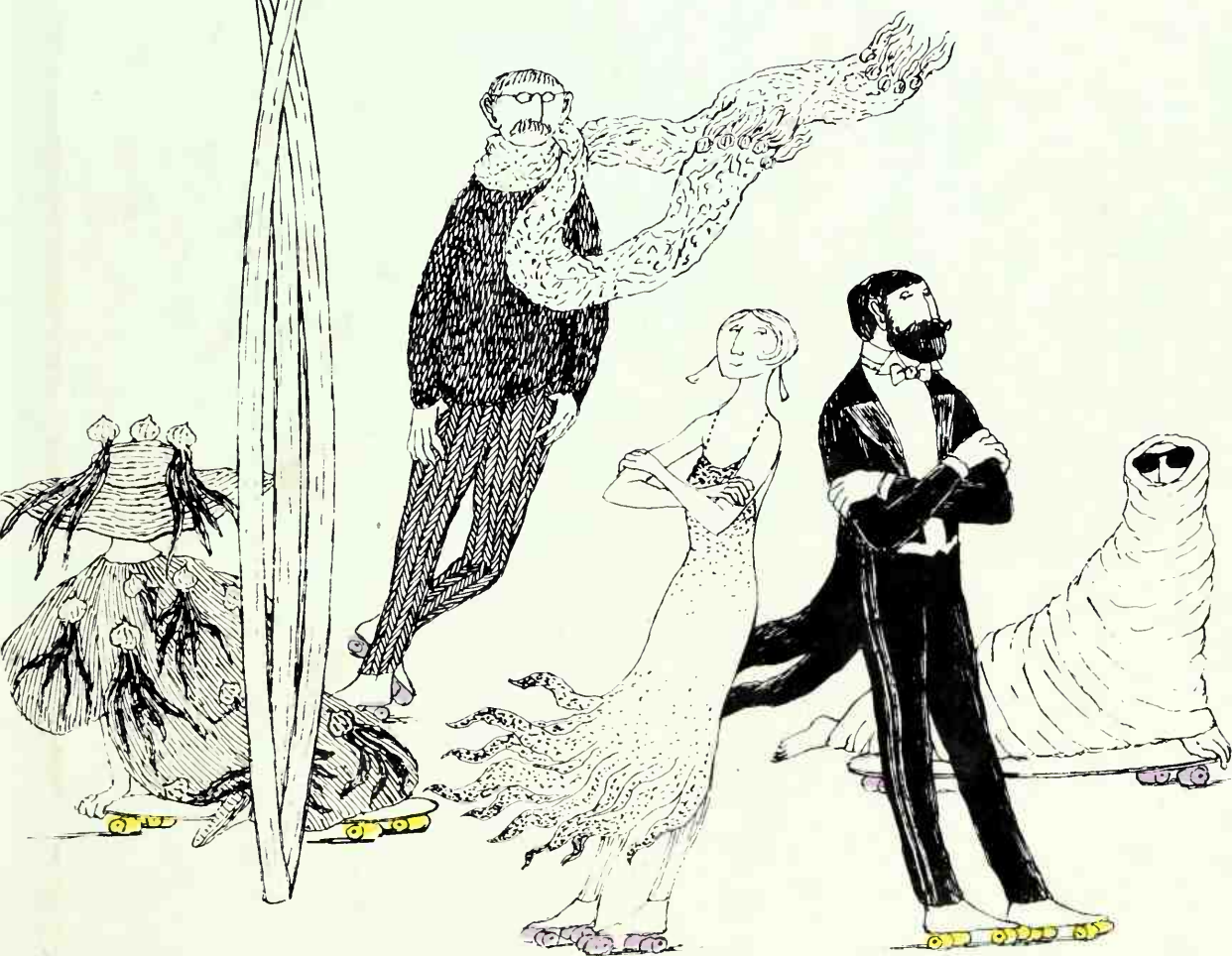


LIGHT METRES

FELICIA LAMPORT

DRAWINGS BY EDWARD GOREY



READERS AND viewers of previous collaborations of Felicia Lamport and Edward Gorey know that their combined impact is greater than the sum of their arts.

Once again, the creators of *Scrap Irony* and *Cultural Slag* join forces for a book of verbal and visual satire, an elegant potpourri of wit, originality, and impeccable technique. Their ironic glances zero in on our culture, from politics to dieting, from gardening to sexual peccadilloes, from middle age to the fuel crisis, with consummate style and high comedy. There's also an homage to tennis, in the grand tradition of Tennyson's *The Charge of the Light Brigade*; the last will and testament of a Mediterranean octopus in a West Berlin zoo who is perhaps too enamored of himself; and a conversation between two of the most frequently invoked personalities of our time—Mr. Masoch and Count de Sade. Indeed, Ms. Lamport and Mr. Gorey run the gamut from “Spinal Discord” to “A Depth Analysis of Modern Man's Ability to Accommodate Himself to Guilt Feelings.”

Here, then, is a refreshingly funny look at modern man and his troubles, told in the tempo of *Light Metres*.



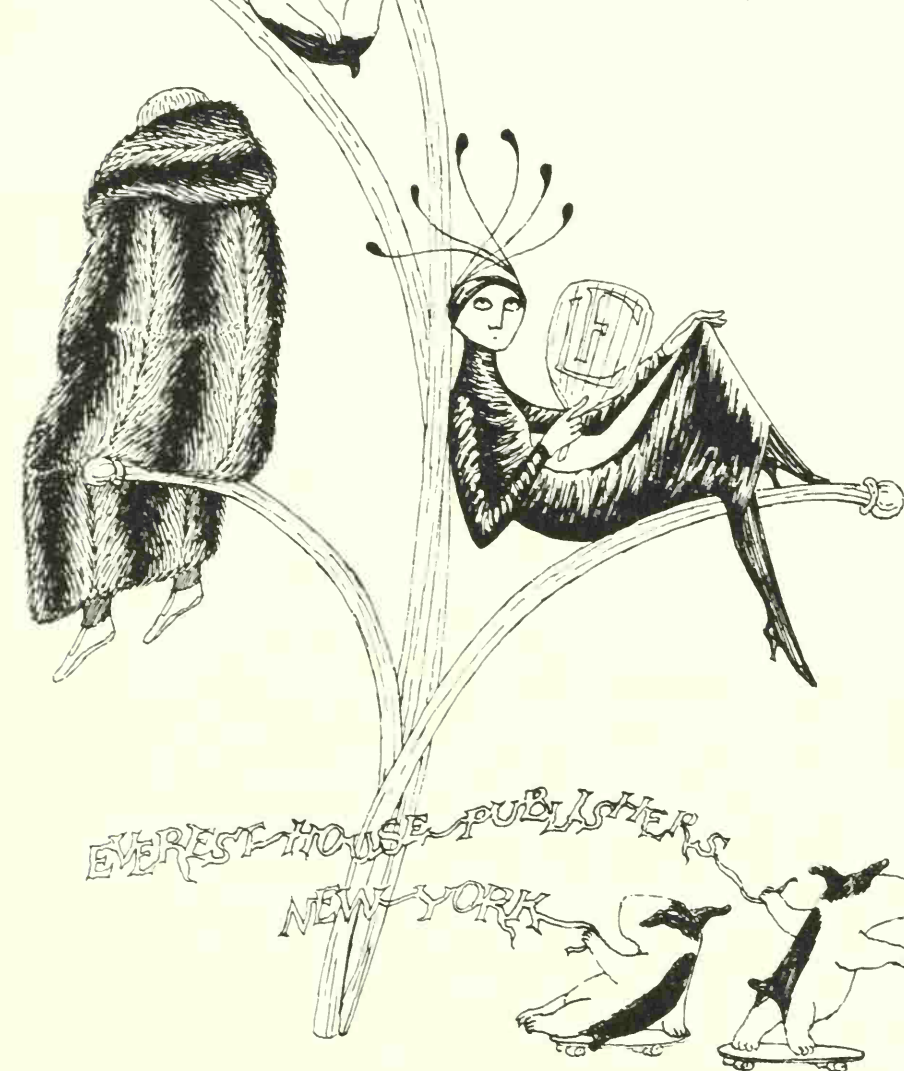
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LIGHT METRES

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FELCIA LAMPORT

DRAWINGS BY EDWARD GOREY



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Contents

DISTAFF DILEMMAS	13
Mother, Mother, Are You All There?	15
Passionate Fashion Note	15
Cook's Detour	16
Eggomania	18
Furbearance	18
Plaintive Geometry	20
THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS	21
The Very Dickens	23
Assembly Lines	24
Wrap Trap	26
The Cambridge Lady	28
GARDEN VARIETY	31
Summery Judgment	33
It Takes a Heap of Compost to Make a House a Mess	34
Lawn Gone Daze	35
Gourd, Have Mercy!	36

Meteorological Reaction	38
Slugfest	39
Vegetable Patter	40
Your Garden Plot Won't Thicken If You're Stingy with the Chicken Wire	43

MIDDLE-AGED SPREAD	45
Intimation of Middle Age	47
Statistic	48
Raising the Bridgework	48
A Word to the Young	48
Spinal Discord	49
Balance	50
Bringing Home the Beacon	50
Aching Footnote	50

TO THE MANNA BORN	51
Incitement to Diet	53
The Concave Man	54
Mini-Maxim	55
Leg Work	56
Balanced Judgment	58
Passing the Buxom	59
Knife-Edge Decision	60
Enriched Dream	61

VICE VERSES	63
Hmm . . .	65
Gregious Error	66
Hint	67
Truism	68
Quilibrium	69
Sequitur	70
Fiscal Fantasy	71
Soirée	72
Sensical Situation	73

MIXED GRILLE	75
Summer Cum Laude	77
Brief History of Publishing—From Start to . . .	78
Alice's Variorum Quorum	79
Matter of Taste	80
Ichthyologic	81
Axiom to Grind	81
Shell Gain	82
Mr. Masoch and Count De Sade	84
Orbit	85
Hellas Bent	86

ALARMS AND DIVERSIONS	87
Encounter	89
Overdrivers	90
Technical Advice to Persons Planning to Erect Memorial Statues of Themselves in New York	92
Oil That Glitters	94
Wild Cards	95
Sick Transit	96
Depth-Analysis of Modern Man's Ability to Accommodate Himself to Guilt Feelings	97
Greatest Show on Earth: The National Convention	98
Nonplussed by an Incubus	100
Sprung Lamb	101
Deprivacy	102
Historical Survey	104
 CONTEMPT OF COURT	 105
Three evocations of the Poet Laureate of the sport, Alfred Lord Tennyson:	
I. The Charge of the White Brigade	107
II. Gala Day	109
III. Shots in the Dark	110

Clobber the Lobber	111
Preparedness	112
American Twist	114
Physiological Note	115

LEST WE FORGET	117
The Love Song of R. Milhous Nixon, 1973	119

REDSTAFF DILEMMA



MOTHER, MOTHER, ARE YOU
ALL THERE?

The aftereffects of a mother's neglects
May spoil her boy's orientation to sex,
But the converse is worse: if she overprotects,
The pattern of Oedipus wrecks.

PASSIONATE FASHION NOTE

Is there any man maligner
Than the Paris dress designer
With a fad?
His demeanor toward the bust is
Reminiscent of Procrustes
Yet his lightest word a must is:
Ironclad.
To lay waist on what was hipbone
He'll cut ligament or chip bone.
One might add
That he blandly sets his course so
As to rack the female torso
And make husbands plot divorce. O
What a cad!
Very Sade.

COOK'S DETOUR

Oh look!
The cook
Who always tests
Capricious
Dishes
On her guests.

She'll skewer
Two or
Three entrails
Adorned
With horned
Imported snails.
Her fey
Entrée
May well combine
Duck's eggs
With dregs
Of vintage wine,
A slab
Of crab
And powdered mace,

A chic
Young leek
To give it grace.
Her trick
With pick-
Led spinach leaf
Produces
Juices
Past belief.

Her tart
Will start-
Le any eye,
Her past-
Ry's laced
With Rock-and-Rye.

O guest
In quest
Of solid fare!
Beware!
Beware
This cuisinière.

EGGOMANIA

Consider the egg. It's a miracle,
A thing so diverse for its size
That we hardly can help growing lyrical
When given the Pullet Surprise.

The scope of this peerless comestible
Must drive other foods to despair
Since it's not only fully digestible
But great for shampooing the hair.

It's boilable, poachable, fryable;
It scrambles, it makes a sauce thicken.
It's also the only reliable
Device for producing a chicken.

FURBEARANCE

"Beginning her fur wardrobe with a moleskin stole designed in high fashion to make up for the modest prestige of the fur, a woman should work her way up to a mink coat just as her husband works himself up to a position to pay for it." —FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH A PROMINENT NEW YORK FURRIER.

From the mole stole
Cut in high style
To the svelte pelt
Takes a vile while
But beguile, smile.

Don't debunk skunk
While your bloke's broke
Add unique chic
With a joke toque
Try raccoon hewn
With a brash dash.
While your dreams stream
Let him stash cash.

When his raise pays
For genteel seal
Keep your eye high
On the real deal
(The refined mind
Will conceal zeal)
Don't digress, press
If he blink, wink
Having thunk "skunk"
Make him think "MINK."

PLAINTIVE GEOMETRY

How happy the hostess who finds she can plan
A party including a notable man,

But let her beware of the grim mistake

That many a lady is prone to make

By thinking: "If *one* name's an asset, well then,
Why shouldn't I try to get *two* famous men?

Each bathed in the glow that his equal
bestows

Is sure to start topping the other's *bons mots*."

But joining two suns makes for total eclipse,
A notable failing of quotable quips

Since each wants the limelight in *his* gin
and tonic

And, having to share it, turns dour and laconic.

At best, one celebrity falls asleep

While the other discusses his compost heap.

As stated in Euclid's quaint conceit:

Parallel lions can never meet.

THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS



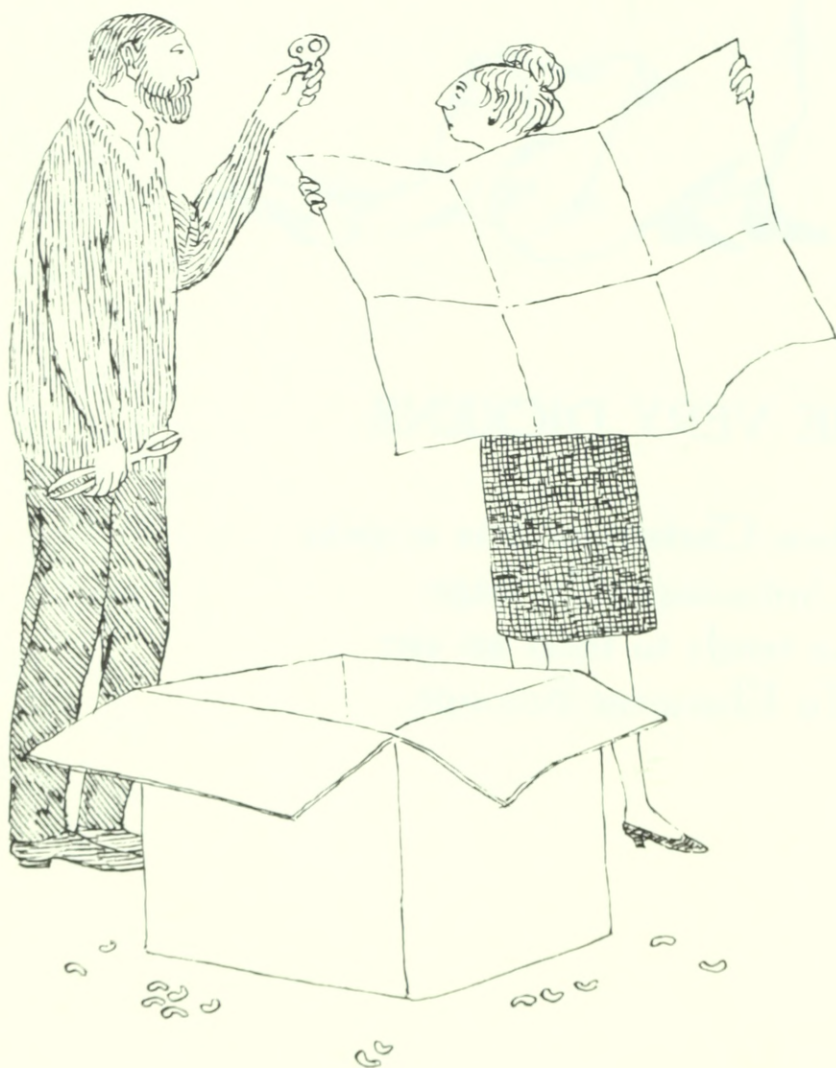


THE VERY DICKENS

When Christmas lists appear
Unmanageably huge
One tends to lend an ear
To Ebenezer Scrooge.

ASSEMBLY LINES

Strong men weep and women tremble
When required to assemble
Christmas toys
As bewildering directions
In a dozen steps and sections
Wreck their poise



For your brain begins to boggle
When a “grommet” or a “toggle”
Strikes your eye
And the impulse to start hurling
“Barrel nuts” and “bolts with knurling”
Rises high.

Frequently you must determine
If translation from the German
Went askew
Or if Japanese inflections
Might explain the imperfections
In Step 2

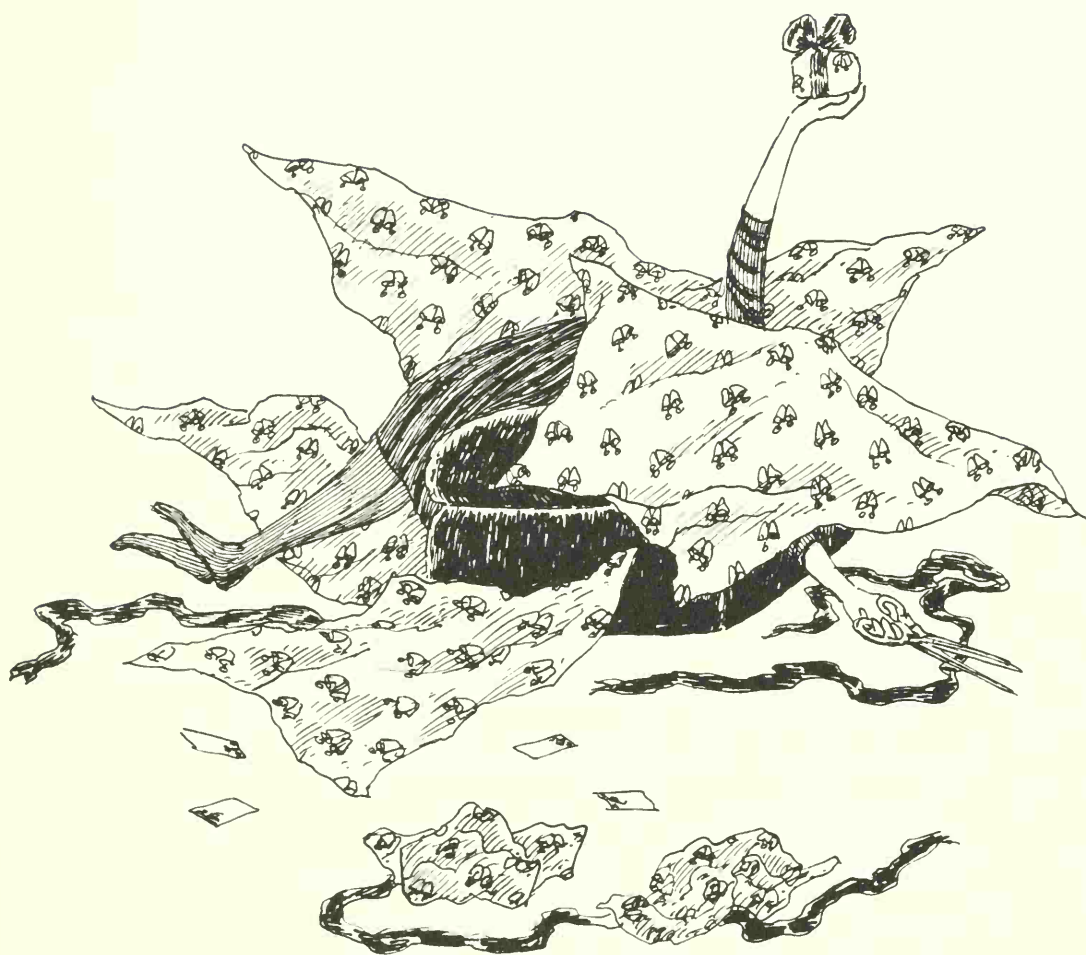
And you struggle to intuit
How “A four-year-old can do it
Without fail”
As your spine begins to buckle
And you penetrate your knuckle
With a nail.

Yet your laboring continues
Though your muscles, nerves and sinews
Start to crack
And you’re certain you have got some
Quintessential piece of flotsam
Out of whack.

But at last, as dawn is breaking,
Triumph crowns your undertaking. . . .
 You turn white
At the thought that children's gambols
May reduce the thing to shambles
 Overnight.

WRAP TRAP

The job of wrapping up a gift
 Is frequently less apt
To make the Christmas spirit lift
 Than leave the temper snapped
As presents slither, squirm and shift
 Like living things entrapped
While paper springs a jagged rift
 And pens go dry uncapped,
Tape snarls, bows flap, and labels drift
 From fingers, winter-chapped. . . .
But though disaster threatens swift,
 The project can't be scrapped
Until that perfectly wrapped gift
 Has left the wrapper rapt.



THE CAMBRIDGE LADY

The Cambridge lady's pleasure
By tradition
Is in work; she looks at leisure
With suspicion
Though her arteries may harden
While she keeps her mind and garden
In condition.

She goes trotting off to lectures
By the score,
Voicing questions and conjectures
From the floor.
Having made a microscopic
Exploration of the topic
Well before.

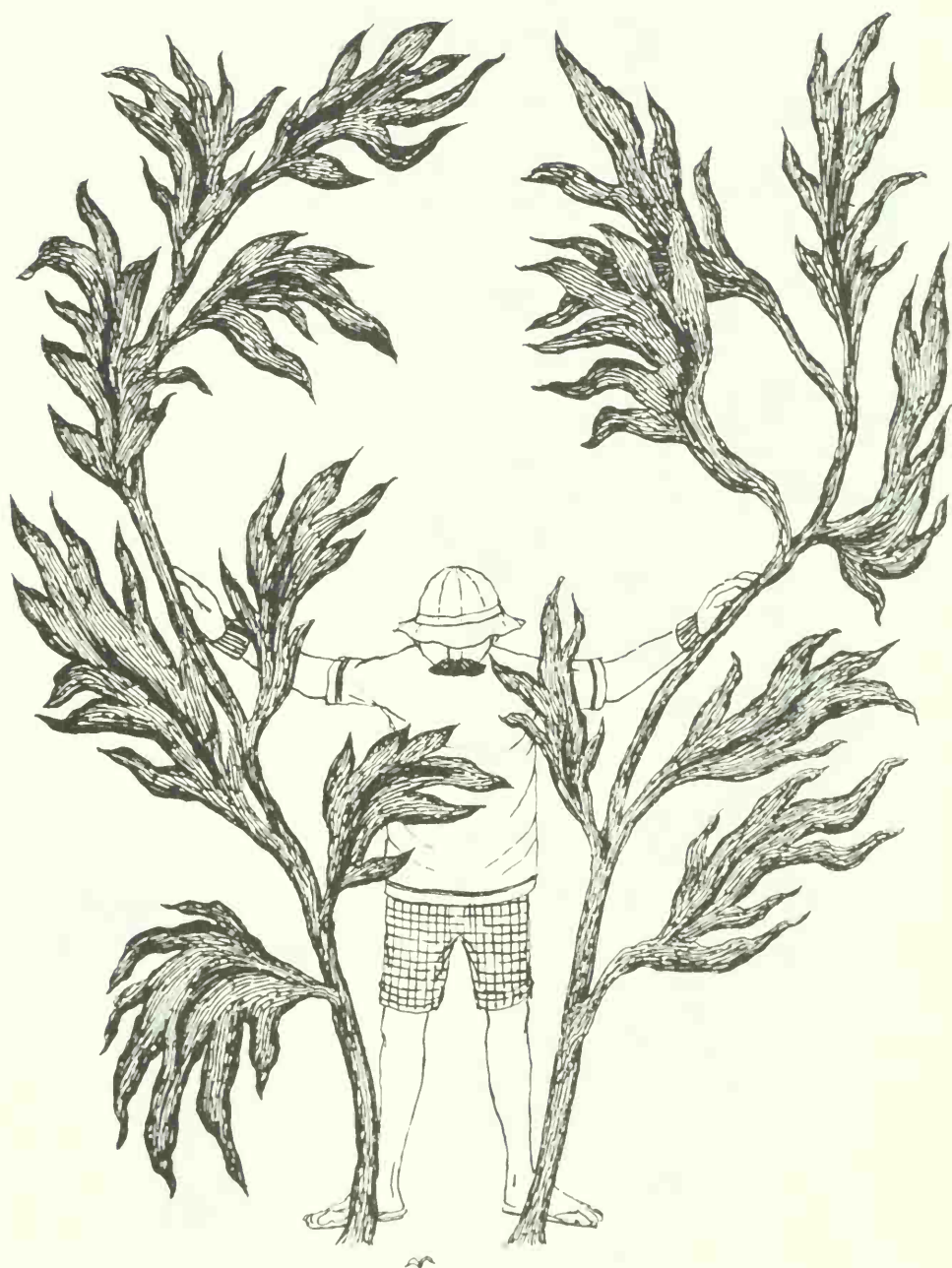
If she's rich it can't be noticed:
She permits
No display of wealth's remotest
Perquisites
And she dines in heirloom dresses,
Sure that nothing obsolesces
If it fits.

At the heart of each committee
That Does Good
For the world or for her city
Neighborhood,
She's so keen on group improvement
That she'd join the Brownian movement
If she could.

She would rather read Jane Austen
Any day
Than a devastating Boston
Exposé
But her mind is open-ended:
She thinks modern music splendid—
In its way.

Though from Portland to Atlanta
Now and then
Ladies quail before the Canta-
Brigienne,
She looks beautiful and wise
To the presbyotic eyes
Of Cambridge men.





SUMMERY JUDGMENT

Summer is icumen in
And millions grow cuckoo
Nursing seeds and cursing weeds
As hope springs up anew—
Though undue.

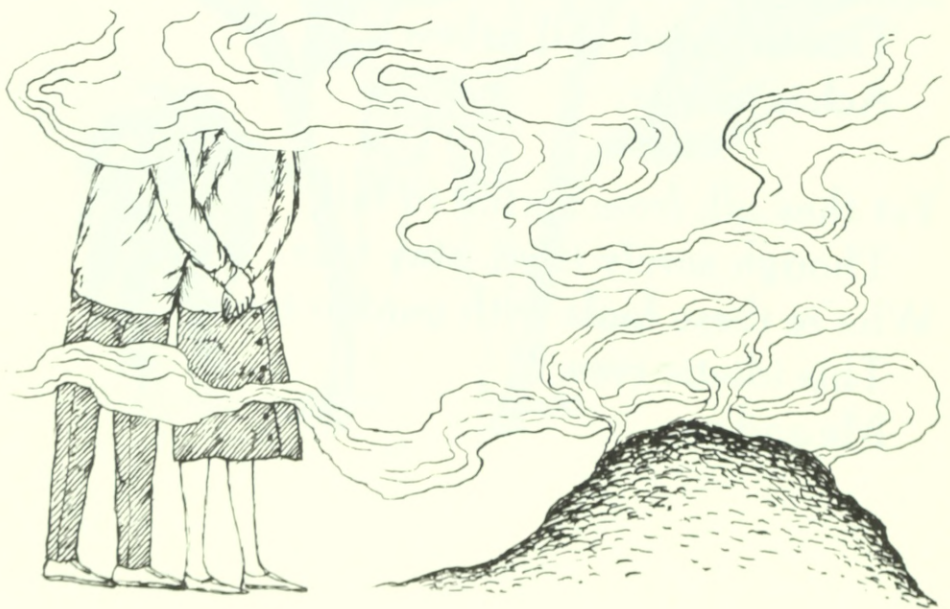
“Last year’s parsley came up sparsely,
This year’s will come through,
Also dazzling rows of basil,
Beans and melons, too—
Honeydew!”

Up at dawn to tend the lawn,
They sweat and toil and stew,
Spines in knots from jiffypots
Transplanted (all askew).
Aches accrue;

Yet they all, from spring to fall,
Though sorely tried, stay true.
Who’re these fools with garden tools,
This idiotic crew?
Me and you.

IT TAKES A HEAP OF COMPOST TO MAKE A HOUSE A MESS

“Come live with me and be my love,”
Wrote Marlowe, but he meant
“Compost with me and rise above
The somewhat gamy scent
Exuded while bacterial
Activities convert
Old carrot tops and cereal
To rich, nutritious dirt,
Thus proving that the offal piles
We’ve lived so long among
Can be subdued by nature’s wiles
Until God’s swill is dung!”





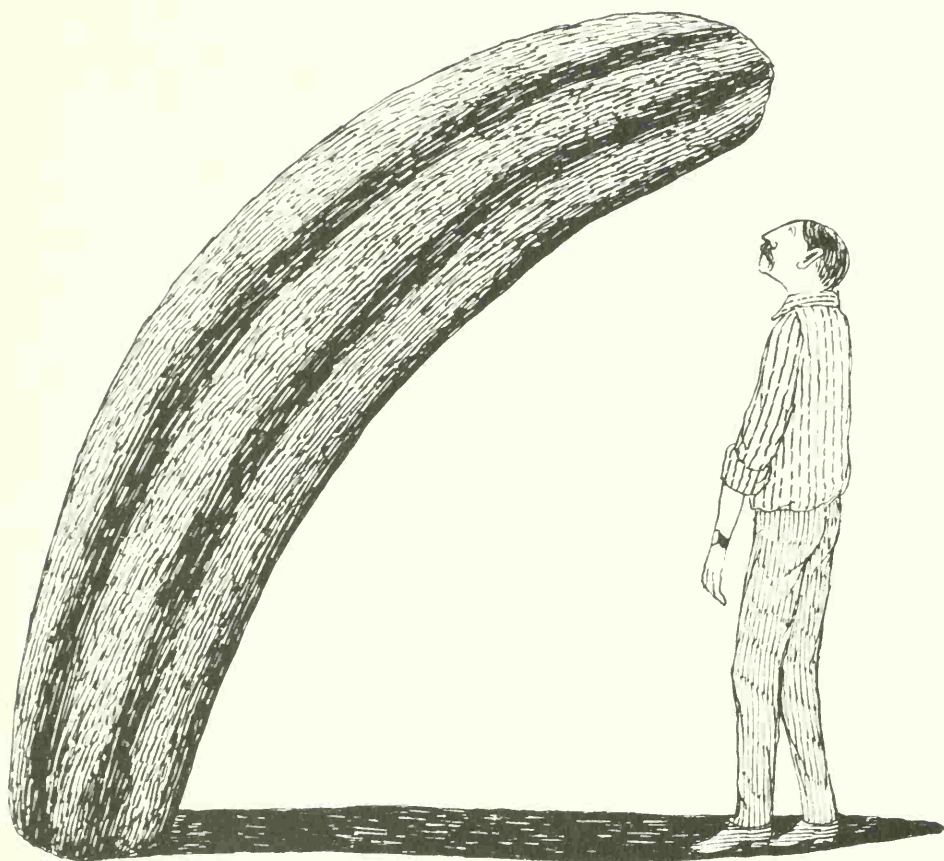
LAWN GONE DAZE

Even a sensible person gets rabid
When the bluegrass he's planted is choked
by the crabbèd.

GOURD, HAVE MERCY!

If there's anything more galling than the crop
that flopped,
It's the crop that has too fulsomely succeeded,
Which can make you start to think it would
be wise to opt
For a garden that's unplanted and unweeded—
A feeling that increases at a stiffer rate
The moment your zucchini vines proliferate.

For they fructify so freely that they summon
shades
Of terror from "The Sorcerer's Apprentice"
When the gourds keep coming at you in such
cavalcades
That you're sure you'll soon become *non*
compos mentis.
The teeniest zucchini can, in one day
flat,
Expand to the dimension of a baseball bat.



You can stew it, fry it, roast it, you can serve
it raw,
Or even try to stuff it into blini,
But there's little hope of finding a receptive maw:
However thin it's sliced, it's still zucchini.
So pull up every second vine that starts
to sprout—
The zucchini's going to get you if you don't
watch out!



METEOROLOGICAL REACTION

There are those who maintain that a rain
dance brings rain

While others put credence in chants;
The scholarly crowd says that seeding a cloud
Produces precipitance,

But all such devices are likely to fail.

There's only one way that is sure to prevail:

*If you water lawn and garden till they can't
take any more*

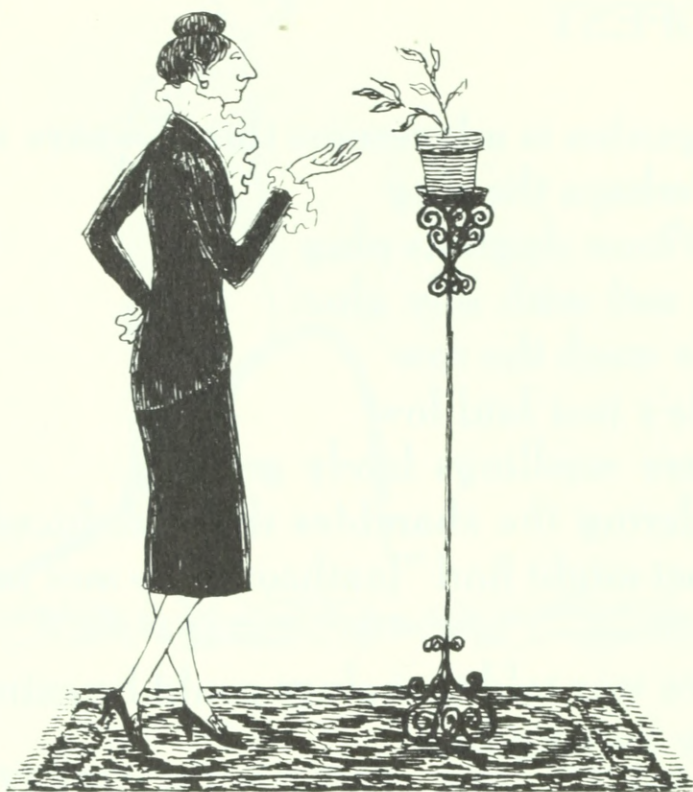
In twenty-seven minutes it will pour.

SLUGFEST

“A garden is a lovesome thing”—says who?
Perhaps the slug
Whose slugfests plug
The soil with oily glue
To mark the row
He’s just laid low
Where seedlings lately grew. . . .
Considering the shambles thus produced.
The poet might find “loathsome” *le mot juste*.

I once was told that slugs could be extirp’d
By leaving beer
In saucers near
The plants on which they slurp’d.
I did my share.
A slug, I swear,
Just drank it down—and burp’d!
Then, joyously engaging in assault,
Reduced my plot to stubble, capped with malt.





VEGETABLE PATTER

I am willing to chat, and politely at that,
With a house plant alone in its pot,
But I'll certainly balk if required to talk
With that bunch in my vegetable plot.

I conversed with them once, but I found their
response
Was so utterly earthy and raw
That I felt too debased by their crudeness of taste
To do anything more than withdraw.

I am forced to assert that they dished so much dirt
That the corn should have gone into shock,
But it just cocked its ears and gave wild husky
cheers
That set the vines running amok.

The melons and limas, those unabashed
climbers,
Kept cutting the lowlier sorrel,
The potatoes quite wisely averted their eyes
But the peppers leapt into the quarrel.

The asparagus steamed and the carrots got
creamed
In the rhubarb that promptly ensued,
The tomatoes turned red and fell splat! on
their bed—
One was potted and two others, stewed.

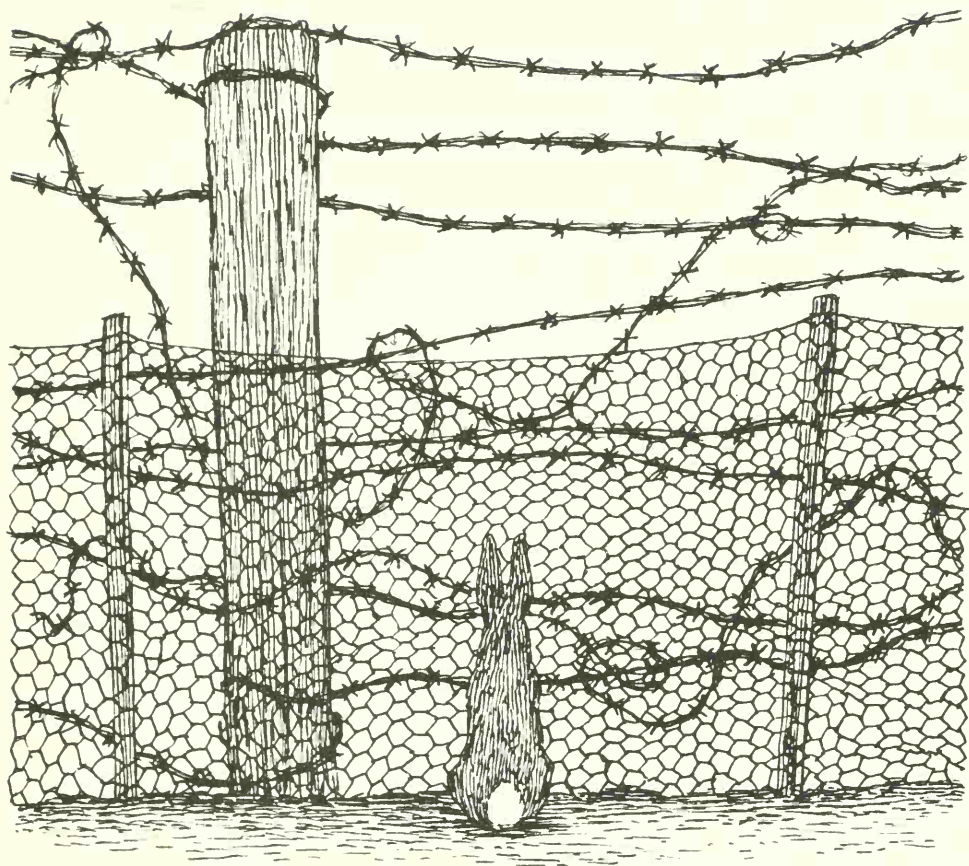
All the lettuce would say was, "Hey! Lettuce
be gay!"

Causing merriment uncontrolled,
The beets said the spinach was making their
skin itch,
A squash laid an eggplant out cold.

And that's why conversation with mass
vegetation

Is something I've firmly suppressed,
Though talk may be valid indoors with a salad—
Providing it's properly dressed.





YOUR GARDEN PLOT WON'T
THICKEN IF YOU'RE STINGY WITH
THE CHICKEN WIRE

When you're budgeting a garden, though
your eyes begin to shine
With the joyous hope of cutting down expense,
If you happen to be planting on a rabbit-
transit line
Your motto should be: "Millions for the fence!"

MIDDLE AGED SPREAD



INTIMATION OF MIDDLE AGE

Work habits slack,
Nights gay and vinous—
What can you expect?
Heaven will object,
Launching the attack:
Pain in the sinous.

Work might and main.
Nights dully tranquil,
Attitudes correct—
What do you collect?
Vericose vein,
Swelling of the anquil.

Riot of crime.
Or diet of virtue—
Neither will deflect
Nature's disrespect.
Once you pass the prime
Minor parts desertue.

STATISTIC

Middle age is very difficult to chart
Since no one really knows when it should start
But a simple calculation gets the figure down pat:
It begins a decade later than wherever you're at.

RAISING THE BRIDGEWORK

When strangers shift quite suddenly from
"Miss" to "Ma'am"
It's clear that too much water has flowed over
Madame.

A WORD TO THE YOUNG

If you mock middle age and deride it
Insisting you cannot abide it,
You may need this concise
But effective advice:
Don't knock it until you have tried it.

SPINAL DISCORD

I sing a lay of vertebrae
 Contiguously clacking.
Though once dyspepsia had its day
And bouts of gout held men at bay
 The back is now attacking.

Physicians frisk for ruptured disk
 And spy along the spine,
Discreetly probing every risk.
The castanet of bone is brisk
 Above the patient's whine

As orthopedic fingers plumb
 What once was loose and limber
From coccyx up to cranium
Till from the lumber regions come
 The strident cries of "Timber!"

The flying disk and erring bone
 Encased in stiff regalia
Give legions, strangely rigid grown,
The corset's special wheezing tone.
 Ah! Such a bac-can-ail-ia.

BALANCE

A society that glows
 With a pure
 Youth-cult
 Obsession
May end up in the throes
 Of mature
 Adult
 Depression

BRINGING HOME THE BEACON

Middle age shines with delightful incandescence
As the only sure cure for persistent adolescence.

ACHING FOOTNOTE

What's so great about being twenty?
 Plenty.

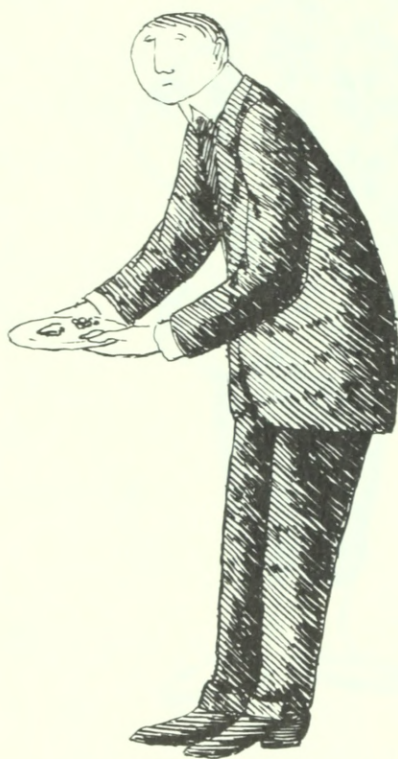




INCITEMENT TO DIET

The loud repercussions of diet discussions
Can set you to groaning aloud
By raising the issue of adipose tissue
With which you feel overendowed.

You determine to lose, but which method to use?
They're all couched in such intricate terms
That you long to get hold of those wise men of old
Who sponsored the Diet of Worms.



THE CONCAVE MAN

Nutritionists stress that one cannot suppress
The thought that a diet is doomed to distress
Until and unless its adherents confess
There's only one thing they can eat
with success:
Less.



MINI-MAXIM

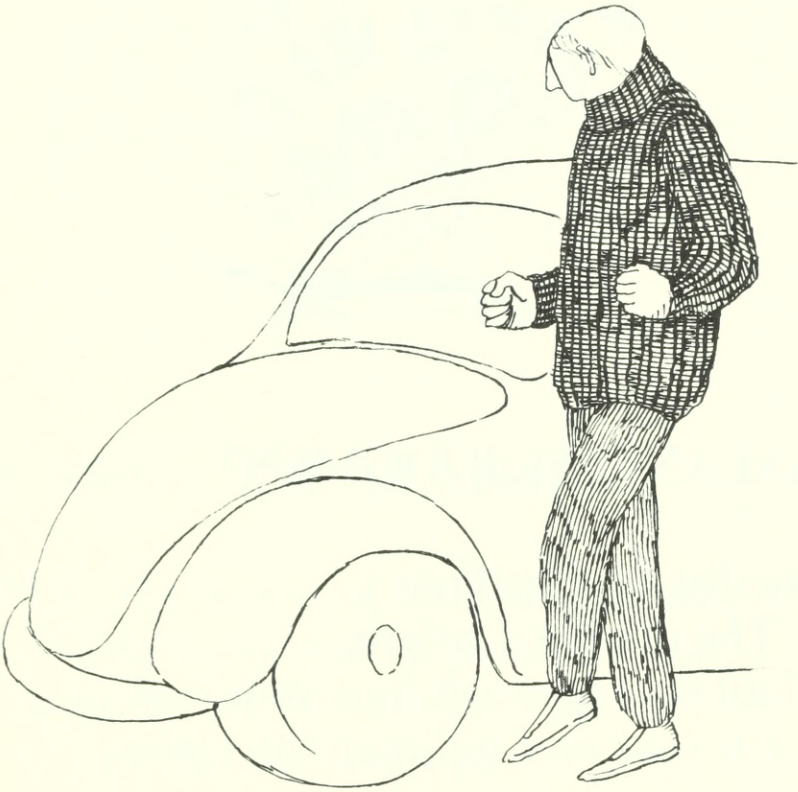
Effulgent indulgence
In scotch or martini
May set off a bulgence
That splits the bikini.

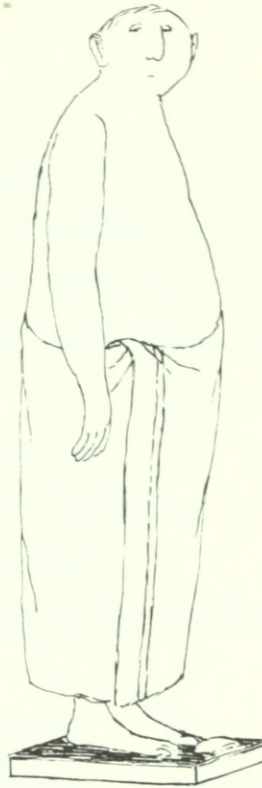
LEG WORK

The doctors all say
When a diet's beginning
That a walk every day
Is both healthy and thinning,

But it's hard to arrive
At a method for balking
The impulse to drive
When we ought to be walking:

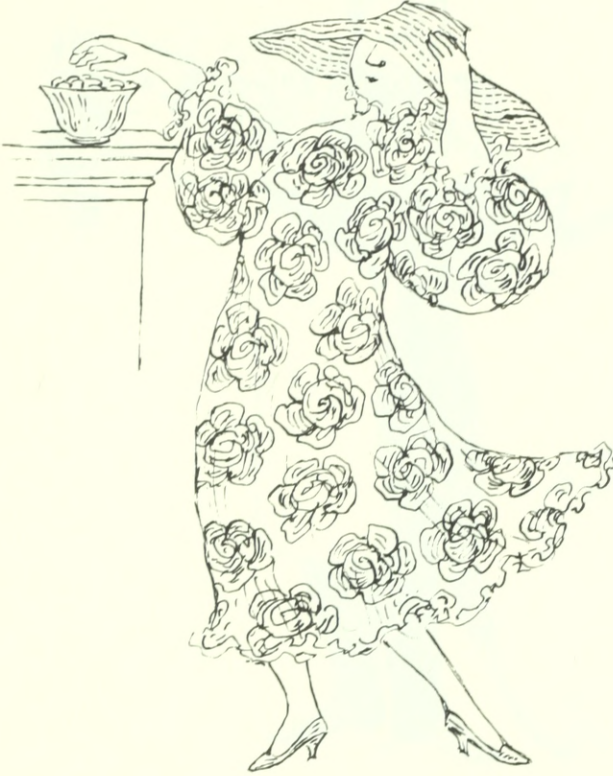
From cradle to grave
There's an absence of leeway
In the home of the brave
And the land of the freeway.





BALANCED JUDGMENT

No diet ever justifies
The trouble it entails
Until the scales fall from your eyes
Or your eyes fall from the scales.



PASSING THE BUXOM

When the waves of hunger lash you
Though your loss of weight is low
Comes the urge to take the cashew
And to let the credit go.



KNIFE-EDGE DECISION

A well-marbled steak is both blessing and curse.
With protein progressing and fat growing worse
It's becoming increasingly hard to decide
Whether beef's Dr. Jekyll or just carboHyde.



ENRICHED DREAM

Wouldn't it be grand to join that gratified band
Of diet writers living off the fat of the land?

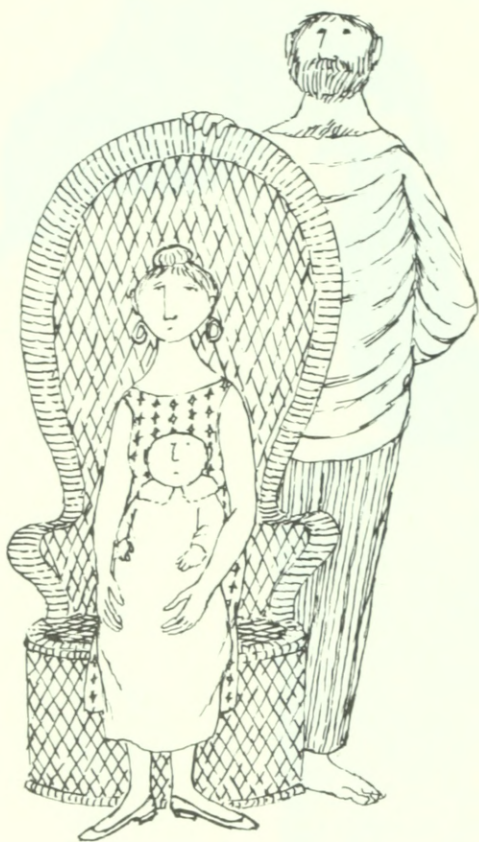
VICE VERSES





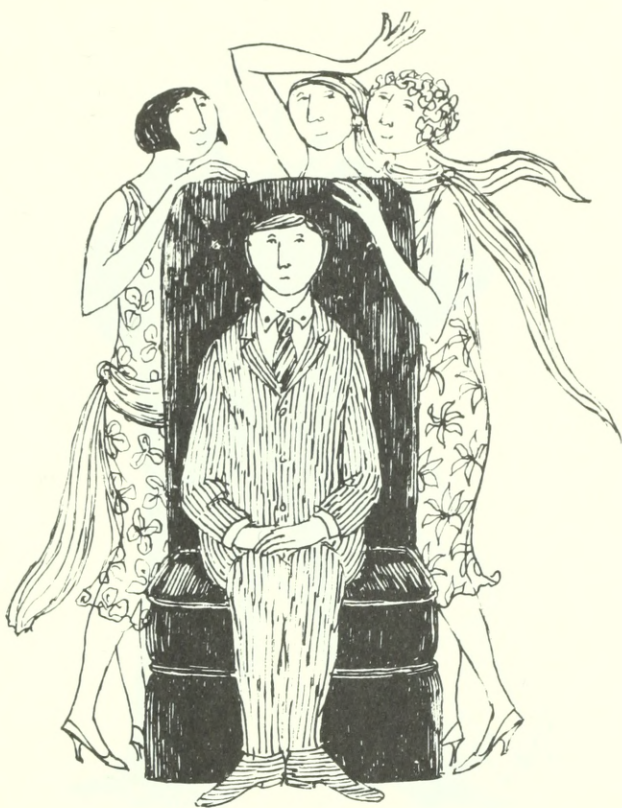
HMM . . .

Nothing gives rise to such wild surmise
As the peachable widow with consolate eyes.



GREGIOUS ERROR

Many a new little life is begot
By the hibited man with the promptu plot.



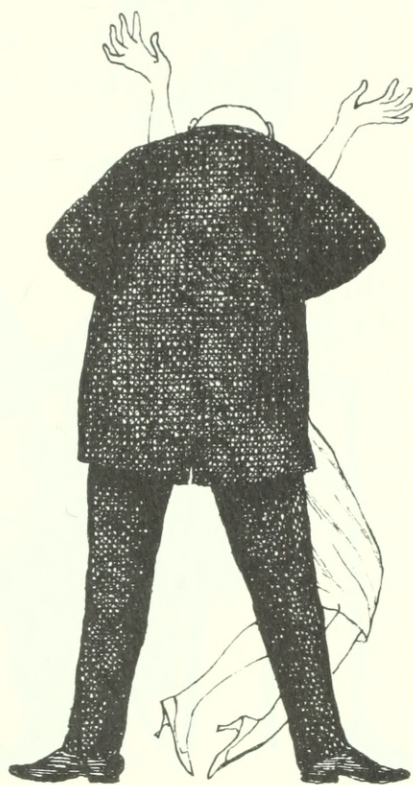
HINT

There never is trouble in finding a spouse
For the ebriated man with the lapidated house.



TRUISM

A woman's constant souciance
Becomes a dreadful nuisance.



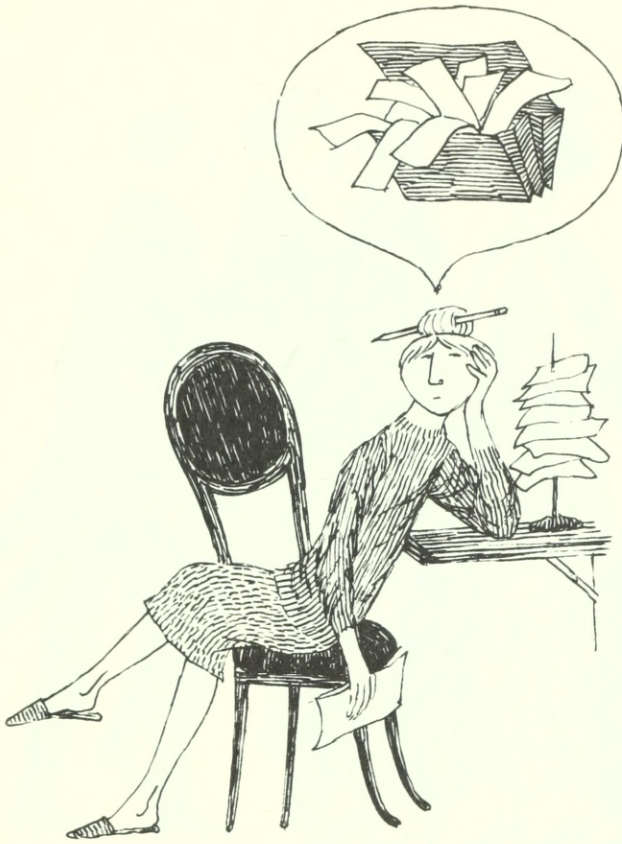
QUILIBRIUM

The iquitous girl often loses her balance
When wooed by a man with unusual chalance.



SEQUITUR

The businessman whose ways are licit
Seldom shows a handsome ficit,
Never winters in Miami—
Ah! but friends, his name has famy!



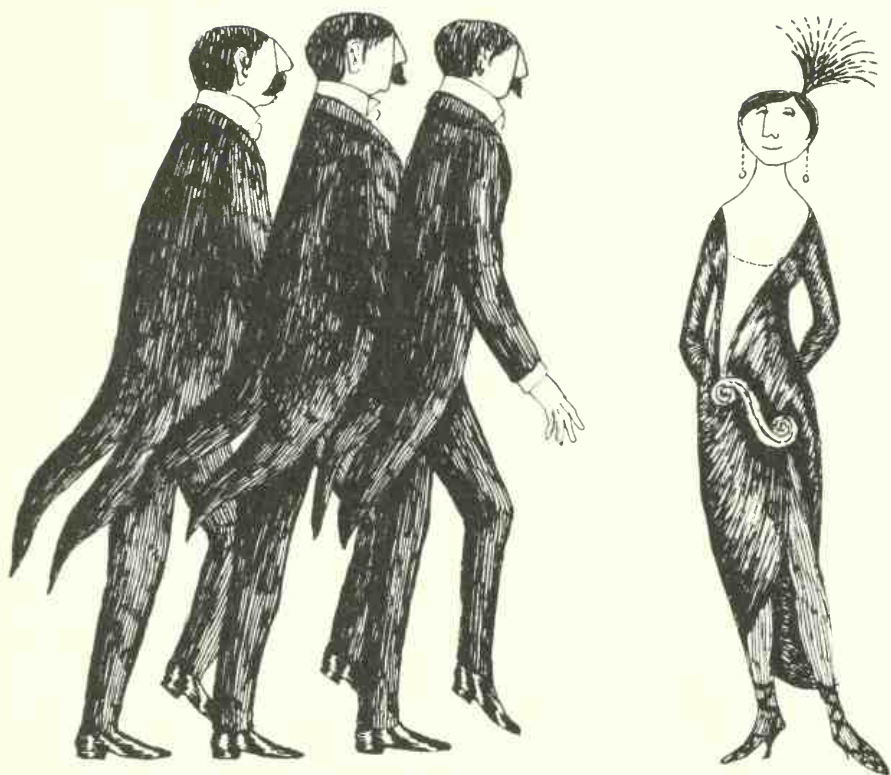
FISCAL FANTASY

Life would be such a nice broglío
Running so smoothly and mok,
If I had a little portfolio
Full of negotiable stock.
And if it were tax-exempt,
I would be gruntled and kempt.



SOIRÉE

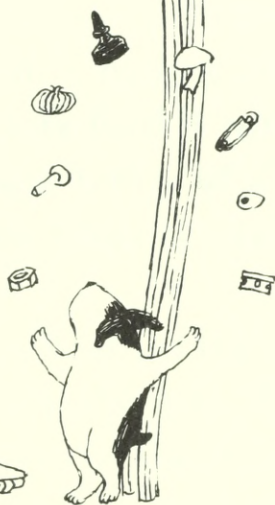
The gentle wives fillet a soul
Eptly, while the men doze,
Or roast a reputation whole
On smoldering nuendos.



SENSICAL SITUATION

Men often pursue in suitable style
The imical girl with the scrutable smile.

MIXED GRILLE



SUMMER CUM LAUDE

Sing ho! for the aestival festival,
The purest of tourist delights
Which always affords the vacationing hordes
A chance to scale cultural heights.

The Carnival's passé, distinctly déclassé
And only the brave brave a Fair:
In hickory thickery, folks once got liquory—
Now it's Terpsichore's lair.

The ducks and the drakes peer at waterfront
Shakespeare
And flee from their lakes bleary-eyed
But drama alfresco, from Shaw to Ionesco
Surrounds them. There's no place to hide.

The cultural cult's luring all the adults
Though the tots find it rather a blight
And tend to grow bitter at all of this literate
Stuff with the sitter at night.

The natives, alack, shun the cultural action
Devoting themselves in their fashion
To televised views of the sports and the news
And raking the Festival cash in.

BRIEF HISTORY OF PUBLISHING— FROM START TO . . .

The earliest yield in the publishing field
Came when scribes who made marks on papyrus
Grew so wildly beserk with delight in their work
That the writing craze spread like a virus.

Cacoëthes scribendi, in fact, was so trendy
A modus vivendi in Cairo
That writers abounded and praises resounded
For every new publishing tyro.

But today there's less praise than in palmier days,
Since the publishing firmament pales
When the firms that once shone as its stars
become Jonahs
EnGulfed by conglomerate whales.

And though passion still stirs a few litterateurs
To embark on artistic travails
When they match their finances to
Krantz's advances,
The wind is knocked out of their sales.

They mutter: "Damnation! Such mass publication
Has set off a cultural tocsin!"
And they gloomily trust that the boom will go bust
When it's trampled to dust by xeroxen.

ALICE'S VARIORUM QUORUM

"You are strange, Lewis Carroll," the
scholars have said,
"We must funnel you through a computer
To bring out the nuggets concealed in your head.
You are clever, but we are astuter."

So they traced each idea to its origin
By the sweat of the scholarly brow,
Reducing the fabulous Cheshire grin
To a faint Oedipussy miaow.

They dosed him with physics, both meta- and plain,
And shifted his psyche through Freud,
But Alice's charming adventures remain
Unexplained, unexcelled, unalloyed.

MATTER OF TASTE

NEWS ITEM: *A Mediterranean octopus in the West Berlin Zoo has been eating half an inch a day from the ends of his tentacles. His keepers are at a loss to understand his behavior.*

That octopus who
In the West Berlin Zoo
Has been nibbling his tentacle ends
Was so often queried
That finally, wearied,
He gave out this statement: "My friends,

"I wish to aver and state
That I really must deprecate
The tone of the tales that appeared in the press,
My actions are simple and plain
Involving no legerdemain,
Though properly speaking I'm forced to confess
That the inches I've nibbled away
Have made me (Haw!) *leger-de-pied*.
Still, why should there be a publicity mess
If I choose to be used in my own bouillabaisse?

“Those rumors are idle
That I’m suicidal:
I’m mad about me in my fashion
So join in my paeon
Of Epicurean
Delight in consuming self passion.”

ICHTHYOLOGIC

Why do fish, who get no pleasure out of mating,
Top all mammals in the rate of propagating?

AXIOM TO GRIND

Virtue grows monotonous
Without a single break.
We need a nip of rottenness
To keep the Hottentot in us
Awake.

SHELL GAIN

NEWS ITEM: *Crabs and snails have been wreaking havoc in oyster and clam beds.*

The quahog cried, "Damme!"
Because of the whammy
Imposed on that chamois-soft clam.
With crabs feeding rife on
His succulent siphon
He spends his whole life on the lam,
Which makes him feel hopped up
And all out of kilter,
So mixed up and chopped up
He's nearly gefüllte.

And what could be moister
Than tears from an oyster
 Attacked by a boisterous snail?
A dastard who's vicious
(Though truly delicious)
 And causes shell fishes to quail.
But, bivalves, hold steady!
 Though snails and crabs crave you,
We gourmets are ready
 And willing to save you:
We'll eat those unholy
 Tormenters who doom you,
Preserving you solely
 For us to consume you.

MR. MASOCH AND
COUNT DE SADE

Oh, Mr. Masoch,

Oh, Mr. Masoch!

*Is there something that disturbs you, Count
de Sade?*

I'm surprised that every play

Whether on or off Broadway

Seems to star us—don't you find it rather odd?

Oh, Count de Sade,

Oh, Count de Sade,

On our splendid sadomasochistic squad

Playwrights toil and effervesce,

All devoted—to excess.

They're your servants, Mr. Masoch.

Your adherents, Count de Sade.

Oh, Mr. Masoch,

Oh, Mr. Masoch,

What a glorious sick transit overweens

Any playwright who's produced

Simple childish Mother-Goosed

Fun in two unnatural acts and six obscenes.

Oh, Count de Sade,
Oh, Count de Sade,
How completely demonstratum erat quod!
When alive we were debased,
Now we're both the height of taste.
Absolution, Mr. Masoch?
No, pollution, Count de Sade.

ORBIT

How profoundly analytic
Of his kith and kind
Is the second-rate critic
With the frustrate mind.

HELLAS BENT

The isles of Greece! The isles of Greece,
Where Sappho and her fellow shades
Implore the gods to grant surcease
From tourists in those mellow glades
To which such swarms have lately flocked
That all the aisles of Greece are blocked.

Arriving by the squad to see
The great and hallowed ancient sites,
They rip right through the Odyssey
In seven days and seven nights,
With motor-boosted vagrant breeze
To whip them through the wine-dark seas.

The hordes who come by air and ship
To island-hop in Doric yachts
And cultivate awaremanship
Of all the best historic spots
So crowd each Attic vale and peak
That where on earth can Greek meet Greek?

ALARMS AND DIVERSIONS





ENCOUNTER

If you've run into a man
Who felt his old Krafft ebbing
Then you've surely metatarsal
On a foot with webbing.

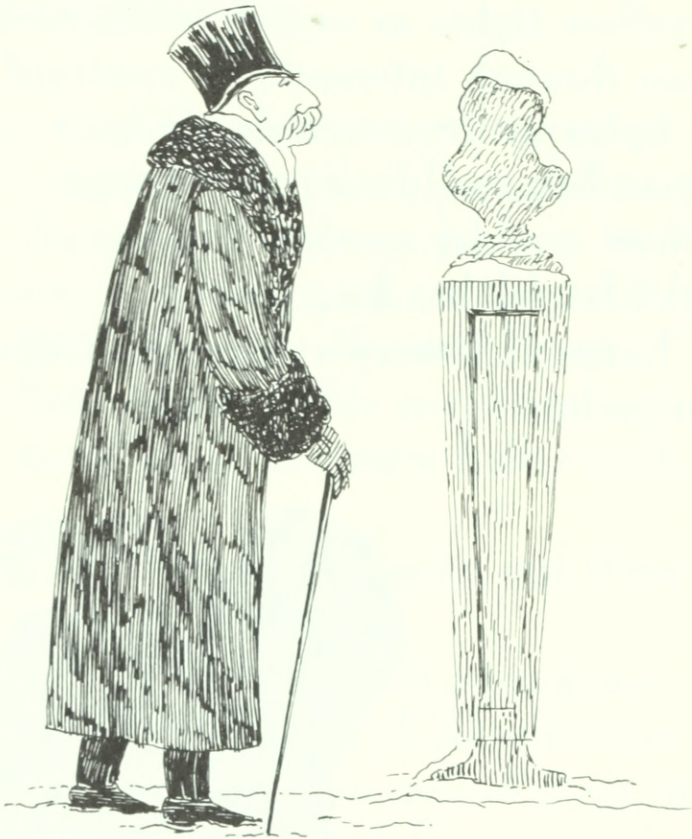
OVERDRIVERS

Since Paul Revere went whizzing on his mission
 (A matter with which Longfellow has dealt)
The Boston driver's been, by long tradition
 Intrepid as a leopard on the veldt,
 And possessor of a trenchant
 But ungovernable penchant
For distributing invective helter-skelter.

He thinks traffic lanes were put there to
 incite him
And he hops them with a kangaroo's delight,
Cutting fellow drivers off *ad infinitum*
 Whenever there's an inch of space in sight.
 He is singularly deft
 At signaling a left
The while he is engaged in turning right.

He sees yellow lights as urgent invitations
To zoom through intersections unafraid
And red lights as attractive decorations
To amuse, but surely not to be obeyed. . . .
Tourists wonder as they cower,
At the fender-bending power
Of the Charge of Boston's Jump-the-Light
Brigade.



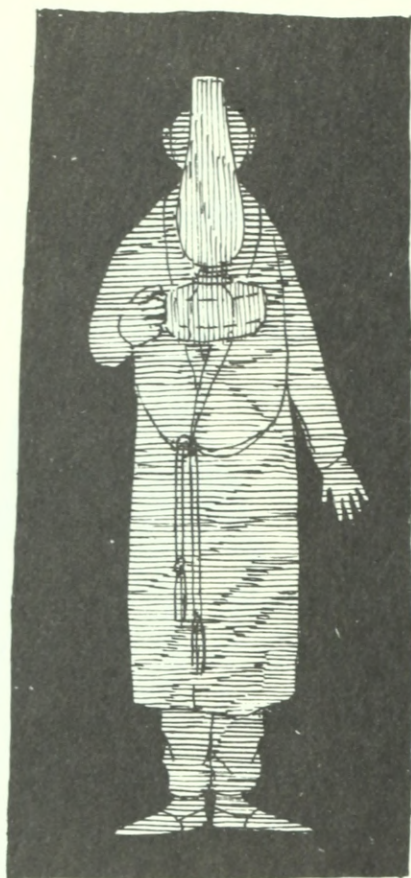


TECHNICAL ADVICE TO
PERSONS PLANNING TO ERECT
MEMORIAL STATUES OF
THEMSELVES IN NEW YORK

Though marble may tempt you
Reject it you must
Although you have dreamt you
Were marbled in bust:

New York's winter climates
Make marble decay
(Like those higher primates
Who can't get away),
And once it gets brittle
How rapidly it'll
Depose
Your nose!

Then subways will shake you
And gasses will melt you
And snowballs will break you
As little boys pelt you.
Your bust, once august or
At least epitaphic,
Will start to lose luster
And blend with the traffic.
To put the case clearly
If somewhat austere,
Marble
'S harble.
Plan it
In granite.



OIL THAT GLITTERS

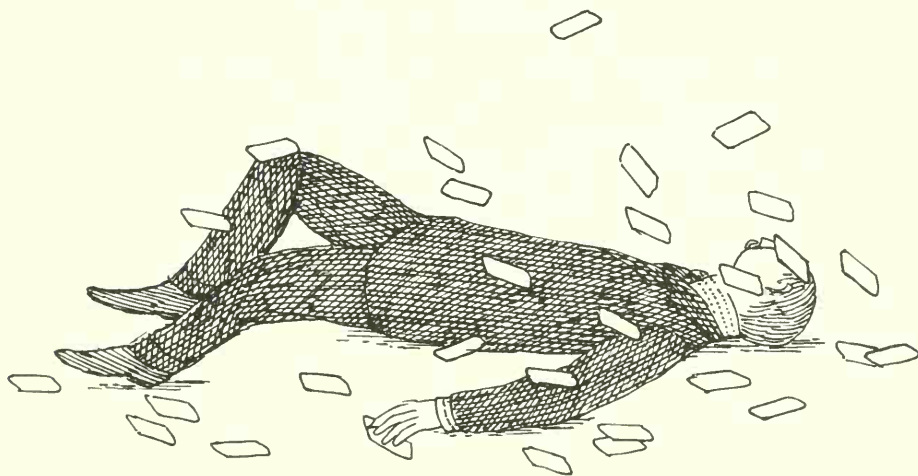
Each sudden renewal of access to fuel
Leaves everyone sunny and bright.
Although frequently burned, we don't seem
to have learned
That the plight will return overnight.
But doubtless that crisis will end when the
price is
Jacked to a new record height.

WILD CARDS

Everybody's living in a house of cards,
Happily American-Expressed.
Even youth is lowering its avant-guards
To join the shuffle with the rest.

Regiments are joining in the Master Charge
That's blowing up the G.N.P.
Hardly anybody now remains at large
Who lacks creditability.

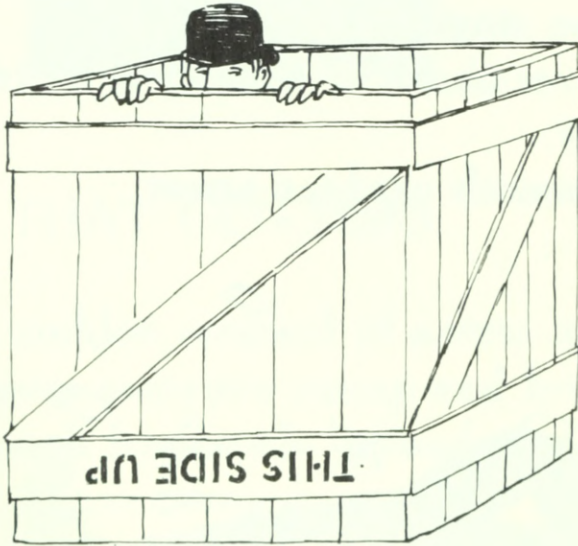
With plastic credit showered on us every day,
We feel so singularly blessed
That we never pause to wonder if we're on
the way
To a mammoth card-iac arrest.

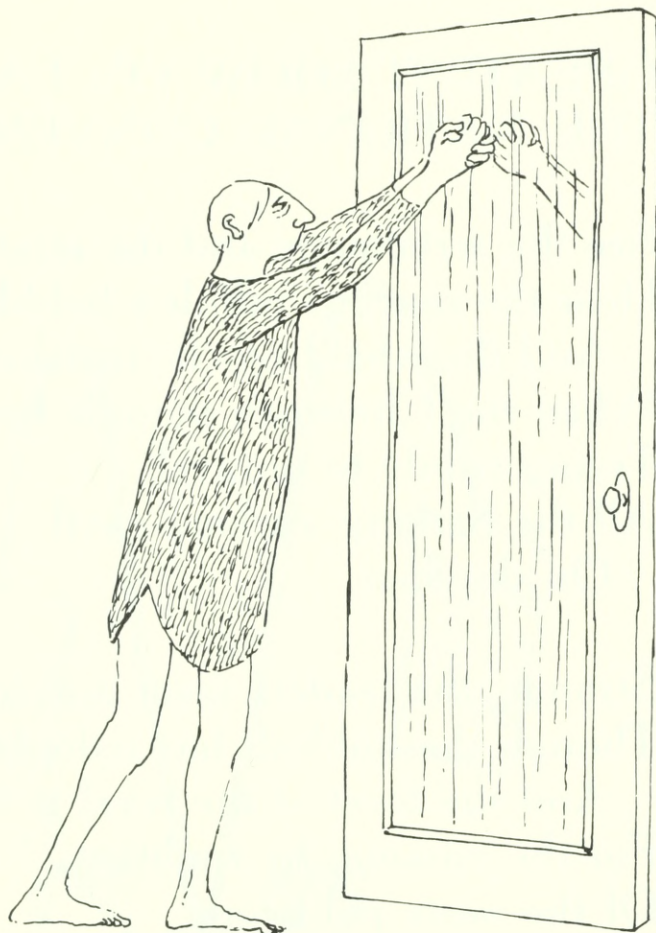


SICK TRANSIT

The railroads all admit that they are down on
The passenger; in point of fact they hate him.
A rail is what they'd ride him out of town on
For freight is now the great desideratum.

But evidence of Pullmanary trouble
Will never stop the proper devotee
Who crates himself and travels on the double
In well-appointed boxcars, F.O.B.





DEPTH-ANALYSIS OF
MODERN MAN'S ABILITY TO
ACCOMMODATE HIMSELF
TO GUILT FEELINGS

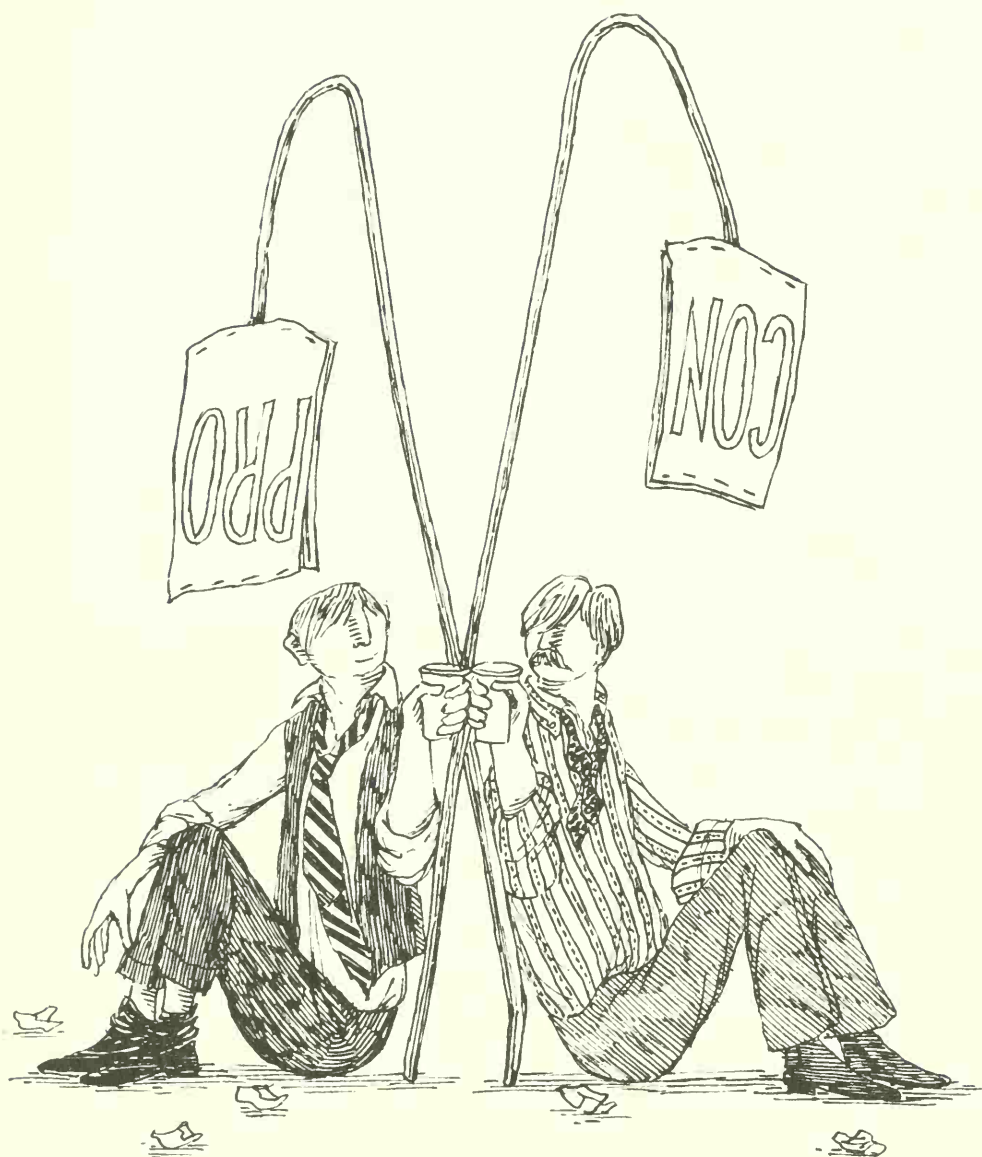
The most durable wash-'n-wear shirt
Is the hair shirt.

GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH: THE NATIONAL CONVENTION

See the scrimmage and the scrabble
Hear the raucous rabble's babble
 And the ribald rebels' ricocheting roar
When the Chairman pounds his gavel
Trying vainly to unravel
All the barking, carking cavil
 On the floor.

Strange, the leaders seem untroubled
Though the hubbub has redoubled
 And the level of the revel is a blast
For the mission, by tradition,
Of the party politician
Is to foster fuss and fission
 To the last.

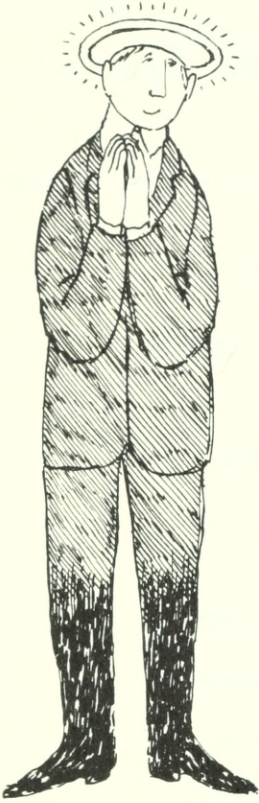
When at last The Man is chosen
What togetherness then flows in—
 Every bourbon glass becomes a loving cup.
See the opposition crumble
Watch the former idols tumble
Hear that cheering laughter rumble—
 Step right up!





NONPLUSSED BY AN INCUBUS

A statesman's firm opinion must be sacrificed
If the survey polls have turned thumbs down
For the spirit of the nation is the pollstergeist
And the exorcists have all left town.



SPRUNG LAMB

After a sudden religious conversion
The shrewd politician can get off the
hook

By answering any who cast an aspersion
“The Lord is my shepherd and I am His
crook.”

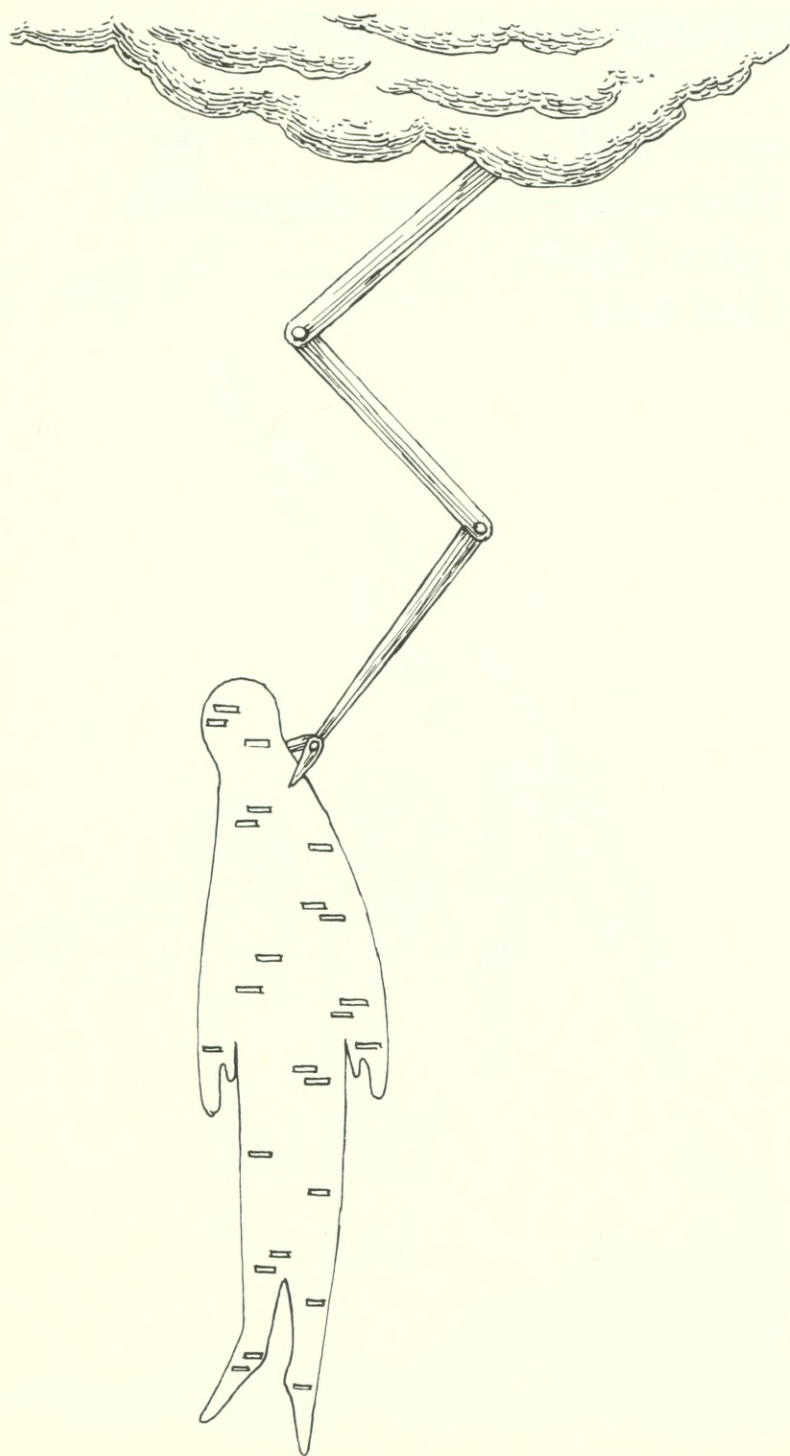
DEPRIVACY

Although we feel unknown, ignored
As unrecorded blanks,
Take heart! Our vital selves are stored
In giant data banks:

Our childhoods and maturities,
Efficiently complied,
Our stocks and insecurities
Elaborately filed,

Our tastes and our proclivities
In gross and in particular,
Our incomes, our activities
Both extra- and curricular.

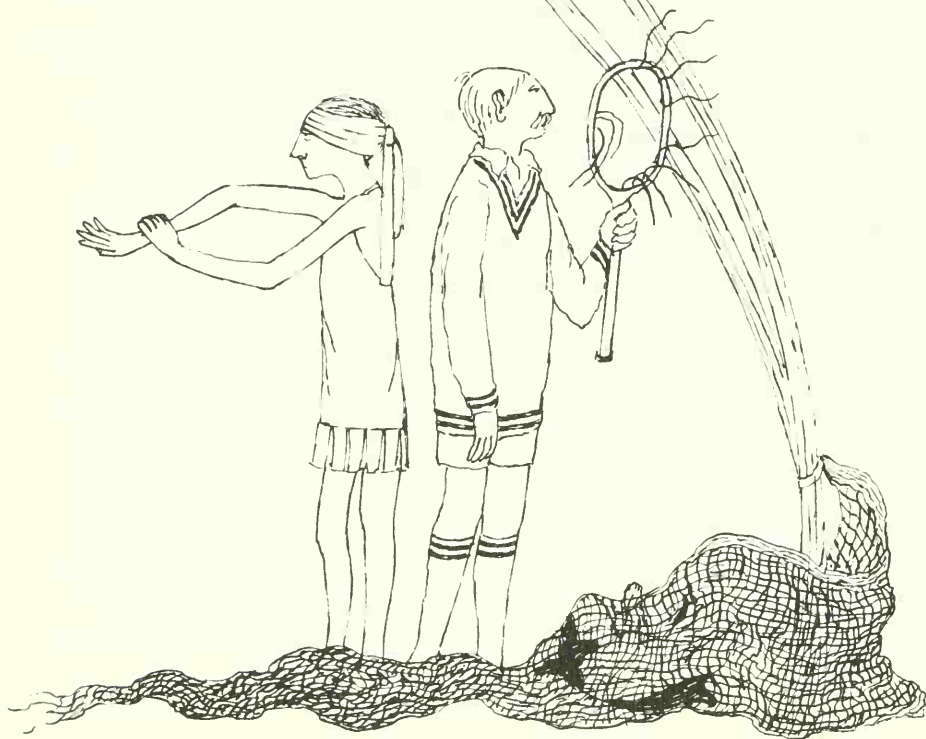
And such will be our happy state
Until the day we die
When we'll be snatched up by the great
Computer in the sky.

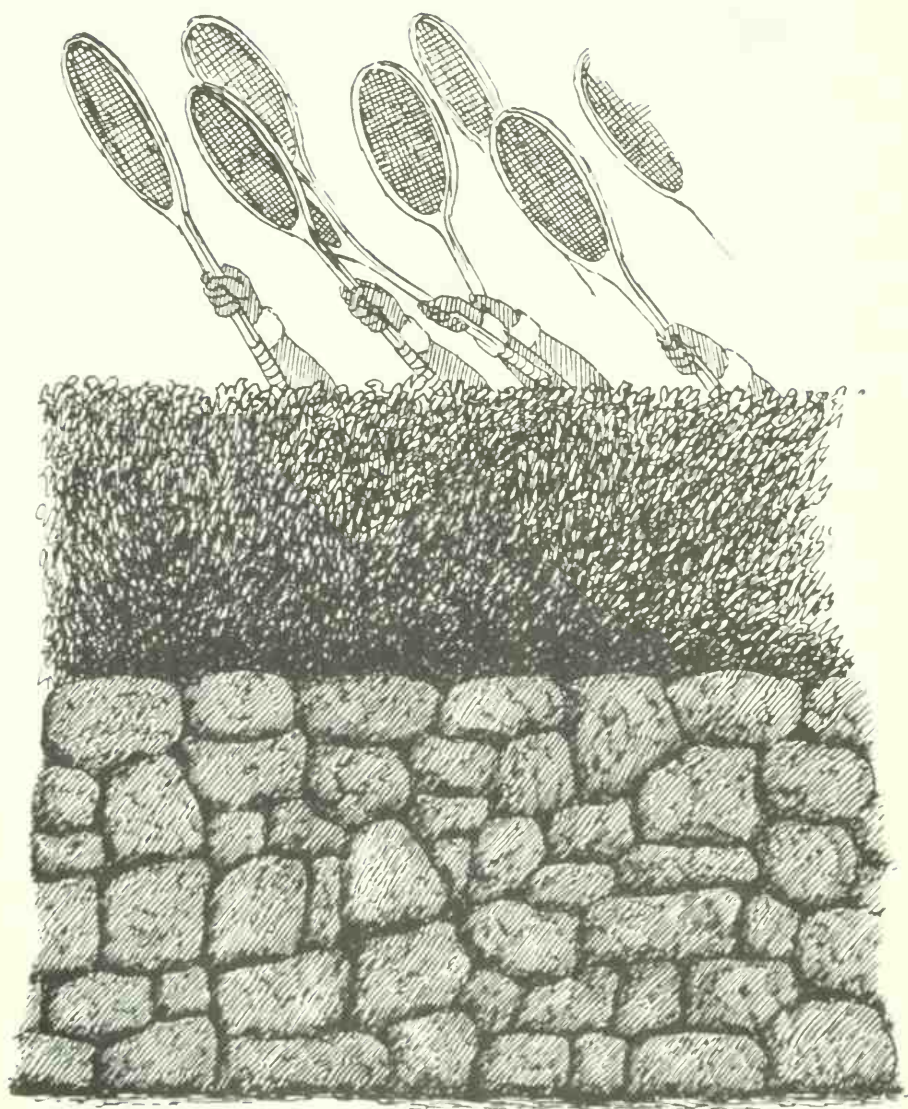


HISTORICAL SURVEY

It seems odd
That whenever man chooses
To play God—
God loses.

OF CONTEMPT COURT





*Three evocations of the Poet Laureate
of the sport, Alfred Lord Tennyson*

I. THE CHARGE OF THE
WHITE BRIGADE

Half the world, half the world,
Half the world's flipping,
Crazed by the tennis bug's
Feverish nipping.
Endlessly dreaming of
Creaming a foe six-love
Onto the *champs d'honneur*
Millions come tripping.

Sweat-banded, ankle-strapped,
Blistered, parboiled and chapped,
Muscles tight, faces rapt,
Eyes full of wonder,
Dancing their strange gavottes,
Hatching strategic plots,
Planning to make their shots
Volley and thunder.

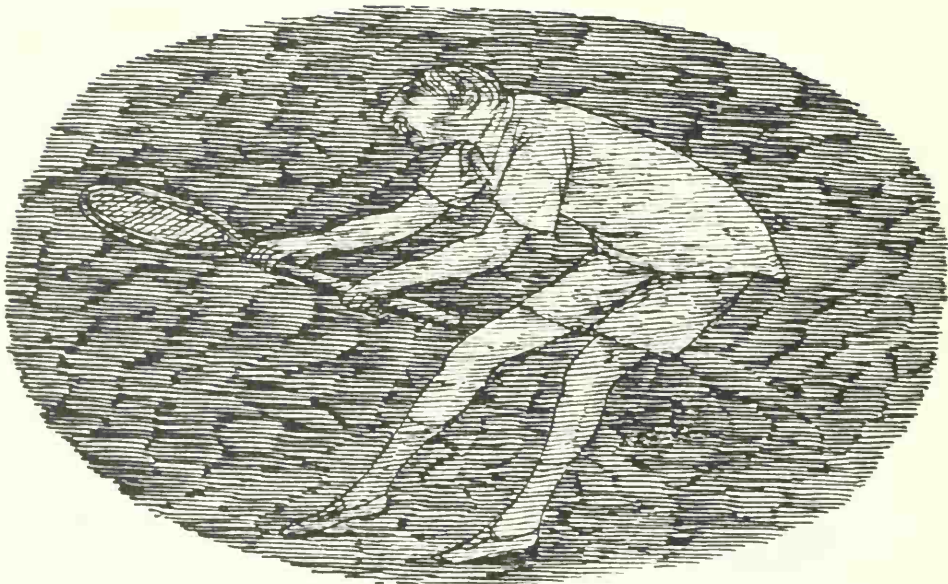
Honor the White Brigade,
Stalwart and unafraid,
Slurping their gatorade
 After a rally.

Upward and on they barge.
Sporting goods shops enlarge
Finding the massive charge
 Right up their alley.



II. GALA DAY

My strength is as the strength of ten
My serve is in the groove,
I will not lose to you again
As I shall shortly prove.
You've been triumphant in the past,
The undisputed champ.
Today this worm will turn at last:
I'm fresh from tennis camp.



III. SHOTS IN THE DARK

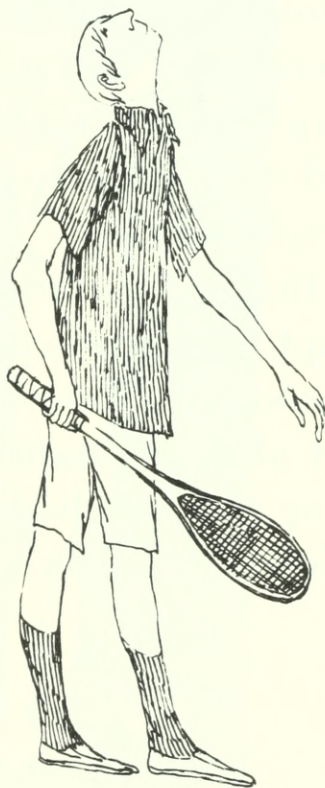
Sunset and the eventide
And one more set to play:
They cannot stop until the shadows hide
The chalk that limns the clay.

They'll stand upon the baseline face to face
In fast-congealing sweat
Each dreaming he will serve that set-point ace
And leap across the net.

What matter if the sable darkness fall,
Wives fret and dinners char?
When done at last, they'll have themselves a ball
With last shots at the bar.

CLOBBER THE LOBBER

slobs
who
tennis
with
play
the
to
urge
need
to
the
lengthen
from
points
us
with
spare
lofty
0
lobs!



PREPAREDNESS

When you've had yourself accoutered
In the finest tennis clothes
And been sedulously tutored
By the best of tennis pros
And have spent long hours choosing
Among racquets by the score
And have sat up nights perusing
All the books of tennis lore
And have studied drop-shot placement
With devotion that appalls
And worked weekends in your basement
With a Thing that belches balls
And developed comprehension
Of the principles of Zen
To make sure that tennis tension
Won't disrupt your game again
And grown thoroughly familiar
With the art of gamesmanship—
You'll be feeling that much sillier
When you lose the set six-zip.

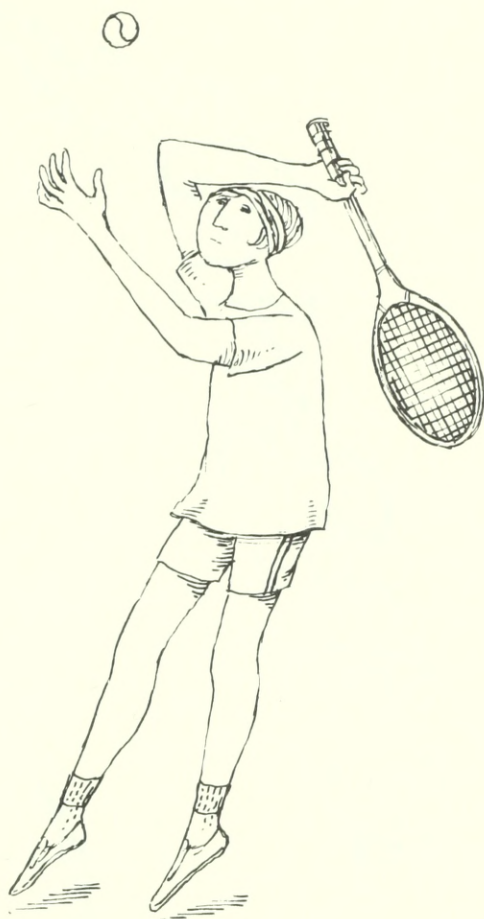


AMERICAN TWIST

A lady named May, although skillful in play,
Had a strange psychological kink:
She never could win when she served to "Ad in"—
Her serve simply went on the blink—
But the masterful clout that she had at "Ad out"
Pulled her rapidly back from the brink.

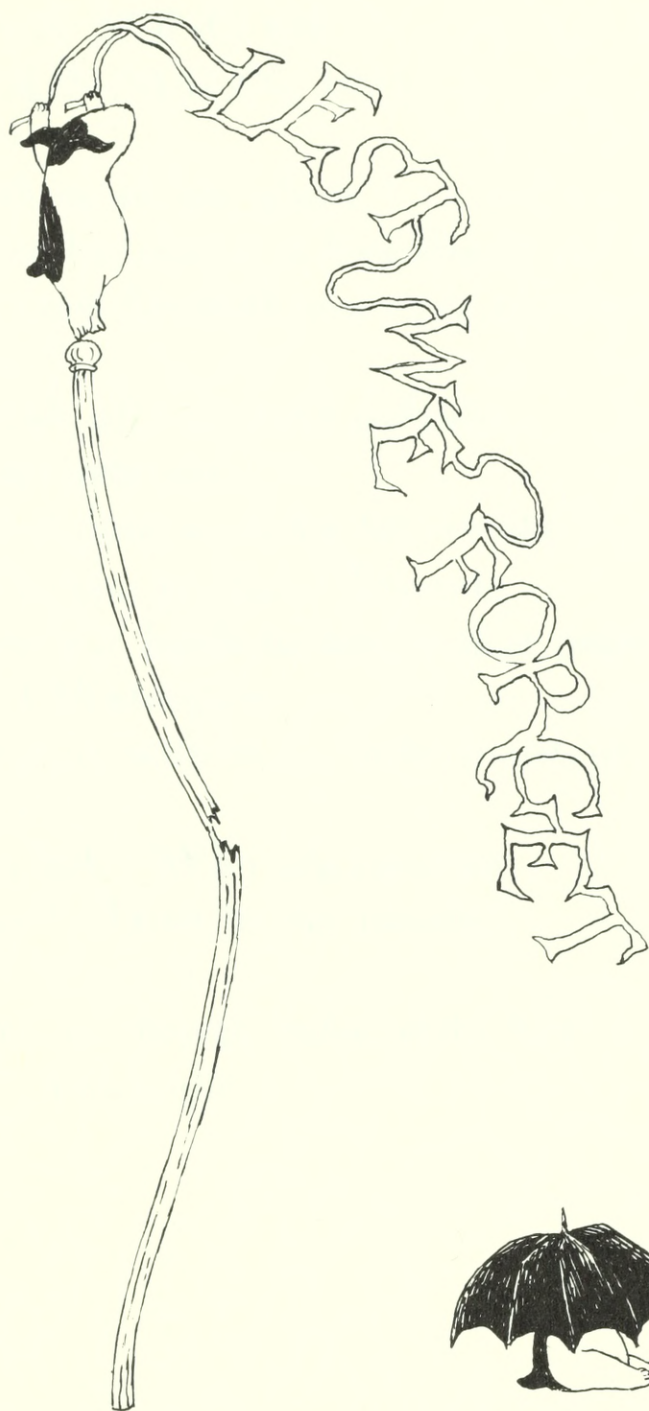
It so often was true that the game-winning coup
Was the one that she couldn't produce
That this quirk in her play gave the lady
named May
The soubriquet: "Irma La Deuce."





PHYSIOLOGICAL NOTE

Let us tell the addled addict as he vainly strives
To play despite his tennis-elbow twinges
That if God had meant us humans to make
backhand drives
He'd have fitted elbows out with nylon hinges.



THE LOVE SONG OF
R. MILHOUS NIXON, 1973

Let us go then, in my plane
For a weekend of repose in Key Biscayne;
When the view beneath our eyes appears
 unstable,
Let us banish all incipient defeats
In one of my retreats.
Come, Bebe! Join in *dolce far niente*
If not in Florida, in San Clemente.
Let us show our heels to media that prate
Endlessly of Watergate,
That plague us with their rude, insistent
 questions.
Oh, do not ask, "Who planned or
Covered up?" Trust in my candor.

In the polls, my image ebbs, sinks low,
Buffeted by imbroglio.

But indeed there will be time
If I tough it out and never lose my cool,
Chanting my old "security" refrain;
There will be time to skim the slime,
Time to purge the scum-filled journalistic pool,
To send my critics swirling down the drain,
Time to nurture apathy
And time yet for a hundred new evasions
And time for many more "alert" occasions:
There'll be no need for me to cop a plea.

In the polls, my image ebbs, sinks low,
Buffeted by imbroglio.

But I have conned them all already, conned
 them all,
Grown skilled in arts of masterly escape;
I have measured out my life in reels of tape.
Equipped with secrets gleaned from bugged call,
There is no foe I cannot undermine
 So why should I resign?

No! I am not an Agnew, though my
 Checkered past
Includes the sour years I suffered through
My unrewarded hopes as Number Two;
Whatever small tax benefits I took
Are inadequate as recompense:
Politics require perspicuity,
Yet any man who has a grain of sense
Lays by a small and safe agnewity.
But I am not a crook.

I keep cool. . . . I keep cool. . . .
I shall have another thousand days to rule.
Shall I let my tapes unroll? Shall I dare
 them to impeach?
I shall triumph thanks to Rose Mary's
 extraordinary reach.
I have heard my staffers peaching each on each.

I do not think that they will peach on me.

I shall weather every crisis that may loom.
What if the secrets writ in milk are spilt
And detente now seems Kissinger-built?
I shall still command the White House
Oval Room.

Disaster cannot hope to bring me down
Unless the Watergates burst open and I drown.

Felicia Lamport's verses have appeared in every national magazine, including *The New Republic*, *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *McCall's*, and *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. She is also the author of *Mink on Week-days*. Ms. Lamport lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Edward Gorey's brilliant drawings have been enjoyed by museumgoers across the country, and his books, including *Amphigorey* and *Amphigorey, Too*, have become collector's items. Mr. Gorey's designs for the successful Broadway revival of *Dracula* and his animated titles for PBS' popular *Mystery* series have received applause from both critics and audiences. He lives on Cape Cod.

jacket design by Edward Gorey

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