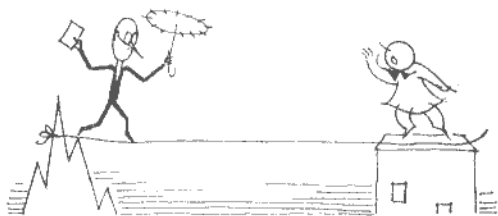




THE GREAT AND THE SMALL

Grook in proportions

When great things
whose greatness
is destined to fall
have turned out
too little
to matter at all,
then stoop
and discover
the great in the small.



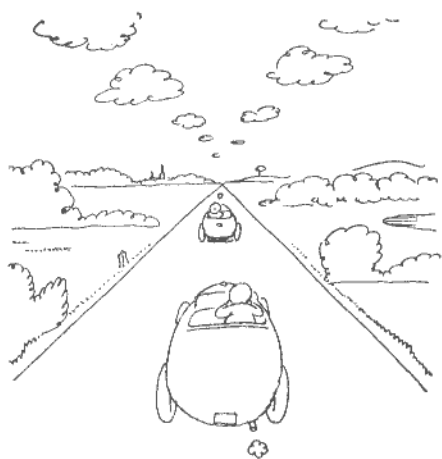
THE RECALCITRANT MEDIUM

The unyielding medium's
not merely endured:
it's that upon which
art depends.
For who can perform
on a tightrope secured
only at one
of its ends?



POPULAR RENOWN

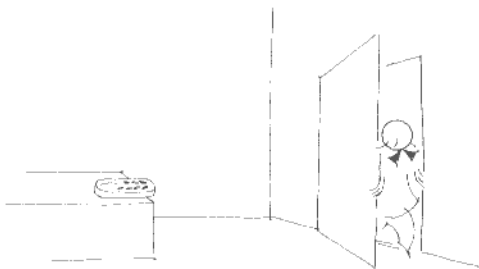
Strive after popular renown,
and you'll
have no attention left
for things worth doing.
To have the fools
consider you no fool
is a distinction
hardly worth pursuing.



ROAD HOGS

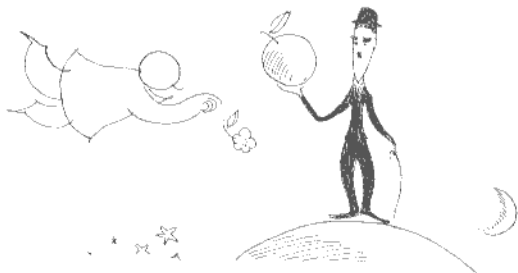
Traffic grook

Does no one read the Highway Code?
Most people drive, without a care,
right in the middle of the road—
though they can see I'm driving there.



DATES

A box of dates
embodies a
malicious sense of fun.
You eat enough,
you eat some more,
you eat until you're done.
And then you go
and wash your hands—
and take another one.



THE COMMON WELL

To Charles Chaplin

The well you invite us to drink of
is one that no drop may be bought of.
You think of what all of us think of
but nobody else could have thought of.



UP TO THE MINUTE

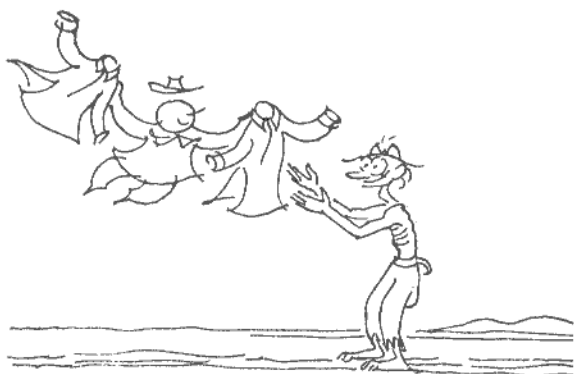
We think of our age
as the age of all ages
when Man has grown modern at last.
But what other page
among History's pages
was so overburdened with past?



FINISHING TOUCHES

Global grook

If we want Peace,
the things we must
accomplish
to preserve it
are, first,
to win each other's trust;
and, second,
to deserve it.



HYGIENE

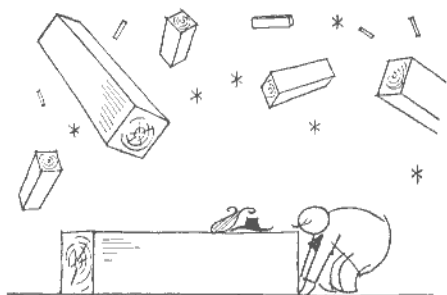
A grook with no reference
whatever to the two-party system

To wear a shirt
that's relatively clean
you needn't ever
launder off the dirt —
if you possess
two shirts to choose between
and always change
into the cleaner shirt.



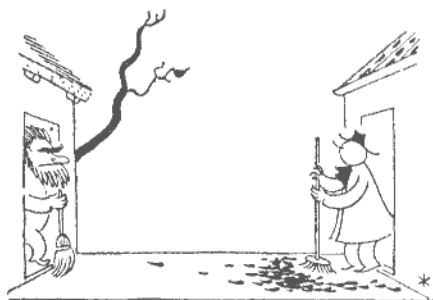
PERFECTION

Perfection, when it reaches the degree by certain panegyricists conceived, is something far too wonderful to see: it has to be described to be believed.



OUR OWN MOTES

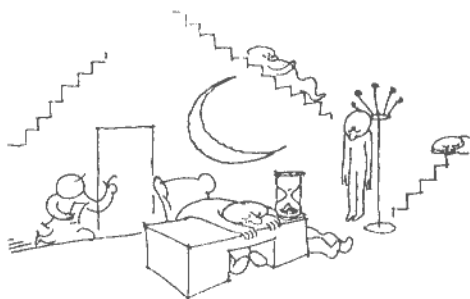
The errors hardest
to condone
in other people
are one's own.



THE HELPING HAND

Good-neighbour grook

We perceive that we must
do our bit, on the score
of community labours;
so we each sweep the dust
from in front of our door
to in front of our neighbour's.



THE BOAST

It is the boast
of modern man
to do at most
the least he can.



TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

People with
a bit of skill
are predestined
to fare ill.



FEAR FRUITFULLY

Don't be scared
by every panic-scare appearing;
don't believe
in every transient reprieve;
but believe
it will be better than you're fearing
when you fear
it will be worse than you believe.



FRUSTRATED YOUNG MAN

Grook about a contemporary phenomenon

No wonder the fellow
is fast turning mad
with gloom and frustration
and doubt.

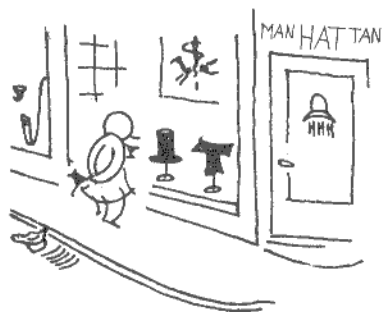
It must be unbearable
being so sad
with nothing to be it
about.



ON TAKING YOUR TIME

Time arrives all the time;
and the only true crime
is the way we defile it
with worry.

For inadequate time
is that species of time
you encounter
whenever you hurry.



ALL THE DIFFERENCE

Choosing would be
easy if a
difference didn't
make things differ.



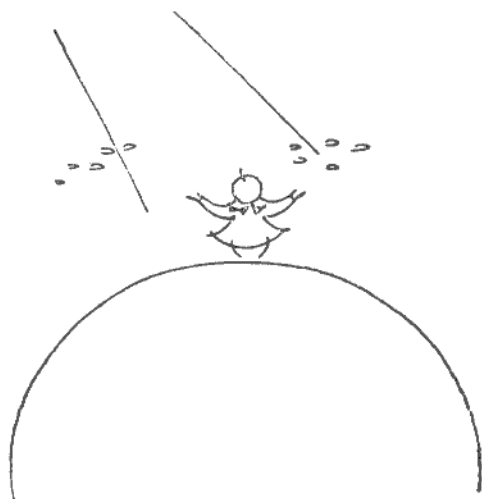
WHY DO THE CHIMPS LOOK WORRIED?

Anthropomorphological grook

When the Apes became Mankind
just a few were left behind.

Some are still around.

Grey, neurotic, anxious, lined,—
can it be that they've divined
whither they are bound?



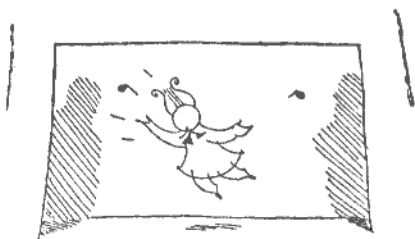
INTERVIEWEE

Am I pro, or anti, or ex, or ultra this, or that, or the other cult?
I am questioned with such pertinacity
that, once for all, I can only say
I am simply here on a passing stay
in a perfectly private capacity.



WEAKNESS THROUGH STRENGTH

Fanatics
may defend
a point of view
so strongly
as to prove
it can't be true.



UNQUALIFIED QUALIFICATION

To a friend,
in case he misunderstand me

I grant you, I attacked your foe;
but this, I feel you ought to know,
is something you should not construe
to mean that I agree with you.



CRANIAL CAPACITY

Portrait of a cerebral type

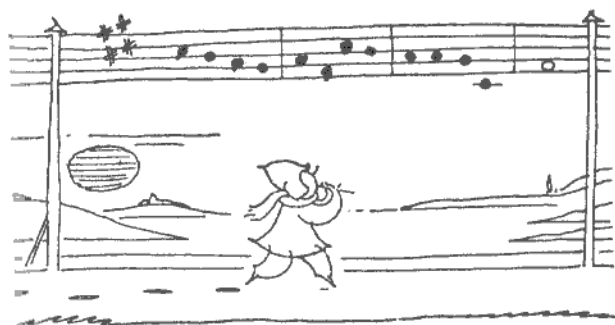
Back of that myopic face
every fact he's lived to trace
lies cross-indexed in its place
with notes and variorum.
His collection grows apace,
and compels him to displace
every inch of working space
to amplify the storeroom.



COLOQUINT

When old Coloquint
 is annoyed with me
he tells me as much
 with vim;
but that doesn't mean
 that I have to be,
for my part,
 annoyed with him.

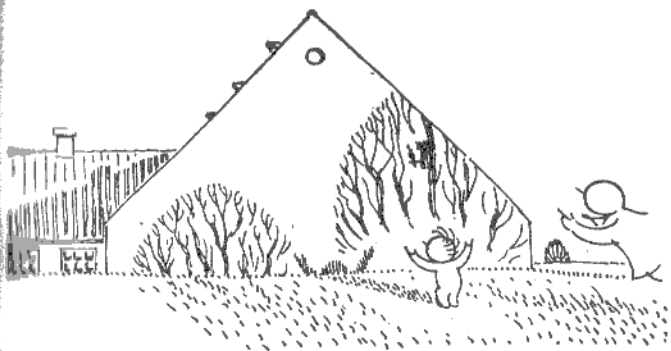
But this is beyond
 his grasp—and so
he equally
 fails to see
that that's what annoys me,
 whether or no
the fellow's
 annoyed with me.



TELEPHONIC COMMUNICATIONS

Sparrows in the wintertime
perch along the wires
cherishing the frozen songs
they have no heart to sing,
fluffing out their feathers
to conserve their inner fires,
waiting for the warmer airs
that summertime will bring.

Troubadours a-wandering
with summer-hearted lyres
recognize these scatterings
of crotchets on a string:
wintertime notations
of the melodies of Spring.



WILLOW PATTERN

The winter sun
gilds the bare willow trees; their shadows, tall
and starkly silhouetted, overrun
my whitewashed wall.

The strength life owns
is such, that vivid life is what one sees
in the mere shadows of denuded bones
of living trees.



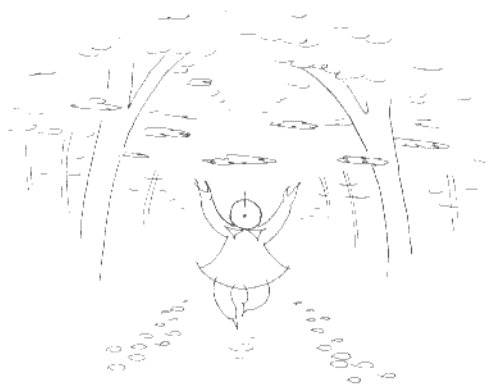
A GROOK ABOUT A RED ROSE

I gave my love a rose of purest red.
All night it stood blushing beside her bed.
One petal fell; then two; and then a score:
It won't believe in budding any more.



ALREADY—

We now approach the season
when hope, in spite of reason,
proclaims that Spring is on the way
and Winter almost past;
when expectations flower
with every passing shower,
and anxious hearts begin to say:
already! and: at last!



BEECH GREEN

Colourgrook

The beech wood is more green this Spring
than it has ever been.

One can't believe that anything
could ever be so green.

Here is a green to ease the mind,
and recreate the will;
but shut your eyes, and you will find
its scent is greener still.



ADDRESS TO MY BELOVED

Some girls I worship from afar
to passionate excess.
But when I meet them face to face
I love them rather less.

Some other girls I love afresh
each time I meet again.
It's not until they're out of sight
that love begins to wane.

But you alone, my love, I love
wherever you may be.
So you can stay, or go away,—
it's all the same to me.



EXPERIENCE

A sigh

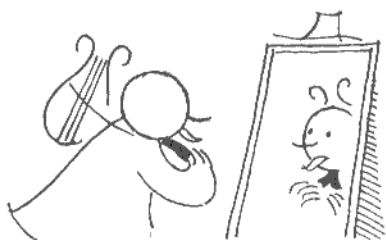
All we know
we learn to doubt
in life's successive schools.
Which goes to show
we started out
unutterable fools.



HABIT

A grook on prudery

The Truth that's naked
and unadorned
affronts our culture
as much as Babbitt's;
and now, as ever,
the lady's scorned
unless she is dressed
in conventional habits.



THE MIRROR

Mirrors have one limitation: You can't
either by hook or by crook
use them to see how you look when you aren't
looking to see how you look.



SPIRITUAL HEIRS

A grook addressed to Parnassus

O Master Minds of bygone ages,
you are our touchstones and our gauges:
we search our times and wonder who
could be a second — one of you.

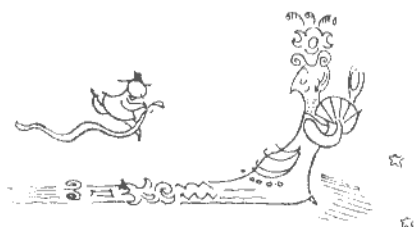
But, Great Ones, is it worth pursuing
this fantasy of second-young?
The me that seems to me worth being
has quite enough to do with meing.



ON AVOIDING EXCESS

Temperance grook

Yes, alcohol
may be enjoyed
in moderation
with propriety;
but do for all
the world avoid
intoxication
and sobriety.



CULTURE

A grook for vultures

Culture's the cultures
of what's left behind
after a culture's
departed.

Yet there's a problem
that troubles my mind:
back in the innocent
dawn of mankind,
how did it ever
get started?



THE SOCIAL ROUND

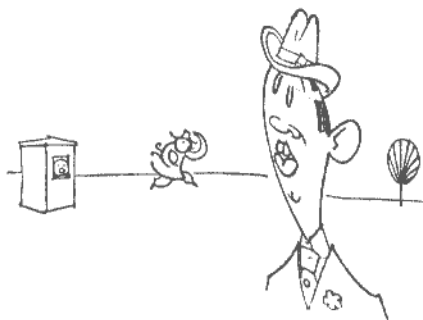
Those smart invitations
on smart people's shelves
that smart people send
one another,
are summons to those
who are bored by themselves
to come and be bored
by each other.



WITHIN REACH

A grook on keeping order

Oh, it's grand when the things
that you can't do without
have at last got so
hopelessly strayed,
that regardless of where
you start rooting about,
you will hit upon one
you'd mislaid.



ENDOWMENT

However excellent
intelligence,
yet there is one endowment
to outgo it:
and that is
to possess so little sense
you haven't even
sense enough to know it.



ALMOST HUMAN

The thinking elevator,
so the makers proudly say,
will optimize its program
in an almost human way.
And truly, the resemblance
is uncomfortably strong:
it isn't merely thinking,
it's even thinking wrong.



GROWTH GROOK

Lying in the meadow grass
I know that life is growing,
know that at this moment it's
the only thing worth knowing.
Here my life flows onwards
with Nature's living flow.
If it stopped its whispering
the grass could hear me grow.



LIVING IN THE MOMENT

To live in the moment's a well-worn routine
that most of the world has perfected;
for some, it's the moment that's already been,
for others, — the one that's expected.

Yet no sort of magic can kindle anew
a past that is over forever,
nor summon the future before it is due:
our moment is now—or it's never.

So brief is the moment in which we may live,
and future or past it isn't.
Whoever would know of what life has to give
must gratefully welcome the present.



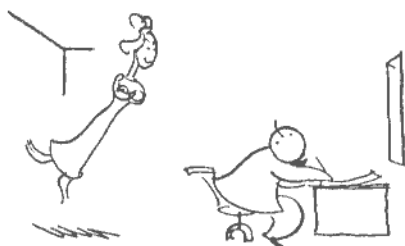
QUIET NIGHT

I'm feeling somewhat
indisposed,
and so's my Muse,
I've diagnosed.
So all exertion
we'll avoid:
we'll put ourselves to bed
with Freud.



LOOK ANEW

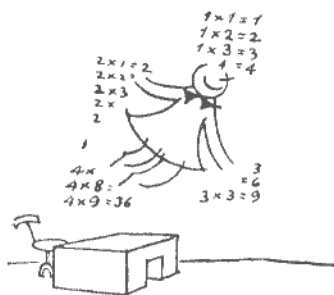
If you look anew
 with every new day's dawning,
as aware as though
 the world had just begun,
you will fill your life
 with meaning every morning,
but apart from that
 get very little done.



MUSA MEWS

My Muse—who swears she's mine forever,
and means it, too ...
made a remark I must endeavour
to misconstrue.

She murmured: 'Don't you think we're clever?
Compared to you?'



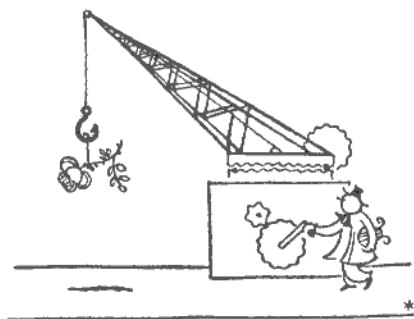
MULTIPLY

What would I choose to be
if I were able?

I'd be the
multiplication table.

Natural laws
never enter its mind:

It simply applies
when it feels inclined.



TECHNIQUE

Recipe

The height of
technical felicity
is to combine
sublime simplicity
with just sufficient
ingenuities
to show how difficult
to do it is.



TWO HALF — TRUTHS

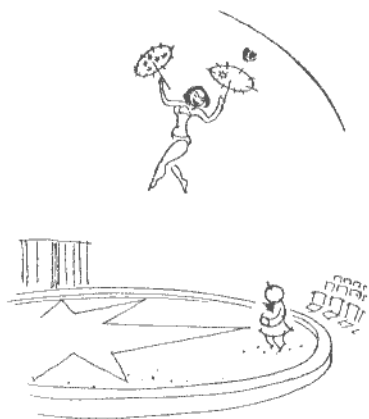
Half of a truth is often aired,
and often proved correct:
it's sensible to be prepared
for what you don't expect.

The other half is minimized,
or totally neglected:
It's wiser still to be surprised
by what you most expected.



THE PLAGIARIST

The plagiarist
embodies
a naive
miscalculation
he apes
originality
by dint of
imitation.



ASPIRATION

A tight-rope artiste, whose abilities
made audiences gasp and perspire,
rejected her critics' civilities,
and aimed at still greater agilities.

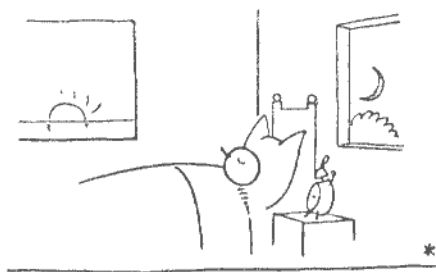
Her ultimate exploit was dire.
For she vowed
to the crowd
that had come to admire:
today I shall try it
without any wire;
for those who to difficult arts
would aspire
must practise on impossibilities.



THE SHAPE OF TRUTH

A fable

A sage, who had filled his glass
at the fountain of truth,
said, in a statement
that later became canonical,
to his disciples,
patterns of eager youth:
'I have seen truth itself;
and it is conical'.



EVENING AND MORNING SONG

About falling asleep and waking up

The world disappears,
a loop running smaller, until
the thread is drawn out,
and the space it encloses is nil.

Newborn of nothing,
reluctantly starting to be,
fumbling awareness awakens
and finds that it's me.



ADMONITION TO RECITERS

Pedagogic grook

Let spoken poetry stand alone,
as printed on the air.

Let no sweet soulfulness of tone
be manifested there.

Whatever soul the words embrace
the words alone must state:
the moment they are put in place
sweet-souling comes too late.