

# **CHRISTMAS PUDDING**

**2007**

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Robert Middleton

*Christmas Pudding* is an anthology devoted essentially to aspects of the use of language, particularly in poetry but also in wit and humour. Poetry is a vehicle for sharing ideas and emotions and, as such, is a mark of our civilisation and collective intelligence: it also promotes an understanding of the nature and importance of language, man's highest natural attribute. I am concerned that few people read poetry today and that the contemporary dominance of the visual media poses a threat to our command (and even understanding) of language and to a decline in writing skills.

I was deeply influenced by the teaching and literary criticism of Yvor Winters at Stanford University in the early 1960s, by his rigorous insistence on the distinction between connotation and denotation in poetry and by his moral crusade against the decline of reason as a precept in art and literature (and life) since the end of the eighteenth century. The accompanying relaxation of content and meaning - and subsequent abandonment of form - that characterises verse for the last two hundred years is, at least in part, responsible for a breakdown in communication between writer and reader: today, 'anything goes' - much verse is obscure and, if it were not divided into lines, would be indistinguishable from prose. I share Winters' view that the late sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century was a golden age for English poetry and that the poets of this age developed a 'timeless' medium for poetic expression characterised by the clear communication of ideas and emotion, using words not only for their sound, rhythm and imagery but also to convey meaning. I recognise, however, that the poetry of this period may not be easily accessible to the general reader as a result of unfamiliar contemporary poetic conventions and shifts in the meaning of words. I also dissent from Winters' rather pessimistic view that not much of comparable quality has been produced since. While drawing on poetry of the 'golden age', *Christmas Pudding* aims to identify those later poems that, in my opinion, meet Winters' strict criteria.

In addition to the desire to entertain and amuse, *Christmas Pudding* has thus a serious intent: I aim to include poems that use language in a rational and comprehensible way, that have a clear meaning with a minimum of decoration and cliché and that express feelings we can share. My choice is intended to show that poetry can be (I would even say, should be) a means of communication between normal rational people.

The inspiration for *Christmas Pudding* is *Christmas Crackers*, an anthology of wisdom, wit and linguistic surprise collected by the distinguished scholar John Julius Norwich. I have tried to emulate his mixture of humour and erudition, although a significant part of my raw material is drawn from the more mundane spheres of e-mail and the Internet. My title seems to me apposite: a Christmas pudding is full of varied, interesting and sometimes surprising ingredients, is well-rounded, requires a considerable amount of stirring in its preparation, is still good a long time after the first serving and is not heavy if enjoyed sparingly. Moreover, a pudding is the least pretentious of dishes, acknowledging Norwich's superior recipe.



***Pieter Bruegel the Elder (c. 1525-1569) – ‘Le pays de Cocagne’***

Eine Gegend heisst Schlaraffenland,  
den faulen Leuten wohlbekannt;  
die liegt drei Meilen hinter Weihnachten. ***Hans Sachs (1494-1576)***

Wine doth enlarge and ease our minds –  
Who freely drinks, no thralldom finds. ***Robert Heath (fl. 1650)***

Why has our poetry eschewed  
The rapture and response of food?  
What hymns are sung and praises said  
For the home-made miracle of bread? ***Louis Untermeyer (1885-1977)***

Drum hab ich mir auch stets gedacht  
zu Haus und anderwärts:  
Wer einen guten Braten macht,  
hat auch ein gutes Herz. ***Wilhelm Busch (1832-1908)***

Dites-moi ce que vous mangez, je vous dirai qui vous êtes. ***Anthelme Brillat-Savarin (1755-1826)***

There is no sincerer love than the love of food. ***George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)***

What I say is that, if a man really likes potatoes, he must be a pretty decent sort of fellow. ***A. A. Milne (1882-1956)***

# CHRISTMAS PUDDING 2007

Christmas Pudding 2007 is devoted mainly to what, in the days before cholesterol, lung cancer and draconian penalties for driving while over the *promille* alcohol limit, used to be called 'good living'. Alexander Woollcott, a critic for *The New Yorker*, observed prophetically in the 1920s: "All the things I really like are either immoral, illegal or fattening." Over the centuries, however, 'good living' has been celebrated by some pleasant and often witty poetry, among which some of our favourite Christmas songs.

We wish you a Merry Christmas / .../ .../  
and a Happy New Year.

Good tidings we bring to you and your kin;  
Good tidings for Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Oh, bring us a figgy pudding<sup>1</sup>  
And a cup of good cheer.

Good tidings ...

We won't go until we get some  
so bring some out here.

Good tidings ...

We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Come landlord fill the flowing bowl until it doth run over / .../  
For tonight we'll merry merry be, / .../ .../ Tomorrow we'll be sober

The man who'd kiss the pretty girl and go and tell his mother  
Ought to have his lips cut off and never kiss another

The man who drinks his small ale and goes to bed right sober  
Fades as the leaves do fade and drop off in October

But the man who drinks his real ale and goes to bed right mellow  
Lives as he ought to live and dies a jolly good fellow.

*Schlaraffenland* in German, *Luilekkerland* in Dutch, *Pays de Cocagne* in French and, more prosaically, *Fool's Paradise* in English – the biblical land of 'milk and honey' – all describe what was essentially a late medieval dream of plenty and leisure at a time when most people went hungry and spent almost all of their waking hours at unrelenting manual work. Burl Ives, who, with Woody Guthrie, Cisco Houston, Pete Seeger, the Weavers and others, led the 1950s renaissance in 'folk' singing in North America, sang memorably of such a place:

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<sup>1</sup> This song probably dates from the sixteenth century and refers to the tradition of giving Christmas treats to carol singers. A 'figgy pudding' is similar to today's Christmas Pudding.

### **Hobo's Song**

On a summer's day in the month of May  
A burly bum came a-hiking  
Down a shady lane through the sugar cane,  
He was looking for his liking.  
As he roamed along he sang a song  
Of a land of milk and honey  
Where a bum can stay for many a day,  
And he won't need any money.

Oh the buzzing of the bees in the cigarette trees,  
By the soda water fountains,  
By the lemonade springs where the bluebird sings,  
In the Big Rock Candy Mountains.

In the Big Rock Candy Mountains  
the cops have wooden legs,  
the bulldogs all have rubber teeth  
and the hens lay soft-boiled eggs.  
The farmers' trees are full of fruit  
and the barns are full of hay -  
I want to go where there ain't no snow,  
where the sleet don't swirl and the wind don't blow  
in the Big Rock Candy Mountains.

Oh the buzzing ....

In the Big Rock Candy Mountains  
You never change your socks,  
Little streams of alcohol  
Come trickling down the rocks.  
Oh the shacks all have to tip their hats,  
And the railroad bulls are blind,        *['shacks' and 'bulls' = train guards]*  
There's a lake of stew and whiskey too,  
And you can paddle all around it in a big canoe.  
In the Big Rock Candy Mountains.

Oh the buzzing ....

In the Big Rock Candy Mountains  
The jails are made of tin,  
You can slip right out again  
As soon as they put you in.  
There ain't no short handled shovels,  
No axes, saws nor picks.  
I'm bound to stay where you sleep all day.  
Where they hung the jerk who invented work,  
In the Big Rock Candy Mountains.

Oh the buzzing ....

If you heard Burl Ives sing it, you must remember the inimitable way he made an upward *glissando* on the word ‘buzzing’ at the start of the refrain. A 20<sup>th</sup> century poet, whose work is virtually forgotten today, wrote something similar:

**Tony O - Colin Francis (1905- ?)**

Over the bleak and barren snow

A voice there came a-calling;

“Where are you going to, Tony-O!

Where are you going this morning?”

“I am going where there are rivers of wine,

The mountains bread and honey;

There Kings and Queens do mind the swine,

And the poor have all the money.”

T T T T

**Bill and Doris – *In memoriam***

**Beim Schlafengehen - Hermann Hesse (1877-1962)**

<p>Nun der Tag mich müd gemacht, soll mein sehnliches Verlangen freundlich die gestirnte Nacht wie ein müdes Kind empfangen.</p> <p>Hände, lasst von allem Tun, Stirn, vergiss du alles Denken, alle meine Sinne nun wollen sich in Schlummer senken.</p> <p>Und die Seele unbewacht will in freien Flügen schweben, um im Zauberkreis der Nacht tief und tausendfach zu leben.</p>	<p>Now the day has made me weary, and in my ardent yearning I welcome the starlit night like a tired child.</p> <p>Hands, cease all work, head, abandon all thought - all my senses now long to sink in slumber.</p> <p>And the unguarded soul longs to soar in free flight, and in the magic circle of the night profoundly and a thousandfold to live.</p>
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T T T T

As noted by Hans Sachs in the quotation on the frontispiece, *Schlaraffenland* is three miles from Christmas and it is also, of course, close to *Cloud-Cuckoo-Land*, known in Germany as *Wolkenkuckucksheim*.<sup>2</sup> If *Schlaraffenland* was a medieval construct, *Cloud-Cuckoo-Land*, despite its Greek ancestry, is definitely modern and seems to be inhabited nowadays mainly by English-speaking politicians (some of whom speak better English than others). Witness the conclusions of the following

<sup>2</sup> The French, to their credit, get no closer than *Châteaux en Espagne*, while the Russians talk more specifically about ‘Potemkin villages’. (The original *Nephelokokkygia* / νεφελοκουγία is found in Aristophanes’ play *The Birds*.)

extract from an article by David Leonhardt in *The New York Times* of 17 January 2007.

### **What \$1.2 Trillion Can Buy**

The human mind isn't very well equipped to make sense of a figure like \$1.2 trillion. We don't deal with a trillion of anything in our daily lives, and so when we come across such a big number, it is hard to distinguish it from any other big number. Millions, billions, a trillion – they all start to sound the same.

The way to come to grips with \$1.2 trillion is to forget about the number itself and think instead about what you could buy with the money. When you do that, a trillion stops sounding anything like millions or billions.

For starters, \$1.2 trillion would pay for an unprecedented public health campaign – a doubling of cancer research funding, treatment for every American whose diabetes or heart disease is now going unmanaged and a global immunization campaign to save millions of children's lives.

Combined, the cost of running those programs for a decade wouldn't use up even half our money pot. So we could then turn to poverty and education, starting with universal preschool for every 3- and 4-year-old child across the country. The city of New Orleans could also receive a huge increase in reconstruction funds.

The final big chunk of the money could go to national security. The recommendations of the 9/11 Commission that have not been put in place – better baggage and cargo screening, stronger measures against nuclear proliferation – could be enacted. Financing for the war in Afghanistan could be increased to beat back the Taliban's recent gains, and a peacekeeping force could put a stop to the genocide in Darfur.

All that would be one way to spend \$1.2 trillion. Here would be another: The war in Iraq.

In the days before the war almost five years ago, the Pentagon estimated that it would cost about \$50 billion. Democratic staff members in Congress largely agreed. Lawrence Lindsey, a White House economic adviser, was a bit more realistic, predicting that the cost could go as high as \$200 billion, but President Bush fired him in part for saying so. . . . .

Three weeks later, *The Guardian* carried an article under the following headline:

Bush slashes aid to poor to boost Iraq war chest: Bill for Iraq conflict will soon overtake Vietnam – \$78bn squeeze on medical care for elderly and poor.

Do some contemporary political leaders never listen to public opinion? Or are their ears blocked with some kind of petroleum derivate? I have never understood why – whatever outrage his subsequent career may have deserved – former German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder's opposition to the Iraq war was (and still is) derided as 'opportunistic' – where does opportunism start and listening to public opinion stop? A price will be paid at the ballot box in due course, but it will be too late for the more than 4,000 US fatalities, the 80,000 Iraqi dead and the

40,000 maimed and injured US troops whose lives are likely to be permanently ruined,<sup>3</sup> about whom much less was heard until the squalor of their hospital facilities was finally discovered (no one even attempts to assess the number of Iraqi maimed and wounded).

A BBC headline on 6 August 2007 read “The US military cannot account for 190,000 AK-47 assault rifles and pistols given to the Iraqi security forces, an official US report says.” As if this folly was not enough, the following was reported in *The Washington Post* of 7 February 2007:

House Democrats criticized former Iraq occupation administrator L. Paul Bremer yesterday for disbursing nearly \$9 billion in Iraqi oil revenue without instituting accounting systems to track more carefully how Iraqi officials were using that money.

In a five-hour hearing, Democratic members of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee probed whether the money, which was provided to Iraqi government agencies to pay salaries and fund other operations in 2003 and 2004, was spent properly. The Democrats cited an audit conducted two years ago by the special inspector general for Iraq's reconstruction that found that Bremer's Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) engaged in “less than adequate” managerial and financial control of the money.

The funds were provided to the Iraqis in cash, often in shrink-wrapped packages of \$100 bills. The committee's chairman, Rep. Henry A. Waxman (D-Calif.), said the U.S. government flew nearly \$12 billion in cash into Baghdad on military cargo planes from May 2003 to June 2004.

“Who in their right mind would send 363 tons of cash into a war zone? But that's exactly what our government did,” Waxman said. Because of the way the CPA kept track of the payments, Waxman said, “we have no way of knowing whether the cash shipped into the Green Zone ended up in enemy hands.”

And does the UK really need to spend £20 billion on a renewed nuclear deterrent? To deter whom? At a time when, according to a UNICEF report, it comes bottom of a league table for child well-being across 21 industrialised countries? *Cloud-Cuckoo-Land* is alive and well and playing in a theatre near you.

T T T T

Here are some poems on food from Chaucer to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; I have made a separate section for the (much more numerous) poems on drink.

**Canterbury Tales - Prologue - Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1343-1400)**

A Cook they hadde with hem for the nones  
To boile the chiknes with the marybones,

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<sup>3</sup> See [www.iraqbodycount.net](http://www.iraqbodycount.net), [www.globalsecurity.org/](http://www.globalsecurity.org/) and <http://icasualties.org/oif>. According to *The Washington Post* (8 April 2007), up to a third of all combat forces in Iraq are at risk of debilitating traumatic brain injuries from roadside explosions. See <http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/full/352/20/2043>.



And poudre-marchant tart and galyngale.  
Wel koude he knowe a draughte of Londoun ale.  
He koude rooste, and sethe, and broille, and frye,  
Maken mortreux, and wel bake a pye.  
But greet harm was it, as it thoughte me,  
That on his shyne a mormal hadde he.  
For blankmanger, that made he with the beste.

**Hymn - Ben Jonson (1572-1637)**

Room, room! make room for the bouncing belly,  
First father of sauce, and deviser of jelly,  
Prime master of arts, and the giver of wit,  
That found out the excellent engine, the spit,  
The plough and the flail, the mill and the hopper,  
The hutch, and the bolter, the furnace and copper,  
The oven, the bavin, the mawkin, the peel,  
The hearth and the range, the clog and the wheel,  
He, he first invented the hogshead and tun,  
The gimlet and vice, too, and taught them to run.  
And since, with the funnel, and Hippocras bag  
He's made of himself, that now he cries swag.  
Which shows, though the pleasure be but of four inches,  
Yet he is a weasel, the gullet that pinches,  
Of much delight, and not spares from the back  
Whatever to make of the belly a sack.  
Hail, hail, plump paunch! O the founder of taste  
For fresh meats, or powdered, or pickle, or paste;  
Devourer of broiled, baked, roasted, or sod,  
And emptier of cups, be they even or odd;  
All which have made thee so wide in the waist  
As scarce with no pudding thou art to be laced;  
But eating and drinking until thou dost nod,  
Thou break'st all thy girdles, and break'st forth, a God.

**Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586)**

Who will in fairest book of nature know  
How virtue may best lodged in beauty be,  
Let him but learn of love to read in thee,  
Stella, those fair lines which true goodness show.  
There shall he find all vices' overthrow,  
Not by rude force, but sweetest sovereignty  
Of reason, from whose light those night-birds fly;  
That inward sun in thine eyes shineth so.  
And, not content to be perfection's heir  
Thyself, dost strive all minds that way to move,  
Who mark in thee what is in thee most fair.  
So while thy beauty draws thy heart to love,  
As fast thy virtue bends that love to good:

But “Ah,” Desire still cries, “Give me some food!”

I suspect that in the last line of this sonnet Sidney is not stating his preference for food over love but rather wishing a different kind of consummation – but the line strikes a pleasant chord. The following sonnet by John Davies of Hereford (1563?-1618) is rather less ambiguous.

*The author loving these homely meats specially, viz: cream, pancakes, buttered pippin-pies (laugh, good people) and tobacco; writ to that worthy and virtuous gentlewoman, whom he calleth mistress, as followeth*

If there were, oh! an Hellespont of cream  
Between us, milk-white mistress, I would swim  
To you, to show to both my love's extreme,  
Leander-like, - yea! dive from brim to brim.  
But met I with a buttered pippin-pie  
Floating upon't, that would I make my boat  
To waft me to you without jeopardy,  
Though sea-sick I might be while it did float.  
Yet if a storm should rise, by night or day,  
Of sugar-snows and hail of caraways,  
Then, if I found a pancake in my way,  
It like a plank should bring me to your kays;  
Which having found, if they tobacco kept,  
The smoke should dry me well before I slept.

The following poem (*Christmas Cheer*) is by Thomas Tusser (1524–1580), an English farmer-poet, probably best known as the originator of the saying “a fool and his money are soon parted.” In 1557 he published an instructional poem entitled *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry*.

Good husband and huswife, now chiefly be glad,  
Things handsome to have, as they ought to be had.  
They both do provide, against Christmas do come,  
To welcome their neighbours, good cheer to have some.  
Good bread and good drink, a good fire in the hall,  
Brawn, pudding, and souse, and good mustard withal.  
Beef, mutton, and pork, and good pies of the best,  
Pig, veal, goose, and capon, and turkey well drest,  
Cheese, apples and nuts, and good carols to hear,  
As then in the country is counted good cheer.  
What cost to good husband, is any of this?  
Good household provision only it is:  
Of other the like, I do leave out a many,  
That costeth the husband never a penny.

James Quin (1693-1766), an English actor of Irish descent, is today remembered less than his contemporary David Garrick, but he left some memorable witty poems such as the following.

**On Seeing the Embalmed Body of Duke Humphrey at St. Alban's**  
 A Plague on Egypt's arts, I say –  
 Embalm the dead – on senseless clay  
 Rich wine and spices waste:  
 Like sturgeon, or like brawn, shall I,  
 Bound in a precious pickle lie,  
 Which I can never taste!  
 Let me embalm this flesh of mine,  
 With turtle fat, and Bourdeaux wine,  
 And spoil the Egyptian trade,  
 Than Glo'ster's Duke, more happy I,  
 Embalmed alive, old Quin shall lie  
 A mummy ready made.

Until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century notion that poetry should be about romantic or 'higher' feelings, poems were written to celebrate just about anything. For example:

**To The Immortal Memory of the Halibut, On Which I Dined  
 This Day, Monday, April 26, 1784 - William Cowper (1731-1800)**  
 Where hast thou floated, in what seas pursued  
 Thy pastime? When wast thou an egg new spawned,  
 Lost in the immensity of ocean's waste?  
 Roar as they might, the overbearing winds  
 That rocked the deep, thy cradle, thou wast safe –  
 And in thy minikin and embryo state,  
 Attached to the firm leaf of some salt weed,  
 Didst outlive tempests, such as wrung and racked  
 The joints of many a stout and gallant bark,  
 And whelmed them in the unexplored abyss.  
 Indebted to no magnet and no chart,  
 Nor under guidance of the polar fire,  
 Thou wast a voyager on many coasts,  
 Grazing at large in meadows submarine,  
 Where flat Batavia just emerging peeps  
 Above the brine, – where Caledonia's rocks  
 Beat back the surge, – and where Hibernia shoots  
 Her wondrous causeway far into the main.  
 Wherever thou hast fed, thou little thoughtest,  
 And I not more, that I should feed on thee.  
 Peace, therefore, and good health, and much good fish,  
 To him who sent thee! and success, as oft  
 As it descends into the billowy gulf,  
 To the same drag that caught thee! – Fare thee well!  
 Thy lot thy brethren of the slimy fin  
 Would envy, could they know that thou wast doomed  
 To feed a bard, and to be praised in verse.

**A Recipe for a Salad - *Sydney Smith* (1771-1845)**

To make this condiment, your poet begs  
The pounded yellow of two hard-boiled eggs;  
Two boiled potatoes, passed through kitchen sieve,  
Smoothness and softness to the salad give.  
Let onion atoms lurk within the bowl,  
And, half suspected, animate the whole.  
Of mordant mustard add a single spoon,  
Distrust the condiment that bites so soon;  
But deem it not, thou man of herbs, a fault,  
To add a double quantity of salt.  
Four times the spoon with oil from Lucca brown,  
And twice with vinegar procured from town;  
And, lastly, o'er the flavoured compound toss  
A magic soupçon of anchovy sauce.  
O, green and glorious! O herbaceous treat!  
'T would tempt the dying anchorite to eat:  
Back to the world he'd turn his fleeting soul,  
And plunge his fingers in the salad bowl!  
Serenely full, the epicure would say,  
"Fate cannot harm me, I have dined to-day."

**To a Goose - *Robert Southey* (1774-1843)**

If thou didst feed on western plains of yore;  
Or waddle wide with flat and flabby feet  
Over some Cambrian mountain's plashy moor;  
Or find in farmer's yard a safe retreat  
From gipsy thieves, and foxes sly and fleet;  
If thy grey quills, by lawyer guided, trace  
Deeds big with ruin to some wretched race,  
Or love-sick poet's sonnet, sad and sweet,  
Wailing the rigour of his lady fair;  
Or if, the drudge of housemaid's daily toil,  
Cobwebs and dust thy pinions white besoil,  
Departed Goose! I neither know nor care.  
But this I know, that thou wert very fine,  
Seasoned with sage and onions, and port wine.

Thomas Hood (1799-1845) was another who did not share the romantic concepts of much 19<sup>th</sup> century poetry. In addition to serious poetry about contemporary social conditions – such as *The Song of the Shirt*, attacking the exploitation of seamstresses – he also wrote much witty verse, including this sonnet:

***Sweets to the sweet – farewell. Hamlet***

Time was I liked a cheesecake well enough –  
All human children have a sweetish taste;  
I used to revel in a pie, or puff,  
Or tart – we all were *Tartars* in our youth;

To meet with jam or jelly was good luck,  
 All candies most complacently I crumped,  
 A stick of liquorice was good to suck,  
 And sugar was as often liked as lumped!  
 On treacle's "linkèd sweetness long drawn out," <sup>4</sup>  
 Or honey I could feast like any fly;  
 I thrilled when lollipops were hawked about;  
 How pleased to compass hard-bake or bull's-eye;  
 How charmed if Fortune in my power cast  
 Elecampane – but that campaign is past.

[*crunched*]

William Makepeace Thackeray is best known as a novelist, but also wrote witty poetry. The title of the following poem ('I hate Persians') is taken from a famous ode by Horace (1.38), that deprecates the luxury and ostentation that the Romans associated with the Persians – it was frequently parodied.

**Persicos Odi - William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863)**

Dear Lucy, you know what my wish is, –  
 I hate all your Frenchified fuss:  
 Your silly entrées and made dishes  
 Were never intended for us.  
 No footman in lace and in ruffles  
 Need dangle behind my arm-chair;  
 And never mind seeking for truffles,  
 Although they be ever so rare.  
 But a plain leg of mutton, my Lucy,  
 I pr'ythee get ready at three:  
 Have it smoking, and tender, and juicy,  
 And what better meat can here be?  
 And when it has feasted the master,  
 'Twill amply suffice for the maid;  
 Meanwhile I will smoke my canaster,  
 And tipple my ale in the shade.

T T T T

**Art Buchwald**, with whom we started *Christmas Pudding 2006*, died in January 2007 and his wit and humour will be much missed. He knew a great deal about good living and in the early 1970s wrote an unforgettable piece about wine-tasting.

***It Puckers Your Mouth*** - As a guest of Alexis Lichine, proprietor of the Château Prieuré-Lichine and Lascombes, I spent a few days in Bordeaux watching one of the great vintages being brought in. M. Lichine promised to take me on a tour of the Médoc and we started, quite naturally, with his own Château Lascombes. He told me that in the course of the tour I would be asked to taste some wines and he didn't want me to disgrace him.

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<sup>4</sup> The reference is to Milton's *L'Allegro*, line 71.

I practiced by tasting some wines from one of his vats. It tasted good, and I swallowed it. “No, no, no,” he said. “Don’t swallow it. Swish it around in your mouth.” “Clockwise or counterclockwise?” “Clockwise. Counterclockwise is for Burgundy. And then spit it on the floor.”

I practiced a few times until I got it right.

“Now say something,” he said. “It puckers the inside of your mouth.” “No, that’s not what you’re supposed to say,” M. Lichine cried. “You’re supposed to say something beautiful like ‘how full and generous. It will fulfill its promise.’”

“Okay, but it still puckers the inside of your mouth.”

Our first stop was Château Margaux, one of the four greatest wine châteaux in France. We visited the chai, the long shed where the grapes are put in vats and barrels. The master of the chai asked me if I wanted to taste some. I nodded, and he gave me a glass.

I swished it around, then spat it out. Lichine looked pleased at his pupil. “It has a texture all its own,” I said. “It tastes like cotton”

Lichine kicked me in the leg. “What he means,” he said to the master, “is that it tastes like velvet.”

After we were shown around the château (I discovered that no one in Bordeaux presses wine in their bare feet any more), Lichine took me to the Château Latour, another of the four greatest vineyards in France.

I tasted the Latour wine and said “A great wine. It has such a rich, soft flavor.”

Lichine smiled.

“Could I have some water?” I asked of the owner, Count Hubert de Beaumont.

Lichine’s face dropped. “Water?” The Count looked puzzled. “Do you want to wash your hands?”

Before I could say I wanted to drink the water, Lichine dragged me away.

“Never, never, never ask for water in Bordeaux,” he admonished me.

“But I tell you my mouth is all puckered up. My cheeks are stuck to my teeth.”

Lichine would have none of it.

The last château we visited belonged to Philippe de Rothschild. M. Rothschild, a gracious host, showed us through his caves, and invited us to have a glass of champagne with him in his house, one of the most beautiful in France.

We went upstairs and a servant served us each a bubbling glass. Lichine toasted his host and we each sipped some. Then as Lichine looked on in horror, I swished it around in my mouth.

He screamed: “No!” But it was too late. I had already spit it on the floor.

T T T T

**Raisin Pie - Edgar Guest (1881-1959)**

There's a heap of pent-up goodness in the yellow bantam corn,  
 And I sort o' like to linger round a berry patch at morn;  
 Oh, the Lord has set our table with a stock o' things to eat  
 An' there's just enough o' bitter in the blend to cut the sweet,  
 But I run the whole list over, an' it seems somehow that I  
 Find the keenest sort o' pleasure in a chunk o' raisin pie.  
 There are pies that start the water circulatin' in the mouth;  
 There are pies that wear the flavor of the warm an' sunny south;  
 Some with oriental spices spur the drowsy appetite  
 An' just fill a fellow's being with a thrill o' real delight;  
 But for downright solid goodness that comes drippin' from the sky  
 There is nothing quite the equal of a chunk o' raisin pie.  
 I'm admittin' tastes are diff' runt, I'm not settin' up myself  
 As the judge an' final critic of the good things on the shelf.  
 I'm sort o' payin' tribute to a simple joy on earth,  
 Sort o' feebly testifyin' to its lasting charm an' worth,  
 An' I'll hold to this conclusion till it comes my time to die,  
 That there's no dessert that's finer than a chunk o' raisin pie.

**The Gourmet's Love-Song - P.G. Wodehouse (1881-1975)**

How strange is Love: I am not one  
 Who Cupid's power belittles,  
 For Cupid 'tis who makes me shun  
 My customary victuals.  
 Oh, Effie, since that painful scene  
 That left me broken-hearted,  
 My appetite, erstwhile so keen,  
 Has utterly departed.  
 My form, my friends observe with pain,  
 Is growing daily thinner.  
 Love only occupies the brain  
 That once could think of dinner.  
 Around me myriad waiters flit,  
 With meat and drink to ply men;  
 Alone, disconsolate, I sit,  
 And feed on thoughts of Hymen.  
 The kindly waiters hear my groan,  
 They strive to charm with curry;  
 They tempt me with a devilled bone –  
 I beg them not to worry.  
 Soup, whitebait, entrées, fricassées,  
 They bring me uninvited.  
 I need them not, for what are these  
 To one whose life is blighted?  
 They show me dishes rich and rare,

But ah! my pulse no joy stirs,  
For savouries I've ceased to care,  
I hate the thought of oysters.  
They bring me roast, they bring me boiled,  
But all in vain they woo me;  
The waiters softly mutter, 'Foiled!'  
The chef, poor man, looks gloomy.  
So, Effie, turn that shell-like ear,  
Nor to my sighing close it,  
You cannot doubt that I'm sincere –  
This ballad surely shows it.  
No longer spurn the suit I press,  
Respect my agitation,  
Do change your mind, and answer, 'Yes',  
And save me from starvation.

**Dinner in a Quick Lunch Room - *Stephen Vincent Benet (1898-1943)***

Soup should be heralded with a mellow horn,  
Blowing clear notes of gold against the stars;  
Strange entrees with a jangle of glass bars  
Fantastically alive with subtle scorn;  
Fish, by a plopping, gurgling rush of waters,  
Clear, vibrant waters, beautifully austere;  
Roast, with a thunder of drums to stun the ear,  
A screaming fife, a voice from ancient slaughters!  
Over the salad let the woodwinds moan;  
Then the green silence of many watercresses;  
Dessert, a balalaika, strummed alone;  
Coffee, a slow, low singing no passion stresses;  
Such are my thoughts as – clang! crash! bang! – I brood  
And gorge the sticky mess these fools call food!

**A Song of Gluttony - *E.O. Parrott (1924-)***

There's nothing so delightful as a gorgeous spot of gluttony:  
Roast beefery or porkery, or caper-sauce-and-muttony.  
Not a thing I let intrude upon the sacred rite of food;  
I've never had enough till I'm undoing the top-buttony.

I haven't any patience with this modern vice of snackery.  
Meals ought to be Falstaffian, with venison and sackery.  
I love to read accounts of the Pickwickian amounts  
Of food they eat in novels both Dickensian and Thackeray.

There's nothing quite so scrumptious as frying food, rich batterly,  
And following with creamy sweets, and cheeses on a platterly.  
Had a certain fair young maid to this sin obeisance paid,  
There'd have never been this scandal in the woods with Lady Chatterley.



**A Rondeau - William Ernest Henley (1849-1903)**

With strawberries we filled a tray,  
And then we drove away, away  
Along the links beside the sea,  
Where wave and wind were light and free,  
And August felt as fresh as May.  
And where the springy turf was gay  
With thyme and balm and many a spray  
Of wild roses, you tempted me  
With strawberries.  
A shadowy sail, silent and grey,  
Stole like a ghost across the bay;  
But none could hear me ask my fee,  
And none could know what came to be.  
Can sweethearts all their thirst allay  
With strawberries?

I suspect that Henley, like Sir Philip Sydney in the sonnet on pages 6-7, had more than strawberries. Ogden Nash, on the other hand, is clear about his priorities.

**The Clean Plater - Ogden Nash (1902-1970)**

Some singers sing of ladies' eyes,  
And some of ladies lips,  
Refined ones praise their ladylike ways,  
And coarse 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 pâté 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.  
Though 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.

**This Bread I Break - *Dylan Thomas (1914-1953)***

This bread I break was once the oat,  
This wine upon a foreign tree  
Plunged in its fruit;  
Man in the day or wind at night  
Laid the crops low, broke the grape's joy.  
  
Once in this wine the summer blood  
Knocked in the flesh that decked the vine,  
Once in this bread  
The oat was merry in the wind;  
Man broke the sun, pulled the wind down.  
  
This flesh you break, this blood you let  
Make desolation in the vein,  
Were oat and grape  
Born of the sensual root and sap;  
My wine you drink, my bread you snap.

**Coffee - J.V. Cunningham (1927-1988)**

When I awoke with cold  
And looked for you, my dear,  
And the dusk inward rolled,  
Not light or dark, but drear,

Unabsolute, unshaped,  
That no glass can oppose,  
I fled not to escape  
Myself, but to transpose.

I have so often fled  
Wherever I could drink  
Dark coffee and there read  
More than a man would think

That I say I waste time  
For contemplation's sake;  
In an uncumbered clime  
Minute inductions wake,

Insight flows in my pen.  
I know nor fear nor haste.  
Time is my own again.  
I waste it for the waste.

**Cupid's Nightcap - Stanley J. Sharpless (1910-?)**

Half-past nine - high time for supper  
"Cocoa, love?", "Of course, my dear."  
Helen thinks it quite delicious,  
John prefers it now to beer.  
Knocking back the sepia potion,  
Hubby winks, says, "Who's for bed?"  
"Shan't be long", says Helen softly,  
Cheeks faintly flushing red.  
For they've stumbled on the secret  
Of a love that never wanes.  
Rapt beneath the tumbled bedclothes,  
Cocoa coursing through their veins.

**Wendy Cope (1945-)**

If I went vegetarian  
And didn't eat lambs for dinner,  
I think I'd be a better person  
And also thinner.

But the lamb is not endangered  
And at least I can truthfully say  
I have never, ever eaten a barn owl,  
So perhaps I am OK.

**Song in praise of Paella - C.W.V. Wordsworth (20<sup>th</sup> century)**

Estella, Estella, they're cooking up Paella  
Down in old Valencia among the orange trees.  
Señoras and Señores, Don Pepe and Dolores,  
Are seated round the copper pot with plates upon their knees.

Paella! Paella! Arroz by any other name would never smell as sweet.  
Paella! Paella! Every Spanish girl and feller  
Takes it by the spoonful, every belch is tuneful,  
Takes it by the shovelful to give themselves a treat.

Estella, Estella, you're sweeter than Paella,  
You're cuter than the octopus, the chicken or the fish.  
It's true I love paella, but you come first, Estella,  
After you, Estella, Paella is my dish.

**When Father Carves the Duck<sup>5</sup> - E. V. Wright (1872-1939)**

We all look on with anxious eyes  
When father carves the duck,  
And mother almost always sighs  
When father carves the duck;  
Then all of us prepare to rise,  
And hold our bibs before our eyes,  
And be prepared for some surprise,  
When father carves the duck.

He braces up and grabs a fork  
Whene'er he carves a duck,  
And won't allow a soul to talk  
Until he's carved the duck.  
The fork is jabbed into the sides,  
Across the breast the knife he slides,  
While every careful person hides  
From flying chips of duck.

The platter's always sure to slip  
When father carves a duck,  
And how it makes the dishes skip!  
Potatoes fly amuck!  
The squash and cabbage leap in space,  
We get some gravy in our face,  
And father mutters a Hindoo grace  
Whene'er he carves a duck.

We then have learned to walk around  
The dining room and pluck  
From off the window-sills and walls  
Our share of father's duck.

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<sup>5</sup> With thanks to Fritz Stewart.

While father growls and blows and jaws  
And swears the knife was full of flaws,  
And mother laughs at him because  
He couldn't carve a duck.

**My first love - *Harry Graham (20<sup>th</sup> century)***

I recollect, in early life,  
I loved our local surgeon's wife.

I ate an apple every day,  
To keep the doctor far away!  
Alas! he was a jealous man  
And grew suspicious of my plan.

He'd noticed several pips about  
When taking my appendix out  
(A circumstance that must arouse  
Suspensions in the blindest spouse),

And, though I squared the thing somehow,  
I always eat bananas now!

**Love Is Not All - *Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950)***

Love is not all: it is not meat nor drink  
Nor slumber nor a roof against the rain;  
Nor yet a floating spar to men that sink  
And rise and sink and rise and sink again;  
Love can not fill the thickened lung with breath,  
Nor clean the blood, nor set the fractured bone;  
Yet many a man is making friends with death  
Even as I speak, for lack of love alone.  
It well may be that in a difficult hour,  
Pinned down by pain and moaning for release,  
Or nagged by want past resolution's power,  
I might be driven to sell your love for peace,  
Or trade the memory of this night for food.  
It well may be. I do not think I would.

T T T T

**In 2003** I went to a wonderful exhibition on the sonnet at the New York Public Library, one of the most remarkable of US institutions. The exhibition included a 'skeleton' of a sonnet by Edna St. Vincent Millay, left uncompleted, and invited visitors to try to complete it in her style - have a try:

..... grieve  
..... torn  
..... shorn  
..... bereave  
..... morn,  
..... here forlorn,

..... Eve.  
..... punishment?  
..... within  
..... went,  
..... thin,  
..... spent,  
..... sin  
..... banishment.

T T T T

## Internet Hoaxes

The Internet and e-mail spread not only information, but also disinformation. One of the most useful websites for determining whether some stories are hoaxes or not is [www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com), which specialises in what it calls 'urban legends'. Before forwarding that amusing or interesting story about a little boy suffering from cancer who wants you to send it by e-mail to all your address list because Microsoft will pay money into a charity ... etc, etc., check on *Snopes* whether you have been had.<sup>6</sup> Here are two examples – both hoaxes:

1. The following was described as an 'actual transcript of radio communications between a US naval ship and Canadian authorities off the coast of Newfoundland in October, 1995, released by the Chief of Naval Operations on 10-10-95.' It had a long life, and corresponds perhaps to what we would have liked to have happened, the bossy Americans getting their comeuppance at the hands of the gentler Canadians – the essence of an urban legend.

*Americans:* Please divert your course 15° to the North to avoid a collision.

*Canadians:* Recommend you divert YOUR course 15° to the South to avoid a collision.

*Americans:* This is the captain of a US Navy ship. I say again, divert YOUR course.

*Canadians:* No, I say again, you divert YOUR course.

*Americans:* This is the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln, the second largest ship in the United States' Atlantic fleet. We are accompanied by three destroyers, three cruisers and numerous support vessels. I demand that you change your course 15 degrees north – that's one-five degrees north, or counter measures will be undertaken to ensure the safety of this ship.

*Canadians:* This is a lighthouse. Your call.

2. The 'article' below has circulated widely through e-mails since 2001.

Stella Liebeck was the 81-year-old lady who spilled coffee on herself and sued McDonalds. This case inspired an annual award - the 'Stella' Award - for the most frivolous lawsuits in the U.S. The following are recent candidates:

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<sup>6</sup> With some embarrassment, I admit to having been 'had' in *CP 2003*, in which I included a piece on the *Axis of Evil* supposedly written by John Cleese. It wasn't.

**June 1998:** A 19-year old, Carl Truman, of Los Angeles won \$74,000 and medical expenses when his neighbour ran over his hand with a Honda Accord. Mr. Truman apparently didn't notice there was someone at the wheel of the car, when he was trying to steal his neighbour's hubcaps.

**October 1998:** A Terrence Dickson of Bristol, Pennsylvania was leaving a house he had just finished robbing by way of the garage. He was not able to get the garage door to go up since the automatic door opener was malfunctioning. He couldn't re-enter the house because the door connecting the house and garage locked when he pulled it shut. The family was on vacation. Mr. Dickson found himself locked in the garage for eight days. He subsisted on a case of Pepsi he found, and a large bag of dry dog food. He sued the homeowner's insurance claiming the situation caused him undue mental anguish. The jury agreed to the tune of half a million dollars.

**January 2000:** Kathleen Robertson of Austin Texas was awarded \$780,000 by a jury of her peers after breaking her ankle tripping over a toddler who was running inside a furniture store. The owners of the store were understandably surprised at the verdict, considering the misbehaving child was Ms. Robertson's son.

**November 2000:** Mr. Grasinski purchased a brand new 32 foot Winnebago motor home. On his first trip, having joined the freeway, he set the cruise control at 70 mph and calmly left the driver's seat to go into the back and make himself a cup of coffee. Not surprisingly, the Winnie left the freeway, crashed and overturned. Mr. Grasinski sued Winnebago for not advising him in the handbook that he couldn't actually do this. He was awarded \$1,750,000 plus a new Winnie. *Etc, etc*

With the exception of the reference to a case brought by Stella Liebeck, who genuinely suffered third-degree burns from coffee served by McDonalds at more than 80°C, all the above stories are hoaxes. Their survival as 'urban legends' is most likely related to campaigns for tort reform and to the poor reputation of lawyers in the US – of course undeserved.

T T T T

### **Pass the Port**

A tourist wanders into a back-alley antique shop in San Francisco's Chinatown. Picking through the objects on display he discovers a detailed, life-sized bronze sculpture of a rat. The sculpture is so interesting and unique that he picks it up and asks the shop owner what it costs.

"Twelve dollars for the rat, sir," says the shop owner, "and a thousand dollars more for the story behind it." "You can keep the story, old man," he replies, "but I'll take the rat."

The transaction complete, the tourist leaves the store with the bronze rat under his arm. As he crosses the street in front of the store, two live rats emerge from a sewer drain and fall into step behind him.

Nervously looking over his shoulder, he begins to walk faster, but every time he passes another sewer drain, more rats come out and follow him. By the time he's walked two blocks, at least a hundred rats are at his heels, and people begin to point

and shout. He walks even faster, and soon breaks into a trot as multitudes of rats swarm from sewers, basements, vacant lots, and abandoned cars.

Rats by the thousands are at his heels, and as he sees the waterfront at the bottom of the hill, he panics and starts to run full tilt. No matter how fast he runs, the rats keep up, squealing hideously, now not just thousands but millions, so that by the time he rushes up to the water's edge a trail of rats twelve city blocks long is behind him.

Making a mighty leap, he jumps up onto a lamp post, grasping it with one arm while he hurls the bronze rat into San Francisco Bay with the other, as far as he can heave it. Pulling his legs up and clinging to the light post, he watches in amazement as the seething tide of rats surges over the breakwater into the sea, where they drown.

Shaken and mumbling, he makes his way back to the antique shop. "Ah, so you've come back for the rest of the story," says the owner. "No," says the tourist, "I was wondering if you have a bronze lawyer."

T T T T

## SHORT AND SWEET

*? John Minshew (1560-1627)*

Good wine maketh good blood,  
Good blood causeth good humours,  
Good humours cause good thoughts,  
Good thoughts bring forth good works,  
Good works carry a man to heaven;  
Ergo, Good wine carrieth a man to heaven.

*William Lithgow (1582-1645)*

He that eateth well drinketh well,  
he that drinketh well sleepeth well,  
he that sleepeth well sinneth not,  
he that sinneth not goeth straight through Purgatory to Paradise.

From **The Art of Cookery** - *William King (1663-1712)*

Crowd not your table: let your numbers be  
Not more than seven, and never less than three.

Which brings to mind immediately the official French national standard formula for determining how many bottles of wine to open in advance of a dinner party:  $N-1$ , where  $N$  is the number of people at table.

From **Martial's "Xenia 18"** - *translated by Jonathan Swift (1667-1745)*

This is every cook's opinion -  
No savoury dish without an onion,  
But lest your kissing should be spoiled  
Your onions must be fully boiled.

*Anonymous, c. 1670*

Tea that helps our head and heart.  
Tea medicates most every part.



Tea rejuvenates the very old.  
Tea warms the piss of those who are cold.

**A Scottish Grace - *Anonymous***

Oh Lord, who blessed the loaves and fishes,  
Look doon upon these twa bit dishes,  
And though the taties be but sma',  
Lord, mak 'em plenty for us a';  
But if our stomachs they do fill,  
'Twill be anither miracle.

**From *Trivia* - *John Gay (1685-1732)***

The man sure had a palate covered o'er  
With brass or steel, that on the rocky shore  
First broke the oozy oyster's pearly coat,  
And risked the living morsel down his throat.  
What will not Luxury taste? Earth, sea, and air  
Are daily ransacked for the Bill of Fare.  
Blood stuffed in skins is British Christians food,  
And France robs marshes of the croaking brood;  
Spongy morells in strong ragouts are found,  
And in the soup the slimy snail is drowned.

**The Selkirk Grace - *Robert Burns (1759-1796)***

Some hae meat and canna eat,  
And some wad eat that want it;  
But we hae meat, and we can eat,  
And sae the Lord be thankit.

**Hodge's Grace - *Anonymous***

Heavenly Father bless us,  
And keep us all alive;  
There's ten of us for dinner  
And not enough for five.

***Anonymous - 1880***

I surely never hope to view  
A steak as luscious as a stew.  
The latter is the tasty goal  
Of elements in perfect whole,  
A mad assemblage of legumes  
Exuding warm ambrosial fumes,  
Each seasoning of proper length,  
Proving in Union there's strength.  
A steak is grander, it is true,  
Yet needs no special skill to brew.  
It is an art a stew to make,  
But anyone can broil a steak.

***Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864)***

I entreat you, Alfred Tennyson,  
Come and share my haunch of venison.  
I have too a bin of claret,  
Good, but better when you share it.  
Though 'tis only a small bin,  
There's a stock of it within.  
And as sure as I'm a rhymer,  
Half a butt of Rudesheimer.  
Come; among the sons of men is one  
Welcomer than Alfred Tennyson?

***On A Slope Of Orchard - Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892)***

There on a slope of orchard, Francis laid  
A damask napkin wrought with horse and hound,  
brought out a dusky loaf that smelt of home,  
And cut down a pasty costly made,  
Where quail and pigeon, lark and leveret, lay  
Like fossils of the rock, with golden yolks  
Imbedded and injellied.

***Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894)***

Then as to feasting, it doesn't agree with me -  
Each single Goblet is equal to three with me,  
Wine is my foe, tho' I still am a friend of it,  
Hock becomes hic - with a cup at the end of it!

***Owen Wister (1860-1938)***

Said Aristotle unto Plato,  
"Have another sweet potato?"  
Said Plato unto Aristotle,  
"Thank you, I prefer the bottle."

***Jeunesse Dorée - Justin Richardson***

On menus every pig's a suckling,  
Fowl is chicken, duck is duckling.  
Restaurants possess in truth  
The secret of eternal youth.

***Sauce - Justin Richardson***

Sauce comes from Worcester -  
At least, it always yorcester.

***La Carte - Justin Richardson***

It takes much art  
To choose à la carte  
For less than they quote  
For the table d'hôte.

**From *The Sultan of Sulu* - *George Ade* (1866-1944)**

The cocktail is a pleasant drink;  
It's mild and harmless – I don't think.  
When you've had one, you call for two,  
And then you don't care what you do.

***A Drinking Song* - *William Butler Yeats* (1865-1939)**

Wine comes in at the mouth  
And love comes in at the eye;  
That's all we shall know for truth  
Before we grow old and die.  
I lift the glass to my mouth,  
I look at you, and sigh.

***Blueberries* - *Robert Frost* (1874-1963)**

Blueberries as big as the end of your thumb,  
Real sky-blue, and heavy, and ready to drum  
In the cavernous pail of the first one to come!  
And all ripe together, not some of them green  
And some of them ripe! You ought to have seen!

***On China Blue* - *Sir Stephen Gaselee* (1882-1943)**

On china blue my lobster red  
Precedes my cutlet brown,  
With which my salad green is sped  
By yellow Chablis down.  
Lord, if good living be no sin,  
But innocent delight,  
O polarize these hues within  
To one eupeptic white.

***The cow* - *Ogden Nash* (1902-1970)**

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

***The Sweetbread* - *Ogden Nash***

That sweetbread gazing up at me  
Is not what it purports to be.  
Says Webster in one paragraph,  
It is the pancreas of a calf.  
Since it is neither sweet nor bread,  
I think I'll take a bun instead.

***Richard Armour* (1906–1989)**

**When** you tip the ketchup bottle,  
First will come a little, then a lot'll.

***The Groaning Board* - *Pink* (?)**

A buttery, sugary, syrupy waffle  
Gee, but I love it somep'n awful.

Ginger cakes dripping with chocolate goo,  
Oo! How I love'em! Oo! Oo! OO!

*Anonymous - 20<sup>th</sup> century*

An accident happened to my brother Jim  
When somebody threw a tomato at him –  
Tomatoes are juicy and don't hurt the skin,  
But this one was specially packed in a tin.

*Anonymous - mid-20<sup>th</sup> century*

Carnation milk is the best in the land;  
Here I sit with a can in my hand.  
No tits to pull, no hay to pitch,  
You just punch a hole in the son of a bitch

*Anonymous - 20<sup>th</sup> century*

I eat my peas with honey  
I've done it all my life  
It makes the peas taste funny  
But it keeps them on my knife!

*Three Limericks - Anonymous*

There was a young man named Perkins  
Who was specially fond of small gherkins  
One fine day at tea  
He ate forty-three  
Which pickled his internal workin's.

There once was a man from Calcutta  
Who spoke with a terrible stutter  
To the waiter he said,  
"Give me bu-bu-bu-bread  
and some bu-bu-bu-bu-bu-bu-butter."

They say that the most healthy sex-  
agenarians have no complex  
About food and drink,  
Which leads me to think  
That good living has no side effects.

*Anonymous - 20<sup>th</sup> century*

Mary had a little lamb,  
A lobster and some prunes,  
A slice of cake, a piece of pie,  
And then some macaroons.  
It made the naughty waiters grin  
To see her order so,  
And when they carried Mary out  
Her face was white as snow.

T T T T

### Pass the Port Again

Three men died on Christmas Eve and were met by Saint Peter at the pearly gates. "In honour of this holy season," Saint Peter said, "you must each possess something that symbolizes Christmas to get into heaven."

The first man fumbled through his pockets and pulled out a lighter. He flicked it on. "It represents a candle," he said. "You may pass through the pearly gates," Saint Peter said.

The second man reached into his pocket and pulled out a set of keys. He shook them and said, "They're bells". Saint Peter waved him through.

The third man started searching desperately through his pockets and finally pulled out a pair of women's panties. Saint Peter looked with a raised eyebrow and asked, "And just what do those symbolize?"

The man replied, "They're Carols."

T T T T

### On Drink

*John Still (Bishop of Bath and Wells – 1543-1608)*

I cannot eat but little meat,  
My stomach is not good,  
But sure I think that I can drink  
With him that wears a hood.  
Though I go bare, take ye no care,  
I nothing am a-cold;  
I stuff my skin so full within  
Of jolly good ale and old.  
Back and side go bare, go bare –  
Both foot and hand go cold;  
But, belly, God send thee good ale enough,  
Whether it be new or old.

*John Lyly (1554-1606)*

Oh, for a bowl of fat Canary,  
Rich Palermo, sparkling Sherry,  
Some nectar else, from Juno's dairy;  
Oh, these draughts would make us merry!  
Oh, for a wench (I deal in faces,  
And in other daintier things);  
Tickled am I with her embraces,  
Fine dancing in such fairy rings.  
Oh, for a plump fat leg of mutton,  
Veal, lamb, capon, pig, and coney;  
None is happy but a glutton,  
None an ass but who want money.

(rabbit)

Wines indeed and girls are good,  
But brave victuals feast the blood;  
For wenches, wine, and lusty cheer,  
Jove would leap down to surfeit here.

**Drinking - Abraham Cowley (1618-1667)**

The thirsty earth soaks up the rain,  
And drinks and gapes for drink again;  
The plants suck in the earth, and are  
With constant drinking fresh and fair;  
The sea itself (which one would think  
Should have but little need of drink)  
Drinks twice ten thousand rivers up,  
So filled that they o'erflow the cup.  
The busy Sun (and one would guess  
By 's drunken fiery face no less)  
Drinks up the sea, and when he's done,  
The Moon and Stars drink up the Sun:  
They drink and dance by their own light,  
They drink and revel all the night:  
Nothing in Nature's sober found,  
But an eternal health goes round.  
Fill up the bowl, then, fill it high,  
Fill all the glasses there – for why  
Should every creature drink but I ?  
Why, man of morals, tell me why ?

**In Praise of Ale - Anonymous 1656**

When as the chill Charokko blows,  
    And Winter tells a heavy tale;  
When pyes and daws and rooks and crows  
Sit cursing of the frosts and snows;  
    Then give me ale.

Ale in a Saxon rumkin then,  
    Such as will make grimalkin prate;  
Bids valour burgeon in tall men,  
Quickens the poet's wit and pen,  
    Despises fate.

Ale, that the absent battle fights,  
    And frames the march of Swedish drum,  
Disputes with princes, laws, and rights,  
What's done and past tells mortal wights,  
    And what's to come.

Ale, that the plowman's heart up-keeps  
    And equals it with tyrants' thrones,  
That wipes the eye that over-weeps,

And lulls in sure and dainty sleeps  
Th' o'er-wearied bones.

Grandchild of Ceres, Bacchus' daughter,  
Wine's emulous neighbour, though but stale,  
Ennobling all the nymphs of water,  
And filling each man's heart with laughter –  
Ha! give me ale!

*Henry Purcell (1659-1695)*

Once, twice, thrice, I Julia tried –  
The scornful puss as oft denied:  
And since I can no better thrive  
I'll cringe to ne'er a bitch alive.  
So kiss my arse, disdainful sow,  
Good claret is my mistress now.

**Five reasons for drinking** - *Dr. Aldrich, late 17<sup>th</sup> century*

Good wine, a friend, or being dry,  
Or lest you should be by and by,  
Or any other reason why.

**The Little Vagabond** - *William Blake (1757-1827)*

Dear Mother, dear Mother, the Church is cold,  
But the Ale-house is healthy and pleasant and warm;  
besides I can tell where I am used well;  
Such usage in heaven will never do well.

But if at the Church they would give us some Ale,  
And a pleasant fire, our souls to regale;  
We'd sing and we'd pray all the live-long day,  
Nor ever once wish from the Church to stray,

Then the Parson might preach and drink and sing,  
And we'd be as happy as birds in the spring:  
And modest dame Lurch, who is always at Church,  
Would not have bandy children nor fasting nor birch.

And God like a father rejoicing to see  
His children as pleasant and happy as he  
Would have no more quarrel with the Devil or the Barrel  
But kiss him and give him both drink and apparel.

**The Holy Bible, Proverbs, xxxi, verses 6-7:** Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.

**Scotch Drink** - *Robert Burns (1759-1796) [Burns' version of the above]*

Gie him strong drink until he wink,  
That's sinking in despair;  
An' liquor guid to fire his bluid,

That's prest wi' grief and care:  
There let him bouse, an' deep carouse,  
Wi' bumpers flowing o'er,  
Till he forgets his loves or debts,  
An' minds his griefs no more.

*D. Henderson (?)*

Now fill your glasses ane an' a',  
And drink the toast I gie ye, O.  
"To merry chiefs and lasses braw,  
And every joy be wi' ye, O."  
Fair fa' the whiskey, O  
Fair fa' the whiskey, O  
What wad a drouhty body do,  
If 'twere nae for the whiskey, O?

*Thomas Love Peacock (1785-1866)*

Not drunk is he who from the floor  
Can rise alone and still drink more;  
But drunk is he who prostrate lies  
Without the power to move or rise.

*From Ode to a Nightingale - John Keats (1795-1821)*

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been  
Cooled a long age in the deep-delved earth,  
Tasting of Flora and the country-green,  
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!  
Oh, for a beaker of the warm South,  
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,  
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,  
And purple-stained mouth;  
That I might drink and leave the world unseen,  
And with thee fade away into the forest dim.<sup>7</sup>

*The Mint Julep - Charles Fenno Hoffman (1806-1884)*

'Tis said that the gods on Olympus of old  
(And who the bright legend profanes with a doubt?)  
One night, 'mid their revels, by Bacchus were told  
That his last butt of nectar had somehow run out!  
But determined to send round the goblet once more,  
They sued to the fairer immortals for aid  
In composing a draught which, till drinking were o'er,  
Should cast every wine ever drank in the shade.  
Grave Ceres herself blithely yielded her corn,  
And the spirit that lives in each amber-hued grain,  
And which first had its birth from the dew of the morn,

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<sup>7</sup> I was delighted to find a late 19<sup>th</sup> century commentary on this Ode by a John P. Fruit!



Was taught to steal out in bright dew-drops again.  
Pomona, whose choicest of fruits on the board  
Were scattered profusely in every one's reach,  
When called on a tribute to cull from the hoard,  
Expressed the mild juice of the delicate peach.  
The liquids were mingled while Venus looked on  
With glances so fraught with sweet magical power,  
That the honey of Hybla, e'en when they were gone,  
Has never been missed in the draught from that hour.  
Flora, then, from her bosom of fragrancy, shook,  
And with roseate fingers pressed down in the bowl,  
All dripping and fresh as it came from the brook,  
The herb whose aroma should flavor the whole.  
The draught was delicious, and loud the acclaim,  
Though something seemed wanting for all to bewail,  
But Juleps the drink of immortals became,  
When Jove himself added a handful of hail.

**Beer - *George Arnold (1834-1865)***

Here,  
With my beer  
I sit,  
While golden moments flit:  
Alas!  
They pass  
Unheeded by:  
And, as they fly,  
I,  
Being dry,  
Sit, idly sipping here  
My beer.  
  
O, finer far  
Than fame, or riches, are  
The graceful smoke-wreaths of this cigar!  
Why  
Should I  
Weep, wail, or sigh?  
What if luck has passed me by?  
What if my hopes are dead, –  
My pleasures fled?  
Have I not still  
My fill  
Of right good cheer, –  
Cigars and beer.  
  
Go, whining youth,  
Forsooth!  
Go, weep and wail,

Sigh and grow pale,  
Weave melancholy rhymes  
On the old times,  
Whose joys like shadowy ghosts appear,  
But leave me to my beer!  
Gold is dross, –  
Love is loss, –  
So, if I gulp my sorrows down,  
Or see them drown  
In foamy draughts of old nut-brown,  
Then do wear the crown,  
Without the cross!

From **Beer** - *Charles Stuart Calverley (1831-1884)*

O Beer! O Hodgson, Guinness, Allsopp, Bass!  
Names that should be on every infant's tongue!  
Shall days and months and years and centuries pass,  
And still your merits be unrecked, unsung?  
Oh! I have gazed into my foaming glass,  
And wished that lyre could yet again be strung  
Which once rang prophet-like through Greece, and taught her  
Misguided sons that the best drink was water.

**In Japan** - *Edward Rowland Sill (1841-1887)*

At the punch-bowl's brink,  
Let the thirsty think  
What they say in old Japan:  
First the man takes a drink;  
Then the drink takes a drink;  
Then the drink takes the man.

**Heroic Poem in Praise of Wine** - *Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953)*

To exalt, enthrone, establish and defend,  
To welcome home mankind's mysterious friend  
Wine, true begetter of all arts that be;  
Wine, privilege of the completely free;  
Wine the recorder; wine the sagely strong;  
Wine, bright avenger of sly-dealing wrong,  
Awake, Ausonian Muse, and sing the vineyard song!  
By thee do seers the inward light discern;  
By thee the statue lives, the Gods return.  
When the ephemeral vision's lure is past  
All, all, must face their Passion at the last.  
So touch my dying lip: so bridge that deep:  
So pledge my waking from the gift of sleep,  
And, sacramental, raise me the Divine:  
Strong brother in God and last companion, Wine.

*Anonymous*

St. Patrick was a gentleman,  
Who through strategy and stealth  
Drove all the snakes from Ireland:  
Here's a bumper to his health.  
But not too many bumpers,  
Lest we lose ourselves, and then  
Forget the good Saint Patrick  
And see the snakes again.

**Bathtub Gin - *Philip H. Rhineland* (20<sup>th</sup> century)**

Oh, ancient sin, Oh, bathtub gin,  
How rare and how robust,  
Bouquet of tin and porcelain  
And little grains of rust.  
Our cares dissolved as you evolved,  
Your beauty was benumbing.  
You rose full-armoured from the bath  
Like Venus from the plumbing.  
When hardened hearts in foreign parts  
Deride your name with scorn,  
And whisper calumnies and say  
That you were basely born,  
I plant a wreath of juniper.  
My thirsty tonsils ache  
To fill my skin with bathtub gin  
Like Father used to make.

**The Song Of Right And Wrong - *G.K. Chesterton* (1874-1936)**

Feast on wine or fast on water,  
And your honour shall stand sure.  
If an angel out of heaven  
Brings you something else to drink,  
Thank him for his kind attentions,  
Go and pour it down the sink.

**Wine and Water - *G.K. Chesterton***

Old Noah he had an ostrich farm and fowls on the largest scale,  
He ate his egg with a ladle in a egg-cup big as a pail,  
And the soup he took was Elephant Soup and the fish he took was  
Whale,  
But they all were small to the cellar he took when he set out to sail,  
And Noah he often said to his wife when he sat down to dine,  
"I don't care where the water goes if it doesn't get into the wine."

The cataract of the cliff of heaven fell blinding off the brink  
As if it would wash the stars away as suds go down a sink,  
The seven heavens came roaring down for the throats of hell to drink,  
And Noah he cocked his eye and said, "It looks like rain, I think,

The water has drowned the Matterhorn as deep as a Mendip mine,  
But I don't care where the water goes if it doesn't get into the wine."

But Noah he sinned, and we have sinned; on tipsy feet we trod,  
Till a great big black teetotaller was sent to us for a rod,  
And you can't get wine at a P.S.A., or chapel, or Eisteddfod,  
For the Curse of Water has come again because of the wrath of God,  
And water is on the Bishop's board and the Higher Thinker's shrine,  
But I don't care where the water goes if it doesn't get into the wine.

*Norman Levy (1888-1966)*

If you stick a stock of liquor in your locker,  
It is slick to stick a lock upon your stock,  
Or some joker who is slicker's going to trick you of your liquor;  
Though you snicker you'll feel sicker from the shock.  
Be a piker though your clubmates mock and bicker,  
For like brokers round a ticker they will flock  
To your locker full of liquor, and your stock will vanish quicker,  
If you fail to lock your liquor with a lock.

*Dorothy Parker (1893-1967)*

I wish I could drink like a lady  
I can take one or two at the most  
Three and I'm under the table  
Four and I'm under the host.

**In Praise of California Wines - Yvor Winters (1900-1968)**

Amid these clear and windy hills  
Heat gathers quickly and is gone;  
Dust rises, moves, and briefly stills;  
Our thought can scarcely pause thereon.  
With pale bright leaf and shadowy stem,  
Pellucid amid nervous dust,  
By pre-Socratic stratagem,  
Yet sagging with its weight of must,  
The vineyard spreads beside the road  
In repetition, point and line.  
I sing, in this dry bright abode,  
The praises of the native wine.  
It yields the pleasure of the eye,  
It charms the skin, it warms the heart;  
When nights are cold and thoughts crowd high,  
Then 'tis the solvent for our art.  
When worn for sleep the head is dull,  
When art has failed us, far behind,  
Its sweet corruption fills the skull  
Till we are happy to be blind.  
So may I yet, as poets use,

My time being spent, and more to pay,  
In this quick warmth the will diffuse,  
In sunlight vanish quite away.

**The Boy's Prayer - *Anonymous 20<sup>th</sup> century***

Our beer  
Which art in bottles  
Hallowed be thy sport.  
Thy will be drunk:  
I will be drunk  
At home as I am in the pub.  
Give us each day our daily schooners  
And forgive us our spillage  
As we forgive those who spilled against us  
And lead us not into the practice of poofy wine tasting  
And deliver us from Tequila  
For mine is the bitter  
The chicks and the footy  
Forever and ever  
Barmen.<sup>8</sup>

***Robert Longlen***

**The Emperor Caligula**  
's habits were somewhat irrigula.  
When he sat down to lunch  
he got drunk at onch.

**A Drink With Something In It - *Oglen Nash (1902-1970)***

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,

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<sup>8</sup> Cf:

**The Girl's Prayer**

Our Cash  
Which art on plastic  
Hallowed be thy name  
Thy Cartier watch  
Thy Prada bag  
In Myer  
As it is in David Jones  
Give us each day our Platinum Visa  
And forgive us our overdraft  
As we forgive those who stop our Mastercard  
And lead us not into Katies  
And deliver us from Susans  
For thine is the Dinnigan, the Akira and the Armani  
For Chanel No. 5 and Eternity  
Amex.

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.

*Anonymous 20<sup>th</sup> century*

There are several reasons for drinking,  
And one has just entered my head;  
If a man cannot drink when he's living  
How the Hell can he drink when he's dead?

*Anonymous 20<sup>th</sup> century*

The horse and mule live thirty years  
And nothing know of wines and beers.  
The goat and sheep at twenty die  
And never taste of Scotch or Rye.  
The cow drinks water by the ton  
And at eighteen is mostly done.  
The dog at fifteen cashes in  
Without the aid of rum and gin.  
The cat in milk and water soaks  
And then in twelve short years it croaks.  
The modest, sober, bone-dry hen  
Lays eggs for nogs, then dies at ten.  
All animals are strictly dry:  
They sinless live and swiftly die;  
But sinful, ginful, rum-soaked men  
Survive for three score years and ten.  
And some of them, a very few,  
Stay pickled till they're ninety-two.

*Two Anonymous Toasts*

Here's to wives and sweethearts sweet!  
May they never, never meet!

Here's to the absent Lords, may they  
Long in a foreign country stay  
Drinking at other ladies' boards  
The health of other absent Lords.

**The Irish Pig - Anonymous 20<sup>th</sup> century**

'Twas an evening in November,  
As I very well remember,  
I was strolling down the street in drunken pride,  
But my knees were all aflutter,  
So I landed in the gutter,  
And a pig came up and lay down by my side.  
Yes, I lay there in the gutter  
Thinking thoughts I could not utter,

When a colleen passing by did softly say,  
 “Ye can tell a man that boozes  
 By the company he chooses” -  
 At that the pig got up and walked away.

Which, of course, reminds me of Churchill’s famous remark when asked which pet he would prefer: “Dogs look up to you. Cats look down on you. Give me a pig. He just looks you in the eye and treats you like an equal.”

T T T T



This picture by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (*Peasant Wedding*) is probably even better known than the *Pays de Cocagne* on the Frontispiece. The poem below by William Carlos Williams (1883-1963) is also a masterpiece of observation.

<p><b>Peasant Wedding</b>          Pour the wine bridegroom          where before you the          bride is enthroned her hair          loose at her temples a head          of ripe wheat is on          the wall beside her the          guests seated at long tables          the bagpipers are ready          there is a hound under          the table the bearded Mayor</p>	<p>is present women in their          starched headgear are          gabbing all but the bride          hands folded in her          lap is awkwardly silent simple          dishes are being served          clabber and what not          from a trestle made of an          unhinged barn door by two          helpers one in a red          coat a spoon in his hatband</p>
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T T T T

The following nearly found its way into *Christmas Pudding 2003* (erotic verse). Finally it was banished, because of its length, to a later edition. It almost made *CP 2005* as a narrative poem. Finally it has found its place among the food.

<p><b>The Rude Potato - Ruth Pitter (1897-1992)</b>  By jobbing Jimmy this was found  Last autumn as he delved the ground  To get the late potatoes up  And save the nice clean heavy crop.  He saw it was irregular,  As these large tubers often are;  A second glance convinced old Jas.  Just how irregular it was.  Comic potatoes do occur,  But in the life of Jimmy Burr  Who's handled many score of tons  And spotted all the funny ones,  This was the rudest he had met.  Its shamelessness was quite complete,  Warming the honest gardener's heart  By asking no least touch of art,  Which nearly all such gems require  To make them apt to our desire.</p> <p>No nugget of the purest ore  Could have delighted Jimmy more.  A slow, profound and spreading grin  Proclaimed the gratitude within:  Then on a handy frame he laid  The treasure, and resumed the spade –  Or stay – no doubt resumed the fork,  Which is more usual for such work</p> <p>Emerging from the kitchen door  Comes Mitzi (from the Danube shore)  For parsley or some subtler weed  Such as these foreign artists need.  She spots the tuber on its frame,  And stops to scrutinise the same.  Then O what peals of peasant mirth  Explode above our chilly earth!</p>	<p>She shrieks, bends double, beats her thighs;  She clasps her sides; then wipes her eyes  To get another look, and then  She has gone off in fits again.  And all the day, when here and there  She has a little time to spare,  She comes; and one refreshing peep  Such dews of joy can make her weep,  That all her sorrows seem to fade,  And glee transforms the exiled maid.  Hark! as she dishes up, she sings  What sound like wild Danubian things;  And later, at the fall of night,  “Roll out the Barrel” almost right.  Fain would she keep the glorious thing  That makes a lonely exile sing;  But Jimmy takes it, when he goes  To taste the nectar at the “Rose  And Crown”, where all our worthies are  Gathered at the evening bar.</p> <p>The slighter spirits yell with glee  The freakish masterpiece to see,  But stately Drake, the landlord, winks  At Jimmy Burr above the drinks,  And gravely hangs the wonder up  For all to see who take a cup,  Then gives old Jim two ten-bob notes,  Which go to slake the assembled throats.  “That's Nature!” says imposing Drake:  “Now, gentlemen, what will you take?”</p> <p>O Science, can you make us mirth  Like this dull apple of the earth?  And what in art can do us good  Like this so nourishing, so lewd?  Only by life such joy is lent,  Wild, bracing and inconsequent.</p>
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T T T T

### English is a funny language

We'll begin with a box, and the plural is boxes;  
But the plural of ox became oxen not oxes.  
One fowl is a goose, but two are called geese,  
Yet the plural of moose should never be meese.  
You may find a lone mouse or a nest full of mice;  
Yet the plural of house is houses, not hice.  
If the plural of man is always called men,



Why shouldn't the plural of pan be called pen?  
 If I spoke of my foot and show you my feet,  
 And I give you a boot, would a pair be called beet?  
 If one is a tooth and a whole set are teeth,  
 Why shouldn't the plural of booth be called beeth?  
 Then one may be that, and three would be those,  
 Yet hat in the plural would never be hose,  
 And the plural of cat is cats, not cose.  
 We speak of a brother and also of brethren,  
 But though we say mother, we never say methren.  
 Then the masculine pronouns are he, his and him,  
 But imagine the feminine, she, shis and shim.

If you have a rough cough, climbing can be tough when on the bough of a tree!  
 Your house can burn up as it burns down, you fill in a form by filling it out and an  
 alarm goes off by going on. Can you explain the difference between slowing up and  
 slowing down? How about the following?

- § The bandage was wound around the wound.
- § The farm was used to produce produce.
- § The dump was so full that it had to refuse more refuse.
- § We must polish the Polish furniture.
- § He could lead if he would get the lead out.
- § The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert and got his just deserts.
- § Since there is no time like the present, he thought it was time to present the present.
- § At the Army base, a bass was painted on the head of a bass drum.
- § I did not object to the object.
- § The insurance was invalid for the invalid.
- § There was a row among the oarsmen about how to row the boats.
- § They were too close to the door to close it.
- § The buck does funny things when the does are present.
- § A seamstress and a sewer fell down into a sewer line.
- § To help with sowing, the farmer taught his sow to sow.
- § The wind was too strong to wind the sail.
- § After a number of Novocain injections, my jaw got number.
- § Upon seeing the tear in the painting I shed a tear.
- § I had to subject the subject to a series of tests.
- § How can I intimate this to my most intimate friend?
- § I spent last evening evening out a pile of dirt.<sup>9</sup>

T T T T

## German

Some German poems I have translated; some are untranslatable. If you know a  
 little German it is worth trying to read those I haven't – they should put an end to  
 the calumny that the Germans don't have a sense of humour.

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<sup>9</sup> With thanks to Robert Genillard

**Eine Tischzucht - Hans Sachs (1494-1576)**

Hör, Mensch! wenn du zu Tisch willst gahn,  
dein Händ sollt du gewaschen han.  
Lang Nägel ziemen gar nit wohl,  
die man heimlich abschneiden soll.  
Am Tisch setz dich nit oben an,  
der Hausherr wölls dan selber han!  
Der Benedeiung nit vergiss!  
In Gottes Nam heb an und iss!  
Den Ältesten anfahren lass!  
Nach dem iss züchtiglichermass!

Nit schnaufe oder säuisch schmatz!  
Nit ungestüm nach dem Brot platz,  
dass du kein Geschirr umstossen tust!  
Das Brot schneid nit an deiner Brust!  
Nehm auch den Löffel nit zu voll!  
Wenn du dich treifst, das steht nit wohl.  
Greif auch nach keiner Speise mehr,  
bis dir dein Mund sein worden leer!

Red nicht mit vollem Mund! Sei mässig!  
Sei in der Schüssel nit gefrässig,  
der allerletzt drin ob dem Tisch!  
Zerschneid das Fleisch und brich den Fisch  
und käuse mit verschlossenem Mund!  
Schlag nit die Zung aus gleich eim Hund,  
zu ekeln! Tu nit geizig schlinken!  
Und wisch den Mund, eh du willst trinken,  
dass du nit schmalzig machst den Wein!  
Trink sittlich und nit hust darein!

Tu auch nit grölzen oder kreisten!  
Schütt dich auch nit, halt dich am weisten!  
Gezänk am Tisch gar übel staht.  
Sag nichts, darob man Grauen hat,  
und tu dich auch am Tisch nit schneuzen,  
dass ander Leut an dir nit scheuzen!  
Geh nit umzausen in der Nasen!  
Des Zahnstührens sollt du dich massen!

Im Kopf sollt du dich auch nit krauen!  
Dergleichen Maid, Jungfrau und Frauen  
solln nach keinem Floh hinunterfischen.  
Ans Tischtuch soll sich niemand wischen.  
Auch leg den Kopf nit in die Händ!  
Leih dich nit hinten an die Wänd,  
bis dass des Mahl hab sein Ausgang!  
Denn sag Gott heimlich Lob und Dank,  
der dir dein Speise hat beschert,  
aus väterlicher Hand ernährt!

Nach dem sollt du vom Tisch aufstehn,  
dein Händ waschen und wieder gehn  
an dein Gewerb und Arbeit schwer.  
So spricht Hans Sachs, Schuhmacher.

**Table Manners - Hans Sachs (1494-1576)**

Now listen here! If you intend  
To eat at table, wash your hands.  
Long fingernails are not so neat  
And should be cut before you eat.  
Don't place yourself at head of table,  
Your host sits there when he is able.  
Now don't forget when Grace is said  
To say God's name before you're fed.  
Let the oldest have first bite,  
Then start yourself and do what's right.

Don't slurp or piggy noises make!  
Don't rush to grab the bread – you'll break  
The pots and dishes like an oaf.  
Against your chest don't cut the loaf!  
Don't fill your spoon up to the brim!  
Soup stains on shirts don't look so trim.  
And don't take another bite  
Until your mouth is empty quite.

When your mouth's full don't talk; hold back!  
Don't join the ones who manners lack  
And are too slow to clear their dish!  
Cut the meat and break the fish  
And chew the food with your mouth shut!  
Don't let your tongue roll like a mutt –  
Don't gulp your food, just drink in sips!  
Before you drink please wipe your lips,  
No grease should fall into the wine!  
Behave and don't cough like a swine.

Don't raise your voice or loud cry out!  
Be calm, don't jiggle all about!  
It's not good at meals to fight.  
Say nothing that might others slight,  
Don't sneeze at table: have a care  
Not to offend the others there!  
Don't pick your nose – it's very rude –  
Or search your teeth for bits of food.

Don't scratch your head or mess your hair!  
The same for girls or women there:  
Don't search your clothes for fleas or moth.  
Don't wipe your face on the tablecloth.  
Don't lean your head upon your hand!  
And leaning on the wall don't stand  
Until the meal is fully done!  
Then praise the Lord for he's the one  
Who gave you all the food you ate,  
A father's hand that fills your plate.

Then get up and leave the table,  
Wash hands as soon as you are able  
And go back to the work you do.  
So says Hans Sachs, cobbler, to you.

***Heinrich von Mühler (1813-1874)***

**Grad' aus dem Wirtshaus komm' ich nun heraus!**

Strasse wie wunderbar siehst du mir aus.

Rechter Hand, linker Hand, beides vertauscht,

Strasse, ich merk' es wohl, Du bist berauscht.

Was für ein schief Gesicht, Mond, machst denn du?

Ein Auge hat er auf, eins hat er zu!

Du wirst betrunken sein, das seh' ich hell:

schäme dich, schäme Dich, alter Gesell!

Und die Laterne erst, was muss ich seh'n!

Die können alle nicht grad' mehr steh'n!

Wackeln und fackeln die Kreuz und die Quer.

Scheinen betrunken mir allesamt schwer.

Alles im Sturme rings, grosses und klein,

wag' ich darunter mich, nüchtern allein?

Das scheint bedenklich mir, ein Wagestück!

Da geh' ich lieber ins Wirtshaus zurück.

The following is so similar it must have been based on the German.

***A Night Scene - Robert B. Brough (1828-1860)***

Out of the grog-shop, I've stepped in the street.

Road, what's the matter? you're loose on your feet;

Staggering, swaggering, reeling about.

Road, you're in liquor, past question or doubt.

Gas-lamps, be quiet – stand up, if you please.

What the deuce ails you? You're weak in the knees:

Some on your heads in the gutter, some sunk.

Gas-lamps, I see it, you're all of you drunk.

Angels and ministers! look at the moon –

Shining up there like a paper balloon,

Winking like mad at me: Moon, I'm afraid –

Now I'm convinced – Oh! you tipsy old jade.

Here's a phenomenon: look at the stars –

Jupiter, Ceres, Uranus, and Mars

Dancing quadrilles, capered, shuffled, and hopped.

Heavenly bodies! this ought to be stopped.

Down come the houses! each drunk as a king –

Can't say I fancy much this sort of thing:

Inside the inn, it was safe and all right,

I shall go back there, and stop for the night.

***Wie wäre es mit einem "Borschtsch"? - Mascha Kaléko (1907-1975)***

Man nehme erstens zirka sieben

Fein abgeschälte rote Rüben.

Dann hacke man den Weisskohl klein,

Tu Zwiebel, Salz und Essig rein.

Mit Hammelfleisch muss das nun kochen,  
Auf kleiner Flamme, sieben Wochen.  
Jetzt Kaviar mit Wodka ran  
Nebst Zimt und frischem Thymian.  
Nun schüttet man das Ganze aus  
Und isst am besten – ausser Haus.

**Die Kunst des Trinkens - Heinz Erhardt (1909-1979)**

Solange es uns Menschen gibt,  
sind auch Getränke sehr beliebt –  
ich meine hier natürlich nur  
die alkoholischer Natur!

Den Wein, den hab' ich übersprungen,  
der wurde schon zu oft besungen –  
und auch der Sekt! (man reicht ihn Gästen  
zum An- und Aufstossen bei Festen.)

Wie selten aber steht vom Bier  
etwas geschrieben, ausser hier:  
"Es schäumt das Glas mit edler Gerste,  
und stets bekömmlich ist das erste!"

Doch gibt es ausserdem Getränke,  
den'n ich besondere Liebe schenke,  
ich schätze fast seit der Geburt se:  
das ist der Klare oder Kurze!

Wie wärmen sie an kalten Tagen  
schön eisgekühlt den kalten Magen!  
Wie spornen sie – als Geistgetränke –  
den Geist an, dass er wieder denke!

Jedoch wie geistlos – sei'n wir offen –  
wird diese Köstlichkeit gesoffen!  
Drum will ich, eh' Sie einen heben,  
hier schnell noch einen Ratschlag geben:

Man trinke Schnaps stets nur zum Essen!  
Das Bier dazu soll man vergessen!  
Und ob in Kneipe oder Haus:  
Man lasse immer einen aus!

Wenn man das ganz genau so tut,  
dann fährt man stets – auch Auto – gut.

**Der Wein war ein Gedicht - Fritz Eckenga (1955-)**

Kartoffeln schälen  
Möhren schaben  
Derweil sich schon am Weissen laben.  
Fisch geträufeln  
Und gelassen

Den Roten abseits atmen lassen.

Tomaten vierteln  
Schoten waschen;  
Na gut – nochmal vom Weissen naschen –  
Fischbett machen  
Ofen wärmen  
Vom Bukett des Roten schwärmen.

Fisch ins Bett  
Bett ins Rohr –  
Schmeckt der Weisse nach wie vor?  
Durchaus! Chapeau!  
War auch nicht billig.  
Der Rote riecht extrem vanillig.

Geiter Zwang –  
Quatsch: Zweiter Gang!  
Weisser – bist ein guter Fang!  
Wühnchen haschen?  
Hühnchen waschen!  
Wird daschu der Rote paschen?

Mussich kosten  
Junge Junge  
Der liegt ewig auf der Zunge!  
Tut mir lei – Hicks –  
Tut mir leiter –  
Dagegen ist der Weisse Zweiter!

Huhn muss raten?  
Braaten! Rohr –  
Fisch vergessen – kommt mal vor!  
Kann nix machen  
Muss zum Müll  
Der Rote macht mich lall und lüll

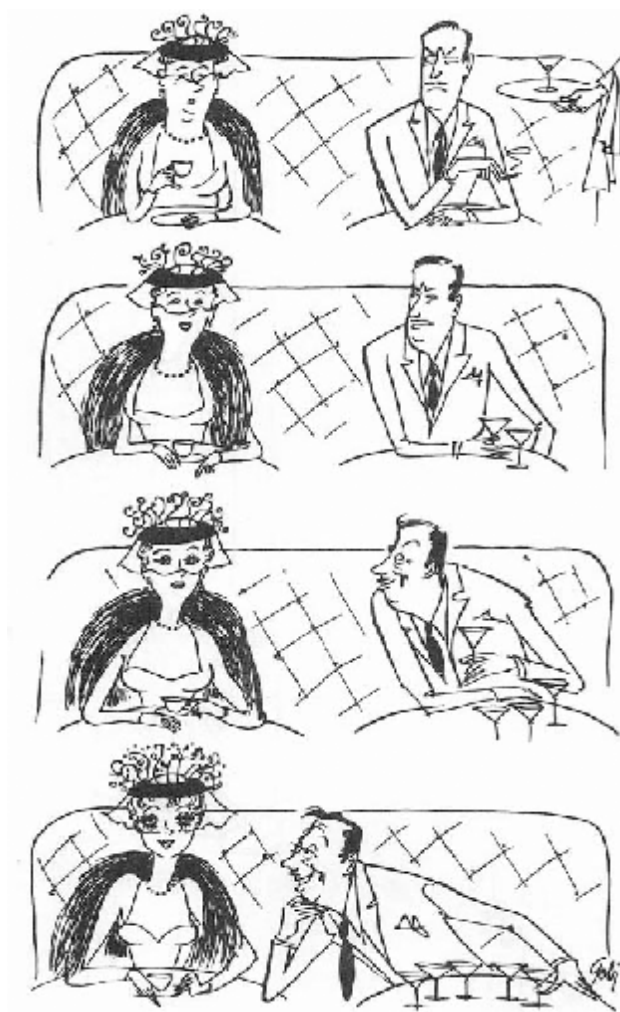
Dummes Huhn  
Bis morgen dann  
Heute leg' ich keine Hand mehr an  
Dein Fl- Dein Fl-  
Dein tzartes Fleisch  
Wo far denn noch die Wlasche gleisch?

Versteckdichnich!  
Ich finde dich!  
Heutkochichnicht heuttrinkichdich!  
Da bissuja  
Mein roter Bruder  
Dadi Dadu Dadi Daduda!

T T T T

### Russian Proverb

“There’s no such thing as ugly – only a shortage of vodka.”



T T T T

### FOOD AND WIT

The trouble with eating Italian food is that five or six days later you’re hungry again. *George Miller (1942–2003)*

I’ll bet what motivated the British to colonize so much of the world is that they were just looking for a decent meal. *Martha Harrison*

If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, talks like a duck, it probably needs a little more time in the microwave. *Lori Dowdy*

I will not eat oysters. I want my food dead. Not sick, not wounded: dead. *Woody Allen*

One of life’s mysteries is how a 1kg box of candy can make a woman gain 2kg. *Anon.*

I’m on a seafood diet. When I see food, I eat it. *Anon.*

Inside some of us is a thin person struggling to get out, but she can usually be sedated with a few pieces of chocolate cake. *Anon.*

Can it be a mistake that STRESSED is DESSERTS spelled backwards? *Anon.*

Cauliflower is nothing but cabbage with a college education. *Mark Twain*

An army marches on its stomach. *Napoleon*

Kissing don't last: cookery do! *George Meredith (1828-1909)*

The remarkable thing about my mother is that for thirty years she served us nothing but leftovers. The original meal has never been found. *Calvin Trillin*

A converted cannibal is one who, on Friday, eats only fishermen. *Emily Lotney*

The way to a man's heart is through his stomach. *Fanny Fern (1811-72)*.

One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well. *Virginia Woolf*

One should eat to live, not live to eat. *Cicero*

At a dinner party one should eat wisely but not too well, and speak well but not too wisely. *W. Somerset Maugham*

When women are depressed, they either eat or go shopping. Men invade another country. It's a whole different way of thinking. *Elaine Boosler*

The only way to keep your health is to eat what you don't want, drink what you don't like, and do what you'd rather not. *Mark Twain*

There are four basic food groups, milk chocolate, dark chocolate, white chocolate, and chocolate truffles. *Anon.*

T T T T

## French

**A une Damoysselle Malade - *Clément Marot (1497-1544)***

Ma mignonne,  
Je vous donne  
Le bon jour.  
Le séjour  
C'est prison :  
Guérison  
Recouvrez,  
Puis ouvrez  
Votre porte,  
Et qu'on sorte  
Vitement :  
Car Clément  
Le vous mande.  
Va friande  
De ta bouche,  
Qui se couche  
En danger  
Pour manger  
Confitures :  
Si tu dures  
Trop malade,

Couleur fade  
Tu prendras,  
Et perdras  
L'embonpoint.  
Dieu te doint  
Santé bonne  
Ma mignonne.

**Sardines à l'huile - *Georges Fourest (1867-1948)***

Dans leur cercueil de fer-blanc  
plein d'huile au puant relent  
marinent décapités  
ces petits corps argentés  
pareils aux guillotinés  
là-bas au champ des navets !  
Elles ont vu les mers, les  
côtes grises de Thulé,  
sous les brumes argentées  
la mer du Nord enchantée ...  
Maintenant dans le fer-blanc  
et l'huile au puant relent  
de toxiques restaurants  
les servent à leurs clients !  
Mais loin derrière la nue  
leur pauvre âmette ingénue  
dit sa muette chanson  
au Paradis-des-poissons,  
une mer fraîche et lunaire  
pâle comme un poitrinaire,  
la Mer de Sérénité  
aux longs reflets argentés  
où durant l'éternité,  
sans plus craindre jamais les  
cormorans et les filets,  
après leur mort nageront  
tous les bons petits poissons !...

Sans voix, sans mains, sans genoux  
Sardines, priez pour nous !...

**Le Vin Perdu - *Paul Valéry (1871-1945)***

J'ai, quelque jour, dans l'Océan,  
(Mais je ne sais plus sous quels cieux),  
Jeté, comme offrande au néant,  
Tout un peu de vin précieux...

Qui voulut ta perte, ô liqueur?  
J'obéis peut-être au devin?  
Peut-être au souci de mon coeur,



Songeant au sang, versant le vin?

Sa transparence accoutumée  
Après une rose fumée  
Reprit aussi pure la mer...

Perdu ce vin, ivres les ondes!...  
J'ai vu bondir dans l'air amer  
Les figures les plus profondes...

**Prologue - Valéry Larbaud (1881-1957)**

Borborygmes! borborygmes !...  
Grognements sourds de l'estomac et des entrailles,  
Plaintes de la chair sans cesse modifiée,  
Voix, chuchotements irrépessibles des organes,  
Voix, la seule voix humaine qui ne mente pas,  
Et qui persiste même quelque temps après la mort physiologique...

Amie, bien souvent nous nous sommes interrompus dans nos caresses  
Pour écouter cette chanson de nous-mêmes;  
Qu'elle en disait long, parfois,  
Tandis que nous nous efforcions de ne pas rire!  
Cela montait du fond de nous,  
Ridicule et impérieux,  
Plus haut que tous nos serments d'amour,  
Plus inattendu, plus irrémédiable, plus sérieux –  
Oh l'inévitable chanson de l'oesophage !...  
Gloussement étouffé, bruit de carafe que l'on vide,  
Phrase très longuement, infiniment, modulée;  
Voilà pourtant la chose incompréhensible  
Que je ne pourrai jamais plus nier;

Voilà pourtant la dernière parole que je dirai  
Quand, tiède encore, je serai un pauvre mort "qui se vide!"  
Borborygmes! borborygmes!...  
Y en a-t-il aussi dans les organes de la pensée,  
Qu'on n'entend pas, à travers l'épaisseur de la boîte crânienne?  
Du moins, voici des poèmes à leur image...

***Anonymous, 20th century***

Les spaghettis,  
tous réunis,  
sous la fourchette,  
cherchent cachette.

Las de mourir,  
bien enroulés,  
voudraient périr,  
mieux honorés.

Les spaghettis,

ça ne finit,  
qu'au petit jour,  
après l'amour.

	P		Si	
<i>Frédéric II:</i>	-----	à	-----	<i>Voltaire</i> G a
	Venez		100	

J'ai bu le lait divin que versent les nuits blanches. *Léon-Paul Fargue (1876-1947)*

L'humour est l'eau de l'au-delà mêlée au vin d'ici bas. *Jean Arp (1886-1966)*

Comment voulez-vous gouverner un pays qui a deux cent quarante-six variétés de fromage? *Charles de Gaulle (1890-1970)*

T T T T

## The Great Eating Contest

Damon Runyon (1884-1946) is best known for his short story collection *Guys and Dolls*, produced as a musical on Broadway in 1950 and revived frequently since then. He wrote many other short stories, including *A Piece of Pie*, that describes an eating competition, from which an extract is given below. The narrator and his friend Horsey conclude a wager with a group of Bostonians that their acquaintance, Nicely-Nicely, can outeat any person brought forward by the Bostonians. Unfortunately, Nicely-Nicely has been persuaded by his fiancée, Hilda Slocum, to renounce gluttony and they have to find a replacement. The extract begins in Mindy's restaurant with the introduction of the stand-in proposed by Miss Slocum. Note Runyon's superb ear for the way people really speak.

Well, nobody cares much about this idea of a stand-in for Nicely-Nicely in such a situation, and especially a Judy that no one ever hears of before, and many citizens are in favor of pulling out of the contest altogether. But Horsey has his thousand-dollar forfeit to think of, and as no one can suggest anyone else, he finally arranges a personal meet with the Judy suggested by Miss Hilda Slocum. He comes into Mindy's one evening with a female character who is so fat it is necessary to push three tables together to give her room for her lap, and it seems that this character is Miss Violette Shumberger. She weighs maybe 250 pounds, but she is by no means an old Judy, and by no means bad-looking. She has a face the size of a town clock and enough chins for a fire escape, but she has a nice smile, and pretty teeth, and a laugh that is so hearty it knocks the whipped cream off an order of strawberry shortcake on a table fifty feet away and arouses the indignation of a customer by the name of Goldstein who is about to consume same. Well, Horsey's idea in bringing her into Mindy's is to get some kind of line on her eating form, and she is clocked by many experts when she starts putting on the hot meat, and it is agreed by one and all that she is by no means a selling-plater.<sup>10</sup> In fact, by the time she gets through, even Mindy admits she has plenty of class, and the upshot of it all is Miss Violette Shumberger is chosen to eat against Joel Duffle. ....

<sup>10</sup> A horse which is entered in a lower category race because it is not expected to win in any higher grade.

Well, this Joel Duffle is a tall character with stooped shoulders, and a sad expression, and he does not look as if he can eat his way out of a tea shoppe, but as soon as he commences to discuss the details of the contest, anybody can see that he knows what time it is in situations such as this. In fact, Nicely-Nicely says he can tell at once from the way Joel Duffle talks that he is a dangerous opponent, and he says while Miss Violette Shumberger impresses him as an improving eater, he is only sorry she does not have more seasoning. This Joel Duffle suggests that the contest consist of twelve courses of strictly American food, each side to be allowed to pick six dishes, doing the picking in rotation, and specifying the weight and quantity of the course selected to any amount the contestant making the pick desires, and each course is to be divided for eating exactly in half, and after Miss Violette Shumberger and Nicely-Nicely whisper together for a while, they say the terms are quite satisfactory.

Then Horsey tosses a coin for the first pick, and Joel Duffle says heads, and it is heads, and he chooses, as the first course, two quarts of ripe olives, twelve bunches of celery, and four pounds of shelled nuts, all this to be split fifty-fifty between them. Miss Violette Shumberger names twelve dozen cherrystone clams as the second course, and Joel Duffle says two gallons of Philadelphia pepperpot soup as the third.

Well, Miss Violette Shumberger and Nicely-Nicely whisper together again, and Violette puts in two five-pound striped bass, the heads and tails not to count in the eating, and Joel Duffle names a twenty-two-pound roast turkey. Each vegetable is rated as one course, and Miss Violette Shumberger asks for twelve pounds of mashed potatoes with brown gravy. Joel Duffle says two dozen ears of corn on the cob, and Violette replies with two quarts of lima beans. Joel Duffle calls for twelve bunches of asparagus cooked in butter, and Violette mentions ten pounds of stewed new peas. This gets them down to the salad, and it is Joel Duffle's play, so he says six pounds of mixed green salad with vinegar and oil dressing, and now Miss Violette Shumberger has the final selection, which is the dessert. She says it is a pumpkin pie, two feet across, and not less than three inches deep.

It is agreed that they must eat with knife, fork or spoon, but speed is not to count, and there is to be no time limit, except they cannot pause more than two consecutive minutes at any stage, except in case of hiccoughs. They can drink anything, and as much as they please, but liquids are not to count in the scoring. The decision is to be strictly on the amount of food consumed, and the judges are to take account of anything left on the plates after a course, but not of loose chewings on bosom or vest up to an ounce. The losing side is to pay for the food, and in case of a tie they are to eat it off immediately on ham and eggs only.

Well, the scene of this contest is the second-floor dining room of Mindy's restaurant which is closed to the general public for the occasion, and only parties immediately concerned in the contest are admitted.

The contestants are seated on either side of a big table in the center of the room, and each contestant has three waiters. No talking, and no rooting from the spectators is permitted, but of course in any eating contest the principals may speak to each other if they wish, though smart eaters never wish to do this, as talking only wastes energy, and about all they ever say to each other is please pass the mustard.

About fifty characters from Boston are present to witness the contest, and the

same number of citizens of New York are admitted, and among them is this editor, Mr. McBurgle, and he is around asking Horsey if he thinks Miss Violette Shumberger is as good a thing as the jumper at the race track.

Nicely-Nicely arrives on the scene quite early, and his appearance is really most distressing to his old friends and admirers, as by this time he is shy so much weight that he is a pitiful scene, to be sure, but he tells Horsey and me that he thinks Miss Violette Shumberger has a good chance.

"Of course," he says, "she is green. She does not know how to pace herself in competition. But," he says, "she has a wonderful style. I love to watch her eat. She likes the same things I do in the days when I am eating. She is a wonderful character, too. Do you ever notice her smile?" Nicely-Nicely says. "But," he says, "she is the dearest friend of my fiancée, Miss Hilda Slocum, so let us not speak of this. I try to get Hilda to come to see the contest, but she says it is repulsive. Well, anyway," Nicely-Nicely says, "I manage to borrow a few dibs, and am wagering on Miss Violette Shumberger. By the way," he says, "if you happen to think of it, notice her smile."

Well, Nicely-Nicely takes a chair about ten feet behind Miss Violette Shumberger, which is as close as the judges will allow him, and he is warned by them that no coaching from the corners will be permitted, but of course Nicely-Nicely knows this rule as well as they do, and furthermore by this time his exertions seem to have left him without any more energy. There are three judges, and they are all from neutral territory.

One of these judges is a party from Baltimore, Md., by the name of Packard, who runs a restaurant, and another is a party from Providence, R.I., by the name of Croppers, who is a sausage manufacturer. The third judge is an old Judy by the name of Mrs. Rhubarb, who comes from Philadelphia, and once keeps an actors' boarding-house, and is considered an excellent judge of eaters.

Well, Mindy is the official starter, and at 8:30 p.m. sharp, when there is still much betting among the spectators, he outs with his watch, and says like this: "Are you ready, Boston? Are you ready, New York?" Miss Violette Shumberger and Joel Duffle both nod their heads, and Mindy says commence, and the contest is on, with Joel Duffle getting the jump at once on the celery and olives and nuts.

It is apparent that this Joel Duffle is one of these rough-and-rumble eaters that you can hear quite a distance off, especially on clams and soups. He is also an eyebrow eater, an eater whose eyebrows go up as high as the part in his hair as he eats, and this type of eater is undoubtedly very efficient. In fact, the way Joel Duffle goes through the groceries down to the turkey causes the Broadway spectators some uneasiness, and they are whispering to each other that they only wish the old Nicely-Nicely is in there. But personally, I like the way Miss Violette Shumberger eats without undue excitement, and with great zest. She cannot keep close to Joel Duffle in the matter of speed in the early stages of the contest, as she seems to enjoy chewing her food, but I observe that as it goes along she pulls up on him, and I figure this is not because she is stepping up her pace, but because he is slowing down.

When the turkey finally comes on, and is split in two halves right down the middle, Miss Violette Shumberger looks greatly disappointed, and she speaks for the first time as follows: "Why," she says "where is the stuffing?" Well, it seems

that nobody mentions any stuffing for the turkey to the chef, so he does not make any stuffing, and Miss Violette Shumberger's disappointment is so plain to be seen that the confidence of the Boston characters is somewhat shaken. They can see that a Judy who can pack away as much fodder as Miss Violette Shumberger has to date, and then beef for stuffing, is really quite an eater.

In fact, Joel Duffle looks quite startled when he observes Miss Violette Shumberger's disappointment, and he gazes at her with great respect as she disposes of her share of the turkey, and the mashed potatoes, and one thing and another in such a manner that she moves up on the pumpkin pie on dead even terms with him. In fact, there is little to choose between them at this point, although the judge from Baltimore is calling the attention of the other judges to a turkey leg that he claims Miss Violette Shumberger does not clean as neatly as Joel Duffle does his, but the other judges dismiss this as a technicality.

Then the waiters bring on the pumpkin pie, and it is without doubt quite a large pie, and in fact it is about the size of a manhole cover, and I can see that Joel Duffle is observing this pie with a strange expression on his face, although to tell the truth I do not care for the expression on Miss Violette Shumberger's face, either. Well, the pie is cut in two dead center, and one half is placed before Miss Violette Shumberger, and the other half before Joel Duffle, and he does not take more than two bites before I see him loosen his waistband and take a big swig of water, and thinks I to myself, he is now down to a slow walk, and the pie will decide the whole heat, and I am only wishing I am able to wager a little more dough on Miss Violette Shumberger. But about this moment, and before she as much as touches her pie, all of a sudden Violette turns her head and motions to Nicely-Nicely to approach her, and as he approaches, she whispers in his ear.

Now at this, the Boston character by the name of Conway jumps up and claims a foul, and several other Boston characters join him in this claim, and so does Joel Duffle, although afterwards even the Boston characters admit that Joel Duffle is no gentleman to make such a claim against a lady. Well, there is some confusion over this, and the judges hold a conference, and they rule that there is certainly no foul in the actual eating that they can see, because Miss Violette Shumberger does not touch her pie so far. But they say that whether it is a foul otherwise all depends on whether Miss Violette Shumberger is requesting advice on the contest from Nicely-Nicely and the judge from Providence, R.I., wishes to know if Nicely-Nicely will kindly relate what passes between him and Violette so they may make a decision.

"Why," Nicely-Nicely says, "all she asks me is can I get her another piece of pie when she finishes the one in front of her."

Now at this, Joel Duffle throws down his knife, and pushes back his plate with all but two bites of his pie left on it, and says to the Boston characters like this: "Gentlemen," he says, "I am licked. I cannot eat another mouthful. You must admit I put up a game battle, but," he says, "it is useless for me to go on against this Judy who is asking for more pie before she even starts on what is before her. I am almost dying as it is, and I do not wish to destroy myself in a hopeless effort. Gentlemen," he says, "she is not human."

Well, of course this amounts to throwing in the old napkin and Nicely-Nicely stands up on his chair, and says: "Three cheers for Miss Violette Shumberger!" Then Nicely-Nicely gives the first cheer in person, but the effort overtakes his

strength, and he falls off the chair in a faint just as Joel Duffle collapses under the table, and the doctors at the Clinic Hospital are greatly baffled to receive, from the same address at the same time, one patient suffering from undernourishment, and another who is unconscious from overeating.

Well, in the meantime, after the excitement subsides, and the wagers are settled, we take Miss Violette Shumberger to the main floor in Mindy's for a midnight snack, and when she speaks of her wonderful triumph, she is disposed to give much credit to Nicely-Nicely Jones. "You see," Violette says, "what I really whisper to him is that I am a goner. I whisper to him that I cannot possibly take one bite of the pie if my life depends on it, and if he has any bets down to try and hedge them off as quickly as possible. I fear," she says, "that Nicely-Nicely will be greatly disappointed in my showing, but I have a confession to make to him when he gets out of the hospital. I forget about the contest," Violette says, "and eat my regular dinner of pig's knuckles and sauerkraut an hour before the contest starts, and," she says, "I have no doubt this tends to affect my form somewhat. So," she says, "I owe everything to Nicely-Nicely's quick thinking."

It is several weeks after the great eating contest that I run into Miss Hilda Slocum on Broadway, and it seems to me that she looks much better nourished than the last time I see her, and when I mention this she says: "Yes," she says, "I cease dieting. I learn my lesson," she says. "I learn that male characters do not appreciate anybody who tries to ward off surplus tissue. What male characters wish is substance. Why," she says, "only a week ago my editor, Mr. McBurgle, tells me he will love to take me dancing if only I get something on me for him to take hold of. I am very fond of dancing," she says.

"But," I say, "what of Nicely-Nicely Jones? I do not see him around lately."

"Why," Miss Hilda Slocum says, "do you not hear what this cad does? Why, as soon as he is strong enough to leave the hospital, he elopes with my dearest friend, Miss Violette Shumberger, leaving me a note saying something about two souls with but a single thought. They are down in Florida running a barbecue stand, and," she says, "the chances are, eating like seven mules."

T T T T

### **Pie contest digests healthier options (*The Guardian*, 23 November 2006)**

Truly shocking news comes from Wigan, a splendid borough noted, among many other things, for hosting the annual World Pie Eating Championship. By proud tradition; contestants compete to see how many meat and potato pies they can put down in three minutes. But alas this year the organisers have bowed to the chilly winds of political and digestive correctness: the garland will go to the person who can consume a single pie quickest. If that was not a sufficient blow to our ancient liberties, Tony Callaghan, the owner of Harry's Bar, where the Championship is held, is also offering. . . wait for it .. a vegetarian option. "I realise this might be controversial," he said, "but this is the way forward for pie-eating at this level."

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## Nostalgia: from *The King's Breakfast* by A.A. Milne

The King asked the Queen, and  
The Queen asked  
The Dairymaid:  
“Could we have some butter for  
The Royal slice of bread?”  
The Queen asked  
The Dairymaid,  
The Dairymaid  
Said, “Certainly,  
I'll go and tell  
The cow  
Now  
Before she goes to bed.”



The Dairymaid  
She curtsied,  
And went and told  
The Alderney:  
“Don't forget the butter for  
The Royal slice of bread.”  
The Alderney

Said sleepily :  
“You'd better tell  
His Majesty  
That many people nowadays  
Like marmalade  
Instead.”

The Dairymaid  
Said, “Fancy!”  
And went to Her Majesty.  
She curtsied to the Queen, and  
She turned a little red :



“Excuse me,  
Your Majesty,  
For taking of  
The liberty,  
But marmalade is tasty, if  
It's very thickly spread.”



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## Odds and ends

### *Answers to 2006 Whizz Quiz*

1. Which classical composers featured the British national anthem in their music?

Johann Nepomuk Hummel: Freudenfest  
Muzio Clementi: Symphony No. 3  
Johann Christian Bach: Harpsichord Concerto No. 6, last movement  
Ludwig van Beethoven: piano variations in C (WoO.78)  
George Onslow 1784-1783 (opus 9)  
Niccolò Paganini – *Variations on ‘God save the King’*

2. Imagine you have just arrived in Purgatory. An angel shows you two doors, one of which leads to hell and the other to heaven. The angel points out two guardians, one in front of each door and tells you that one always speaks the truth and the other always lies. You are allowed to ask one of the guardians a single question before choosing a door. What is your question?

**Answer:** Ask one of the guardians what the other guardian would say if you asked him which door leads to heaven. Then take the other door.

### ***Work Ethic***

Life at work is like a tree full of monkeys, all on different limbs at different levels. Some monkeys are climbing up, others on the way down. Monkeys on top look down and see a tree full of smiling faces. The monkeys on the bottom look up and see nothing but assholes.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Remarkable names of real people (See CP 2001)***

Sir Jock Stirrup, current chief of the British Defence Staff (Dickens couldn't have chosen a better name).

### ***Unusual Place Names***

In *CP 2006* I included some unusual place names, mainly from the USA. Todd Stewart commented from Sun Valley, Idaho: "...somewhere in rural Oregon there was a cluster of buildings called *Whorehouse Meadow* in commemoration of a brothel once located there. However, the Federal Government's Board of Geographical Names, apparently a redoubt of Victorian sensibility, decreed that the place would henceforth be known as *Naughty Girl Meadows*. The Oregon authorities then told Washington to keep its hands off the cherished traditions of the Old West, and as far as I know *Whorehouse Meadow* remains *Whorehouse Meadow*."

In the same vein, I include a poem written in 1863 by Orpheus C. Kerr - a pseudonym of Robert H. Newell (1836-1901), editor of a magazine called *Lily of the Valley*). Newell explained that "While looking over some old magazines in the *Lily* office one day, I found in an ancient British periodical a raking article upon American literature, wherein the critic affirmed that all our writers were but weak imitators of English authors, and that such a thing even as a Distinctively American Poem, *sui generis* had not yet been produced.

"This radical sneer at the United States of America fired my Yankee blood, my boy, and I vowed within myself to write a poem, not only distinctively American, but of such a character that only America could have produced it. In the solitude of my

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<sup>11</sup> With thanks to Bill de Spoelberch.



room, that night, I wooed the aboriginal muse, and two days thereafter the *Lily of the Valley* contained my distinctive American poem of **The American Traveler**.<sup>12</sup>

<p>To <i>Lake Agmoognegamook</i>, All in the State of Maine, A Man from <i>Wittequergaugum</i> came One evening in the rain.</p> <p>'I am a traveller,' said he, 'Just started on a tour, And go to <i>Nonjamskillcock</i> Tomorrow morn at four.'</p> <p>He took a tavern bed that night; And, with the morrow's sun, By way of <i>Sekledobskus</i> went, With carpet-bag and gun.</p> <p>A week passed on; and next we find Our native tourist come To that sequestered village called <i>Genasagamagum</i>.</p> <p>From thence he went to <i>Absequoit</i>, And there, quite tired of Maine He sought the mountains of Vermont, Upon a railroad train.</p> <p><i>Dog Hollow</i>, in the Green Mount State, Was his first stopping place; And then <i>Skunk's Misery</i> displayed Its sweetness and its grace.</p> <p>By easy stages then he went To visit <i>Devil's Den</i>, And <i>Sramble Hollow</i>, by the way, Did come within his ken.</p> <p>Then via <i>Nine Holes</i> and <i>Goose Green</i> He travelled through the State; And to Virginia, finally, Was guided by his fate.</p> <p>Within the <i>Old Dominion's</i> bounds He wandered up and down; Today, at <i>Buzzard Roost</i> ensconced, Tomorrow at <i>Hell Town</i>.</p> <p>At <i>Pole Cat</i>, too, he spent a week, Till friends from <i>Bull Ring</i> came,</p>	<p>And made him spend a day with them In hunting forest-game.</p> <p>Then, with his carpet bag in hand, To <i>Dog Town</i> next he went, Though stopping at <i>Free Negro Town</i>, Where half a day he spent.</p> <p>From thence, to <i>Negationburg</i> His route of travel lay; Which having gained, he left the State And took a southward way.</p> <p>North Carolina's friendly soil He trod at fall of night, And, on a bed of softest down, He slept at <i>Hell's Delight</i>.</p> <p>Morn found him on the road again, To <i>Lousy Level</i> bound; At <i>Bull's Tail</i>, and <i>Lick Lizard</i>, too, Good provender he found.</p> <p>The country all about <i>Pinch Gut</i> So beautiful did seem That the beholder thought it like A picture in a dream.</p> <p>But the plantations near <i>Burnt Coat</i> Were even finer still, And made the wondering tourist feel A soft delicious thrill.</p> <p>At <i>Tear Shirt</i>, too, the scenery Most charming did appear, With <i>Snatch It</i> in the distance far, And <i>Purgatory</i> near.</p> <p>But, spite of all these pleasant scenes, The tourist stoutly swore That home is brightest, after all, And travel is a bore.</p> <p>So back he went to Maine straightway: A little wife he took; And now is making nutmegs at <i>Moosehimagunticook</i>.</p>
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<sup>12</sup> Quoted in "Local Discolor" by Mamie Meredith in *American Speech* Vol. 6, No. 4 April 1931.