Memo to Palace Guard in an Election Year* . . . 24
*The Unprejudiced* . . . . . 25
*No Golden Age* . . . . . 26
*Constant Reader* . . . . . 27
*Mirror, in Passing* . . . . . 28
*Men, Yet!* . . . . . 29
*Be Honest, Now!* . . . . . 30
*On the Male Capacity for Veracity* . . . . . 31
*Ear-Bender* . . . . . 32
*Indiscreet Traveler* . . . . . 33
*Unsung Genius* . . . . . 34
*Lonesome Gal* . . . . . 35
*Regrets* . . . . . 36
*Secret* . . . . . 37
*Jacobson's Law of Opposites* . . . . . 38
*Distressful Dilemma* . . . . . 39
*Yeah, Yeah* . . . . . 40
*Music to Be Mugged By* . . . . . 41
*Bad News* . . . . . 42
*Moth* . . . . . 43

*Candid Commercials* . . . . . 44
*No More Hors D'Oeuvres* . . . . . 45
*Restaurant Etiquette* . . . . . 46
*Garcon, May I Have a Doggie Bag?* . . . . . 47
*Cocktail Party* . . . . . 48
*Morning After* . . . . . 49
*Soup's On!* . . . . . 50
*Picnic Hint* . . . . . 51
*Assorted Chocolates* . . . . . 52
*Reunion at Rosemary Hall* . . . . . 53
*Lochinvar in Suburbia* . . . . . 54
*Lady in the Dark* . . . . . 55
*Speeding isn't the Word* . . . . . 56
*Pilgrim on Wheels* . . . . . 57
*Stepping Stones* . . . . . 58
*Teen Technique* . . . . . 59
*Aftermath* . . . . . 60
*Pal* . . . . . 61
*You Can Say That Again* . . . . . 62
*Melancholy Moment* . . . . . 63
*To the Chairman of the Evening* . . . . . 64
*False Alert* . . . . . 65
*Sanity Among the Mad Hatters* . . . . . 66
*Sneaky Strategist* . . . . . 67
*I'm Always Bringing Up the Rear* . . . . . 68

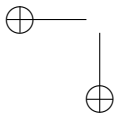
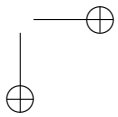
*Assorted Kisses* . . . . . 69
*Four Ages of the Gamester* . . . . . 70
*Good Show!* . . . . . 71
*Suffering Catfish and Me* . . . . . 72
*Angler* . . . . . 73
*The Ski's the Limit* . . . . . 74
*Double-Edged Insult* . . . . . 75
*Newly Nautical* . . . . . 76
*Unconfidentially* . . . . . 77
*Bushed* . . . . . 78
*All About Mr. Twitterly* . . . . . 79
*Writers, Arise! Unite! Get Wise!* . . . . . 80
*Weary Willie* . . . . . 82
*No Muscle Men* . . . . . 83
*No See-Through Wrapper* . . . . . 84
*Salute to Efficiency* . . . . . 85
*Nightmare in the Morning* . . . . . 86
*Bootee-Knitter* . . . . . 88
*For an Unnamed Daughter* . . . . . 89
*Revisionist* . . . . . 90
*L'Enfant S'Amuse* . . . . . 91
*Not by the Book* . . . . . 92
*Shutterbug Parents* . . . . . 93
*Valentine* . . . . . 94
*No, Camille* . . . . . 95

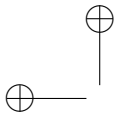
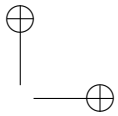
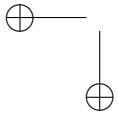
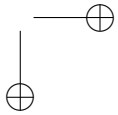
*Of Beastly Bird and Bird-Brained Beast* . . . . 96
*Gifford the Gibbon* . . . . . 97
*Pray Tell* . . . . . 98
*Xxx Shopping Days Before ???* . . . . . 99
*Season's Greetings!* . . . . . 101
*Adjustments, Next Window* . . . . . 102
*Happy Birthday!* . . . . . 103
*Cow Counsel* . . . . . 104
*Child's World* . . . . . 105
*Bee Myrtle* . . . . . 106
*Invitation to the Dance* . . . . . 107
*Owls in a Wood* . . . . . 108
*Andromeda* . . . . . 109
*The Grouse* . . . . . 110
*Action Portrait* . . . . . 111
*Isles of Mazatlan* . . . . . 112
*Lost Summer* . . . . . 113
*Forest Fisher* . . . . . 114
*Autumn Daisies* . . . . . 115
*Window Ledge* . . . . . 116
*Duo at Dawn* . . . . . 117
*Meadow Larder* . . . . . 118
*Fox* . . . . . 119
*Golden Eagle* . . . . . 120
*The Mountain Sleepers* . . . . . 121

# WHO ME?

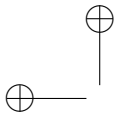
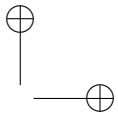





## WHO, ME?

Whipped to a lather
Of wordy froth,
Authors would rather
Talk than auth.

## TRIGGER WORD

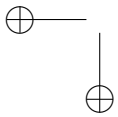
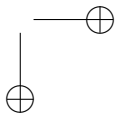
In a whispered conversation clear
Across a crowded room I hear –
Loud as though clarions should proclaim
Those magic syllables – my name!

## PYROMANIACS

Gossip's like wildfire.
It soon makes a pyre
Where Truth becomes ashes.
But who'll
Resist adding one
Bit of fuel to such fire?
Few'll.



## OUTRAGED CONFIDANTE

I kept your secret!
Not a syllable
Did the most prying
Friend find spillable
Till – how the fabric
Of loyalty melts! –
I found you'd already
Told everyone else.

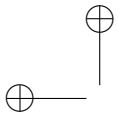
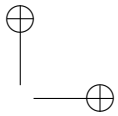
## WHO WANTS TO THROW THE FIRST STONE?

Though "I told you so!" is a mean remark,
To the speaker's grave discredit,
    I'd be richer than many
    If I had a penny
For every time I've said it.

## CONVERSATIONAL CHIMERA

You frankly begin
With “Needless to say —,”
Then proceed to tell me
Anyway.

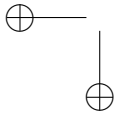
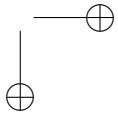
But I dream of someone –
Don’t wake me, don’t –
Who, when it’s needless
To say something, won’t.

## PERFECT PERFORMANCE

The beautiful blonde played dumb, imbued
With astonishing facility.
(Or was it more natural aptitude
Than histrionic ability?)



## THEY NEVER GET
## TO THE REAL NITTY-GRITTY
## IN THOSE SEX EDUCATION CLASSES

Somehow a woman will figure out
What a new gadget is all about,
Open a "Handy Improved New Packet,"
And put on a life-preserver jacket.
She'll use intuition or ESP
(With, frankly, many a casualty)
To put things together that come in sections,
But a woman won't READ THE PRINTED DIRECTIONS.
(The maker can sternly insist she's got to,
But a female was born determined not to.)

## UNITED DOMESTIC FRONT

Don't criticize – HER bridge, HER hats,
HIS taste in comics or cravats –
Not in front of company!
(But, darling, confidentially. . . )

## SAFARI SIDELIGHT

When cobra
Meets mongoose
The snake is
The gone goose.

## PROGRESS NOTE

Reeking of asafetidy,
Though a youth was sometimes mortified,
Thus aided and abetted, he
Was redolently fortified
Against the germs and viruses
That sought to do his system in
(They bloomed each spring like irises),
Where he now trusts antihystamine
And a four-way-effectible
Antibiotic
Which the germs find delectable
If exotic.

## DENTAL HAZARD

Though the dentist's smile
Seemed minus all guile,
Base perfidy lurked
Beneath.
"This won't hurt a bit,"
He cried, "not a whit."
But ow-ww-www! how he lied
In my teeth.

## TRAVELERS

We're off now on our modest trip.
The car goes at a lively clip.
The motor purrs. The highway's wide.
Oh, uneventful be our ride!
We'd like to reach our destination
(Earthly) without one citation
Or incident like blown-out tire or
Traffic mishap even direr.
Yet should we suffer damage wrought
By some onrushing juggernaut,
Make it a Rolls, we pray, this time,
Not the heap of some creep without a dime.

## DEPOSITION AT DAWN

I feel like the deuce.
I lag and I drag.
The years have played hob,
You can see, with me.
I'm frumpy and dumpy,
A perfect old hag –
But don't anyone dare
To agree with me!

## BRIEF HISTORY OF FEMININE EMANCIPATION

From Adam's rib
To Women's Lib.

## LADY ALONE

It's wonderful to be on your own,
Independent, living alone;
You're not tied down, you're free as the breeze
To come and go as you darn well please.

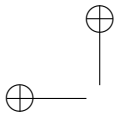
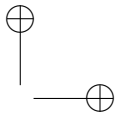
You can view TV shows every night,
With nobody grumbling to watch the fight.
You can happily dine on fudge eclairs
And let the cat sleep on the bed. Who cares?
You're unencumbered, a footloose elf,
And you wouldn't change... you keep telling yourself....

**OLIVE**

Oh, stern in her soul's rectitude,
As pure as one of heaven's anointed,
She's always thinking men are lewd
And always being disappointed.

## NOUVEAU PAUVRE

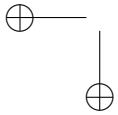
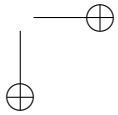
Young newlyweds today are apt
To find they're destitute, too strapped
For luxuries like food and rent
After their modest income's spent
On bare necessities like new cars,
Color TV, and portable bars.

## LEGACIES

The blocks of GE and AT&T
Are somehow never willed to me.
But Aunt Min's chromo? A pet canary?
Guess who's the beneficiary.



## ROPE'S END

There are drear, dark days
When you hit rock bottom,
When trouble comes double,
And – gripes? You got 'em.
It's just you versus
The universe...
And then something happens!
Things get worse.

## VACATION VACUITY

My erstwhile giant intellect
Has shriveled down to bantam.
Grown dull and cloyed,
It's null and void,
A torpid wraith, a phantom,
A vanishment, a vacancy,
As any scornful jay can see.

## WORRIED CAPITALIST

Oh, what shall I put my money in?
Industrials? Bolivian tin?
What's a good hedge against inflation?
Debentures? Gold? A combination
Of Building and Loans and blue-chip stock?
Or stash it away in a mattress or sock?
These jittery times, it's hard to know.
Should I plan for a balanced portfolio,
Or would it be smarter to go and blow
The whole fifty bucks at Pimlico?

## SUCCESSFUL POLITICO

This tireless and resourceful guy
    Rose swiftly in the world,
Defeating all his rivals by
    Leaving no stone unhurled.

## MEMO TO PALACE GUARD
## IN AN ELECTION YEAR

Gather ye favors while ye may,
    The knell may soon be tolling;
And this same head that's crowned today,
    Tomorrow may be rolling.

## THE UNPREJUDICED

Fair, always open to suggestion,
    Unbiased, though my views are strong ones,
I see all sides of every question –
    My side and the wrong ones.

## NO GOLDEN AGE

I rather think that Socrates,
Viewing today's mediocrities,
Would ring for room service and, aghast,
Order "A double hemlock, fast!"

## CONSTANT READER

My lord will read – I wonder why? –
Never ever in the li-
Brary or our book-lined den.
But five, my lad, will get you ten
That he will browse – and by the hour –
In the cloistered stall beside the shower.

## MIRROR, IN PASSING

A woman casts a long, full glance –
    There's a mirror, so she's got to –
But a man peers furtively, askance,
    Pretending not to.

## MEN, YET!

I know that men are clumsy brutes
With stubbly chins and muddy boots,
Who scatter ashes on the floor
And rival sawmills when they snore
And whimper when they've trifling ills
And go into shock at household bills.
Men! One stalked me since 'way last May,
But darned if he didn't get away.

## BE HONEST, NOW!

"To tell the truth –"
You often say,
In tones that disconcert me.
Do you tell the truth
So seldom, pray,
That you feel you must alert me?

## ON THE MALE CAPACITY FOR VERACITY

Every single mother's son
Is a latter-day George Washington.
He'll look you squarely in the eye,
Unable quite to tell a lie.

With sternly virtuous scorn he riddles
Female fibs and fumadiddles,
Feminine lack of principle. Oh, but he,
He is a model of truth and probity!
He is a pillar of Right... except
When he speaks of the mileage records kept
On his hopped-up sports car, or what he dropped,

Thinking three aces couldn't be topped,
The size of the bully he picked a fight with,
The ailing friend he sat up all night with,
How many strokes he got on the green with,
And who was that lady he just was seen with.
Believe him, and every mother's son
Will be glad to tell you another one.

## EAR-BENDER

"Listen, my lad,
And you shall hear
Of the troubles I've had
Since we met last year –"
But not if I,
With any luck,
Should manage to spy
You first and duck.

## INDISCREET TRAVELER

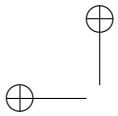
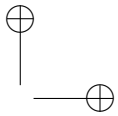
Do as the Romans
    Do in Rome
And hope no one hears about it
    Back home.

## UNSUNG GENIUS

His fame is dim,
His life unknown.
No wreath for him,
No carven stone.
He lived, he wrote,
He now is gone –
The tireless pote
We call Anon.

## LONESOME GAL

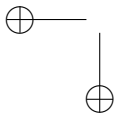
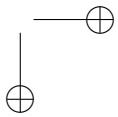
I keep seeking some new guise
To trick a heart out, grown too wise
And weary, although I surmise
That's just where the answer lies –
In some new guys.

**REGRETS**

Tears, my glum repentant one,
Mean you now agree
That sinning wasn't half the fun
You hoped that it would be.



## SECRET

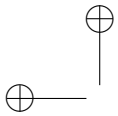
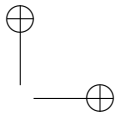
Tell “the Girls” if you must.
Pledge them to Secrecy or Bust.
Seal their lips, bind their eyes,
Clamp them firmly in a vise.
Chain their feet till they chafe –
Still your secret won’t be safe.
Somehow the enterprising dears
Will semaphore it with their ears.

## JACOBSON'S LAW OF OPPOSITES

There are two kinds of people, unfortunately:
The Packrat (A) and the Profligate (B).
Mountains of junk are hoarded by A.
She never throws one darn thing away.
While B keeps nothing for future need –
There's no Tomorrow in his blithe creed –
Which wouldn't be bad if, inexorably,
A didn't always marry B.

## DISTRESSFUL DILEMMA

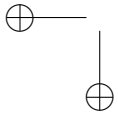
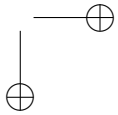
I hardly ever find the time
For things I really like to do –
Those fascinating, lovely things
I'll need to go on strike to do,
Those elegant, exciting things
I'd clap my hands and laff to do!
My days are always cluttered with
The stupid things I haff to do.

## YEAH, YEAH

Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow
Interest mounts on every buck I borrow.



## MUSIC TO BE MUGGED BY

Though music may soothe
The savage breast,
And cool an attacker's
Felonious zest –
A soupcon of Schubert?
A snatch of Scarlatti? –
I'd rather rely
On a spot of Karate.
(In fact, my first lesson's
Tonight at eight,
Unless I get jumped
Between Walnut and State.)

## BAD NEWS

Trying to break it gently has
Seldom succeeded, in palace or hut.
Few words are so alarming as
"I don't want to alarm you, but –"

## MOTH

Why
Does a moth
Choose the most expensive
Cloth
And always chew
My clothes most
Precisely where
It shows most?

## CANDID COMMERCIALS

What once were thought unmentionables
Are video call-attentionables
Distracting us over TV suppers
With three-way-stretch no-rider-uppeps,
Nylon cups, and firm uplifting.
Whither, prithee, are we drifting?
I shrink from bias separation,
And welcome station identification,
A refugee in my flannel peignoir
From this Land of the Brief and the Home of the Bra.

## NO MORE HORS D'OEUVRES

The canapes frankly
Can languish there dankly.
It's truly incredible
What's passed off as edible!

## RESTAURANT ETIQUETTE

Decorum is something we all should observe.
Resist any urge to upset it.
It's vulgar to fight for the check – and you might
Even get it!

## GARCON, MAY I HAVE A DOGGIE BAG?

I'd like to take
What's left of my steak
Home to my faithful Rover
(Although next day
At lunch I may
Eat it myself, warmed over).

## COCKTAIL PARTY

Chips and dips
And Freudian slips,
Insidious and
Invidious quips
And hefty sips
Of vodka and gin
And Kafka and Lorca
And no-win war
And anyone for
The moon? Peace Corps?
The party next door?
More sheep dip? Hey,
What say we all play
Charades?

## MORNING AFTER

Last night I sparkled in rare good form!
No one could dream of topping me!
Lawsy, the quips that dripped from my lips –
They say there was just no stopping me!
And yet, this morning, I'm holding my head...
I've started remembering what I said!

## SOUP'S ON!

The Mock-Turtle he had the right idee
When he warbled his famous lay
To Soup, Soup, Beautiful Soup,
On a far-away shore one day.

Sniff, Snoop, Beautiful Soup!
Rattle a ladle and watch me swoop –
Be it clear and chaste, or laced with sherry
And garnished like Easter millinery.
Chowder – Boston or Bronx or Coney!
Mulligatawney! Minestrone!
Madrilene, or the black-eyed bean –
All madrigals of the soup tureen.
Bouillabaisse, or lobster bisque.
Vichyssoise, or delights more brisk
Like spicy Norwegian brews of fruit,
Gusty gaspacho, cream of newt,
Antique birds'-nests chilled to jelly
Or octopus broth with vermicelli.

The Mock Turtle he can count on me
To echo his joyous lay
And fondly inhale soup by the pail,
A different one each day...
Put on the kettle! Fetch the fines herbes!
The soup du jour's the potage superbe!

## PICNIC HINT

In case you neglected
To season the salad
It needn't stay savorless,
Flavorless, pallid;
For ants – at the seashore,
In meadow or glen –
Taste somewhat like horseradish
Or cayenne.

## ASSORTED CHOCOLATES

Is this a cream? Is this a mint?
The coating gives no valid hint.

The hieroglyphics swirled thereon
May well be clues, but I grow wan

Trying to guess if this vague "B"
Means "butterscotch" – or is it "P"? –

If here lurk toasted filberts or
That jellied filling I abhor?

I take it. I've no sooner tried it
Than I discreetly try to hide it,

Or, if I've pinched it just a crack
And no one's looking, I put it back.

## REUNION AT ROSEMARY HALL

The gals come back to ivied halls
When dear old alma mater calls,
Returning umpteen-or-so years later,
More settled (about the hips), sedater.
Where once they frolicked with nymph-like grace
They chaperone dances in beaded lace,
And sprites who sprinted through pansy hearts
Wear arch supports and push shopping carts.

Though once the classics cluttered their craniums,
Now they're all whizzes at potting geraniums,
Playing canasta (while father bowls),
And whipping up tuna fish casseroles.
Their midnight oil is burned in lamps
They acquired with ten books of trading stamps,
And they vote for school bonds and wear bifocals
And chauffeur Dad to catch 8:10 locals,
Since Academia's culture-swillers
Became Suburbia's staunchest pillars.

## LOCHINVAR IN SUBURBIA

He drilled no outlaw,
Slew no dragon,
But hitched to a star
Was his little wagon,
A brief-case shield,
A ballpoint six-shooter –
The dauntless five-times-a-week
Commuter.

## LADY IN THE DARK

3 A.M.

I'm not much given to burglar scares,
But – I heard a kind of noise downstairs –
A stealthy, sinister sort of squeak,
A desperate-criminal kind of creak –
So, darling, would you take a peek. . . ?

4 A.M.

I'm seldom nervous or suspicious,
But something's awfully surreptitious
About this silence – it's too profound –
No reassuring, normal sound –
So would you, honey, look around. . . ?

## SPEEDING ISN'T THE WORD FOR THE PARTING GUEST

We've got you out of your seat,
Maneuvered you onto your feet
    And into your wraps.
    Here's your hat. Now perhaps
We can ease you as far as the street.

Yet you linger despite all our tries,
Our pointed ho-hummings and sighs,
    While we go through again –
    And again – and again –
Our endless mad round of good-byes.

## PILGRIM ON WHEELS

I buy my soup and soap today
At a handy drive-in market.
I dine at drive-in's on the way,
Unplagued by where'll I park it?

With drive-in drug stores, movie shows –
In this age, what's more rational?
And you know where my money goes!
To the Drive-in Second National.

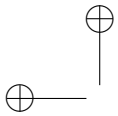
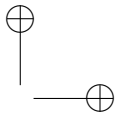
And now as I near the finish line,
What fearsome detour waits. . . ?
Or might I find a DRIVE IN sign
Above the Pearly Gates?

## STEPPING STONES

To reach the house you must advance
Across a booby-trapped expanse
Of grass just sprinkled or rained on, yet
The only way for you to get
To that inhospitable door
Is to ape the stride of a dinosaur
Or the mincing gait of an ichneumon,
For nothing that's remotely human
Could possibly negotiate
Those random discs of flag or slate,
Half-buried, slippery, slyly staggered.
Llamas would grow halt and haggard,
Mountain goats would falter, faced
With paths so treacherously spaced
As "stepping stones," those Devil's pawns
That mar Suburbia's fairest lawns.

## TEEN TECHNIQUE

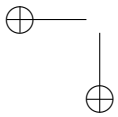
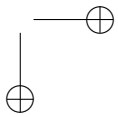
Daughter voluntarily
Did the dishes.
Before she dialed TV,
She consulted my wishes.
I'm not sure what it means,
But I'll take a chance on it:
You know her next year's allowance?
She wants an advance on it.

## AFTERMATH

Last night we threw a wing-ding!
Now I view with no surprise
White rings on the furniture,
Dark rings under my eyes.



## PAL

Earth holds no comfort
Like a friend
Who'll stand beside you
To the end
Through failure and
Success, and say
"You shoulda done it
Thisaway. . . ."

## YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN –
## AT YOUR OWN RISK

I'll grab a bat again.
I'll knock you flat again!
You'll hit the mat again,
If you say that again.

## MELANCHOLY MOMENT

When we must put down
An empty beaker
(And hear the after-
Dinner speaker.

## TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE EVENING

If he "needs no introduction,"
Tell us why
You take half an hour
To introduce the guy?

## FALSE ALERT

Relax, it's a cruel
    Delusion.
When the speaker says, "'Now,
    In conclusion. . . "
It means he has still
    Twenty minutes or so
    To go.

## SANITY AMONG THE MAD HATTERS
## OR,
## HAVE THEY REALLY FLIPPED
## THEIR LIDS THIS TIME?

Hats will look like hats. — Paris Fashion Forecast.

Hats will look like hats.
I can hardly bear to peek!
Not like coal scuttles or cravats
Or inner tubes or flats
Or the eyelashes of gnats –
Now staggeringly unique,
Those zany autocrats
Say the sane hat will be chic.

Hats will look like hats,
Sensible, sober, sleek –
Not like nests of vampire bats
Or salads in automats
Or receptacles for gats
Or something dragged in by cats –
Those crazy, fabulous hats
That made a husband shriek.
For hark! from the habitats
Of Style, the oracles speak!

## SNEAKY STRATEGIST

I let him flip his lid and scream
Over my new lid that's a madman's dream.
I didn't peep while he tore his hair
But I meekly let him groan and swear
And sputter till he had squawked his last,
All gaskets blown by that noble blast,
Before bringing out the new dress that
I couldn't resist to go with the hat.

## I'M ALWAYS BRINGING UP THE REAR OF THE AVANT GARDE

Though I'm mad for new fads –
Here I go, all aglow
For mink tunics or mobiles
Of tin –
By the time I latch on to them,
How do I know
They're still far enough out
To be In?

## ASSORTED KISSES

How different the connubial peck
From the ardent smack when strangers neck!

## FOUR AGES OF THE GAMESTER

First handball, then bowling,
Then treks to the links.
Now he's ready to settle
For tiddly-winks.

## GOOD SHOW!

The vanquished, after a game of skill,
Congratulates with all good will
The winner who, in modesty,
Deprecates his victory –
If both are true-blue sportsman stuff
And hypocritical enough.

## SUFFERING CATFISH AND ME

To suffer in silence is noble,
But please don't go thinking I'm yeller
    If I should wax vocal
    When pain gets too local,
For, boy, when I'm hurting, I beller!

## ANGLER

He caught a fish T-H-I-S B-I-G, he swears,
With earnestness unblinking.
But privately his wife declares
It's only fishful thinking.

## THE SKI'S THE LIMIT

Skiers are
A hardy breed.
Their bones knit fast,
And when they bleed,
Their blood clots nicely.
They're up and about
In no time, sneering
At souls less stout.
They cast aspersions,
But I just laugh.
Their casts are what
I autograph.

## DOUBLE-EDGED INSULT

Tell Mike and Ike
They look alike –
Unless you're loath
To offend them both.

## NEWLY NAUTICAL

He wears brass buttons
Even on his shorts
Since buying a boat
Complete with oars and thwarts.

## UNCONFIDENTIALLY

It's time someone stepped forward to unsully the fair name of we Thespians. — Screen Star.

Unsully the name,
Unsmirch the fame
Of we cinema stars and starlets.
Untarnish our record,
Restore it uncheckered,
Unsmutch our escutcheon, you varlets!
Of primrose paths
And champagne baths,
We'll learn folks to blab – with a flint ax.
For sin we detest
And avoid like a pest,
With all its foul works, such as syntax.

**BUSHED**

Too tired to take his wife out dancing,
But – bowl with the boys? He goes off prancing.

## ALL ABOUT MR. TWITTERLY

Mr. Twitterly's life
Wasn't what you'd call rife
With gaiety and adventure.
Trust deed and debenture
Were its wildest highlights.
No purple twilights
Found him piping in the park
Barefoot, for a lark.
No rosy-fingered dawn
Saw him leaping on the lawn
Of the courthouse square,
Bare.

Sometimes he wore a shirt pour le sport,
But always the long-sleeved sort.
Though it cost an extra dollar.
And he invariably buttoned the collar.
By black socks latched firmly to garters
You could spot him, as Christian martyrs
By lion's tooth marks were known.
No oat was ever sown
By Mr. Twitterly, a seemly sight
In gloves and homburg bedight.
But there were times he looked wistful, recalling how once
For two mad months,
Straining every fiber with a zeal monasterial,
He strove, albeit fruitlessly, to raise not only a mustache but
a Napoleon-III-type imperial.

## WRITERS, ARISE! UNITE! GET WISE!

The Authors they want to be organized
And keep only union hours –
No grinding toil by midnight oil
In sweat-shop ivory towers.
They crave their quota of social gains
And a club-car seat on gravy trains,
With featherbedding and suchlike things
That only collective bargaining brings.
They want More Pay and Less Production
Or they aim to raise a king-size ruction –
Riots, and marching in picket lines
With psychedelic, if misspelled signs.

The Authors they want to be organized –
With check-offs and seniority –
By an Argus-eyed, industry-wide
Omnipotent Authority,
A czar with the holy zeal of Luther,
The iron fist of a ruthless Reuther
To fight the fight that will right each wrong
And put the Authors where they belong –
Out of this wretchedest of rackets,
Into the juicier higher brackets,
Whence with a long-pent fervent glow
They can tell publishers where to go.

The Authors they want to be organized
For – what if you can't write pretty?
They'll get you hired and you'll never be fired,
With a local in every city.
The joint's unfair! No padded stalls!
No purple-brocaded coveralls!
Down with rejections! Down with "Sorry,
Almost a buy. But try tomorry."
Surprise assessments are always due
But they're worth it to have a closed shop too,
Where the dope can hack it with Marsh McLuhan
And I'll get as much as Rod McKuen!
Genius may starve, with stars in her eyes...
So, Authors, get wise – and organize!

## WEARY WILLIE

The work wasn't tough –
    No doubt of it.
Here's what was rough:
    Getting out of it.

## NO MUSCLE MEN

Lads whose biceps
Are ineffectual
Settle for being
Intellectual.

## NO SEE-THROUGH WRAPPER

Doctor books have color plates
That show our innards plain –
Gory, gruesome, odd-shaped things
Like kidneys, lungs, and brain.
I'm glad we come done up in skin
And not in cellophane.

## SALUTE TO EFFICIENCY

Frequent refinishing jobs aren't necessary, even after a romantic encounter. — Lipstick ad.

No more time out to repair
The most romantic wear and tear.
No retouching; no retreading;
No untoward delay in spreading
Just the right entente cordiale
So necessary to morale.
Bottlenecks in bliss diminish
With our Heavy Duty finish.
With this pocket-size surmounter
Of the heartiest encounter,
Being out of circulation
Is a needless deprivation,
And moments wasted being painted in,
Now are free to get acquainted in!

## NIGHTMARE IN THE MORNING

Comes now the dawn and the brisk alarm
That clamors till I stir,
Till I stretch a groping, unsure arm
To still its cheery whir.
And I seem to swim through seas of sleep
To greet the conscious day,
Up from a plumbless murky deep
Where in poppied dreams I lay.

Lethargic still I mutter
And my lids begin to flutter
And my eyes get tentatively set to focus.
I flex a toe and finger
Rather gingerly, and linger
Like December's snow on hibernating crocus.
Then I lift my head and, twitching
(Maybe scratching if I'm itching),
Step by step I go through morning's harsh agenda –
The crawling out, the bathing,
Molar-brushing, carcass-swathing,
Brushing, combing, and much harrowing addenda.

But then the final horror breaks.
I learn, at last aware,
These were mirages and mistakes.
I'm still reclining there.

I only DREAMED I rose and dressed!
(It seemed so vivid then!)
I must lie quietly and rest. . . .
It's all to do again.

## BOOTEE-KNITTER

Shall I
Make them
Pink?
Or blue?

Or some
Of each?
In case
There's two?

## FOR AN UNNAMED DAUGHTER

What shall we name our baby girl?
Nothing so dated as Ethel or Pearl,
Maude and Agnes and Sara Jane
Are homespun, solid, but much too plain.
Cynthia, Cecily, Margot – heavens,
They sound like the Countess of Plympton-Blevins.
Patience and Prudence are rather blue-nose –
Maybe appropriate, but then who knows?
A name for our darling! What shall it be?
We can't call her Butch indefinitely.

## REVISIONIST

I wish I were halfway as sure
    Of the ease with which tots
        May be shown
    How to pick
    Up their toys
    And not kick
    Smaller boys
    But to mind
    Their mamas
    And be kind,
    As I was
    Before I had tots
        Of my own.

## L'ENFANT S'AMUSE

Such ducky playthings I find in my crib –
Nice chewable strings on my yellow bib;
The ear I yanked off my Peter Rabbit;
A blue stick that rattles when I grab it;
My beautiful squashy pink fur whale;
The cat (but she left when I bit her tail);
And now these wrigglers, so hard to catch,
Waving in air, that I've managed to snatch.
They look delicious! Mmmm, they're divine!
OUCH! They must be toes – and mine.

## NOT BY THE BOOK

Theory's erudite
But empty chatter.
Practice, now, is quite
Another matter.
Often the rule of thumb
Must be applied,
With the addition of some
Five fingers beside,
Held paddle-wise, and smart-
Ly applied with vigor
To the indicated part
Of the culprit's figger.

## SHUTTERBUG PARENTS

They permeate society
Like weevils in cotton. Dexterously
You're cornered until they've disclosed
Uncounted candidly unposed,
Unfocused, underdeveloped shots
Of their incomparable tots,
And they're off to newer prey before
You can spring your "snaps" to tie the score.

## VALENTINE

A valentine for you, my pet,
With paper lace and a pink rosette
And hearts as bulging as circus tents
With warmly appropriate sentiments.
A valentine, though it comes to you
With bills and missives of bleaker hue:
A memo – your new bifocals wait you;
And ads – Do Slipping Dentures Date You?

Though Cupid speeds by early post
He'll have to buck, while you munch your toast,
Grim tidings borne by your daily journal:
Red Aggression Termed Paternal;
Anarchy Flaring, East and West;
Diplomats Once Again Outguessed;
Hate, Hysteria, West and East;
Crime, Corruption, Drugs Increased.

So welcome, please, this blithe epistle's
Gilded darts, the tender missiles
Of quaint St. Valentine, my dear.
We mayn't be here another year.

## NO, CAMILLE,
## THE CAMELLIA IS NOT NAMED
## AFTER THE CAMEL

The camel's not dainty,
Like a camellia,
Nor musical,
Like St. Cecelia,
And even with schizophrenia
And a bad cold, you can tell
That like a gardenia
Or a fifth of No. 5 (Chanel)
Isn't how La Belle Camelle
Chooses to smell.

## OF BEASTLY BIRD AND BIRD-BRAINED BEAST

The ibex and the ibis are
Creatures quite dissimilar.
One is feathered, one is furred;
One is beast, one is bird.
And I know which is which, of course,
As well as I know hen from horse –
Although when asked, to be quite frank,
I may momentarily draw a blank.
So, since there's little chance I'll get
An ibex or ibis for a pet,
I'll leave to you the glib replies
To: Which one gallops, which one flies?

## GIFFORD THE GIBBON

Did you hear about Gifford the Gibbon?
He fell in a faint
In a bucket of paint,
Then rolled all around
On a canvas he found
Which he managed to cart
To a big Modern Art
Exhibit – and won a blue ribbon!

## PRAY TELL

What is the praying
Mantis saying –
"Now I lay me –"?
"God bless Amy,
God bless Jerry"?
Is he very
Devout
Or is he hiding out,
Trying to look inconspic-
Uous on a stick?
Maybe he's after his dinner,
Something for the inner
Mantis.
What puzzles me, I grant, is:
Although he poses piously,
Is he just preying – with an 'e'?

## XXX SHOPPING DAYS BEFORE ???

My gifts I'll order early –
Before the rush, on sale.
I'll wrap and tie them neatly,
All ready for the mail.
But first I'll check the sizes
Of every dimpled tot,
Grown-ups favorite colors
And the hobbies of the lot,
Their needs and preferences,
To determine who gets what.

I'll remember – as I didn't
In any previous year –
That Gordon gave up smoking
And Grandma took up beer,
That earmuffs made of rabbit
Don't go with Mildred's mink,
That Hildegarde looks ghastly
In any shade of pink,
And Vesta just likes purses
You could tote a loaf of bread in,
And nylon gloves are something
She wouldn't be caught dead in,
And Ann hates blue chiffon now –
It's what she married Fred in.

I'll even buy the trimmings –
    The tags, the satin bows –
And be all set for Christmas
    Before Thanksgiving goes,
If I could unbar these windows
    And find where they hid my clothes.

## SEASON'S GREETINGS!

Christmas cards from "Joe" and "Mary"
Are exasperating, very.

Those signed starkly "Jean" or "John"
Might as well be scrawled "Anon."

Say Merry Christmas, Buster, do.
But be specific. Buster Who?

## ADJUSTMENTS, NEXT WINDOW

To exchange what was a present
Is the mark of churls and boors,
And besides it's none too pleasant
Meeting friends exchanging yours.

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

You'll never be old –
As old, I mean,
As Thirty seems
To Seventeen.

## COW COUNSEL

There's nothing so restful as gazing
At a brown cow grazing,
Leisurely nibbling buttercup and daisy.
She's not lazy,
Just an imperturbably serene
Ornament of any proper bucolic scene.
How relaxing to share companionable hours
With a creature who's doing nothing madder than methodically masticating flowers?

This calm ruminant's mere proximity
Can unshatter your battered equanimity.
For cows, congenitally, are confirmed non-conversationalists.
They never ask you why Episcopalians look askance at Congregationalists
Or how about inflation or automation
Or the younger generation
Or the vanishing whooping crane
Or if the rain in Spain really is mainly on the plain.
If there's one thing you can count on, it's that a placid brown cow
Will never buttonhole you and demand, How now?

## CHILD'S WORLD

She sits on her little haunches like a chipmunk,
Studying the ground
Where she has found –
A leaf? A ladybird?
A caterpillar, furred?
A beetle spotted like a domino?
A globe of dandelion fluff to blow?
A pearl-pale
Horned snail?
A polished, violet-colored pebble? Treasures I,
Unnoticing, pass by?
She flings herself down wherever she may be,
On her straight small back –
In a haystack,
In a daisy field, on
A dew-sprigged lawn,
A stony ledge,
A stream's mossy edge,
Watching a playful young breeze puff
Clouds like dandelion fluff
Across a blue immensity
That I, preoccupied, seldom see.

It helps to be under seven
To be closer to earth, God's earth, and to His heaven.

## BEE MYRTLE

Like foam
Cresting this grassy sea
Are whitecaps of bee myrtle.
Petal spray trembles
And tumbles against undulant green
Ruffled by wind
That has a thousand miles to go
To reach that other sea,
The restless Gulf,
And mingle with its briny tang
The memory of bee myrtle,
Fragrant on a sun-washed Texas plain.

## INVITATION TO THE DANCE

Dance, little goat, with your hooves so neat
And your tail flung jauntily up,
In a meadow ablaze with marguerite
And buttercup.

Prance, little goat, so new, so young –
As young as spring, as fleet! –
So savor it all, with nose and tongue
And frisky feet.

Dance, little goat, your turns and tours.
The meadow's agleam with dew.
(Don't you hear someone with horns like yours,
Piping for you?)

## OWLS IN A WOOD

From branches interlaced,
From shadows moon-etched,
In a leafy tangle lost in opacity,
They watch unseen.

But the night knows the strength
Of blunt, folded wings,
The warmth of hunched bodies,
A curving to bits of shade of greater substance –
More dappled, downy and barred –
And everywhere the luminous eyes
Wide and stark
Where the owls sit motionless, staring, waiting,
Listening to the dark.

## ANDROMEDA

Child, child, not the first
Nor the last to be lost, bound
To rock, offered to
Dark gods because a mother
Was vain as she was lovely.

## THE GROUSE

This was a nuptial dance.
Beneath the fir
She would hesitate, then advance
As the cock followed her.

The forest was loud with his drumming,
A vibrant plea
Till the air was electric, humming
With urgency.

Only the grouse, pausing there
With folded wing,
Was all silence – still, and aware,
And listening!

## ACTION PORTRAIT

Awkwardly,
As if treading on eggs,
The road-runner races
On soda-straw legs,
Tousle-headed,
Tail in the air,
Pursuing his fleeing
Bill of fare.

## ISLES OF MAZATLAN

On these off-shore isles
Honeycombed with caves,
Smugglers once hid their plunder.
Now in sleek curves on gaunt rocks
Only the seals lie
Sunning their sinuous wetness:
Portly patriarchs, svelte matrons,
Cubs with the sweet familiar insigne of youth
Dappling plump bodies.

No black ships hover
In hidden coves,
Only blunt-nosed shrimp boats
Steaming homeward with their catch,
Furrowing cobalt waves to silver.
Now only the seals
Claim these island havens,
Basking, diving, clambering back
To bleak ledges,
Huddling and humping themselves,
Dark and streaming and gilded with sun.

## LOST SUMMER

One golden summer she lost.
Unseeing, unknowing,
She dreamed as the days passed,
Nor counted their going.
Its fruit hung ripe to her hand
But it withered, wasted.
Its lute was left untuned,
Its wine untasted.
Later she sought for a glimmer
Of gold or dross.
But all she recalled of that summer
Was its loss.

## FOREST FISHER

In the twilight gloom,
Spicy with balsam balm,
Where great boughs arch
And all is motionless, calm
Save the brook that fumbles
Through bracken and tangled brush,
A heron stands,
Still in the forest hush –
A slate-blue wraith,
Transfixed, intent alone
On a gauze-finned shadow
Where water slides on stone.

## AUTUMN DAISIES

After the pageant of summer –
Of marigold, mariposa,
Lupine and primrose,
Pentstemon and pussy-paws,
Sulphur-hued beavertail blooms
And all the red-and-gold carnival of columbines –
Now everywhere are Michaelmas daisies!
Springing from sand and rock,
From the shadow of bitterbrush,
From a crack at my doorstep –
Clusters and constellations of pale-rayed flowers
As if, after the long days of sun,
Autumn had rained down all its amethyst stars
Silently,
In one chill September night.

## WINDOW LEDGE

Bird song
Day long,
Chipmunk chatter,
Squirrel patter –
Who can't afford
The rich reward
For a few crumbs thrown
On a ledge of stone?

## DUO AT DAWN

High
In the roseate sky
On jubilant wings
The lark sings.
And from the canyon's parapet
In cheerful duet
The wild burro lifts his voice
To rejoice.

## MEADOW LARDER

Seed of weed
And seed of grass,
And elf-sized harvesters
Who pass
Along the meadow's
Crisscrossed lanes
Where pod and husk
Yield ripened grains.

Vole and shrew
And silver mouse
Gather stores
For winter house.
Hoarded fruit
Of summer bloom
Will winter them
In burrowed room,
Though blizzard howl
And ice roof over
Snuggeries deep
In millet and clover.

## FOX

Fox, be fleet:
This is a hunter's moon.
Slim delicate feet
Carry you like a shadow
Across the meadow,
Over the ridge of the hill
Through rustling thickets,
Down to the winter-chill
Stream.
Fox, you move like a dream.
Hollow with hunger,
Hunting and hunted,
May treacherous ground
Betray no sound,
No scent be strewn
On the indiscreet
Air.
Fox, be fleet:
This is a hunter's moon.

## GOLDEN EAGLE

O golden bird,
Daughter of the sun
And of perilous crags,
O soaring, burnished one,
My sight can barely
Trace you on the sky.

Yet how miraculous
Your huntress eye
That marks the slighest
Bend of a weed
Where a white-footed mouse
Is garnering seed
Too far from home.

A plummet, a swoop, a shrill
Half-cry in the throat,
Then the meadow is empty, still.
Once more pinions are spread
And the bronze bird takes flight,
Staring into the sun
That blinds my human sight.

## THE MOUNTAIN SLEEPERS

High in the sacred mountains
Of the Hopi
The kachinas sleep.
Where the wind screams like an eagle
Among the craggy Superstitions,
And snow drifts sift in tortuous passes,
Light as owl feathers,
The gods lie at rest.

They brought summer sun and rain.
They blessed autumn's harvest.
Soon they will come down
From cloud-shrouded heights
To guide the first furrow,
Stir the first seed.

But now
Amid awesome peaks where Hopi prayers
Rise like smoke from lonely campfires,
The kachinas sleep.