

THE COLLECTED POEMS

OF

WILLIAM H. RIKER

RIKER

Riker: Teaching,
Every reaching.
(Preaching?) Always kind.

Clever fellow.
Ever mellow.
His the tie that blinds.

Oh so witty,
Writes a ditty.
Posts it on the door.

Strange perspective:
History detective.
Makes us beg for more.

Anonymous

CHARLES DODGSON

Charley Dodgson like to photo
Little girls *au natural*.
You might think he'd get in trouble
When the little girls would tell.

But Charley was a fine logician,
Had his conquests will rehearsed,
Told them tales of pretty Alice,
And got Mamas' approval first.

SAMUEL JOHNSON

A mighty writer,
Never terse
In prose or verse,
Until pensioned
By monarch well-intentioned,
For wit, both Tory and Divine,
And never wrote another line.

J.D. SALINGER: THE CATCHER IN THE RYE

I'd prefer that S. condense
This misery of innocence.

AGGRIPINA

Aggripina, mother of Nero,
Warned the would-be fiddling hero,
"Philosophy is not fit thing
For a man who will be king."

She poisoned Claudius and his son
(And thus was Nero's empire won)
And durst to tell him what to do,
So he humped and killed the bossy shrew.

But she deserved the fate she got
For incest, murder and telling him what
Philosophy's not.

THE BOY AND THE DOLPHIN (after Pliny)

The boy astride the dolphin glides
As if Posiedon's horse he rides.
The village things it's credit owed
For what the boy and dolphin showed
And advertises prodigy
With anthro-orca effigy.
The noble tourists come to stare
And take, of course, a noble share
Of village stores of wine and food.
The villages now change their mood.
From unseen costs to extricate
The dolphin they decapitate,
The feudal way to stop its feats.
Today they would have sold out seats.

**CAPITAL
BY KARL MARX**

Splenetically,
He swore that we,
The bourgeoisie,
Should oft recall
His carbuncle.

'Tis true,
We do,

But not so often as the suffering mass
Who're ruled by the vanguard of the
working class.

UTILITARIANS

Oh! Cheer utilitarians --
They're jolly antiquarians.
They toast the pain and pleasure rules
While dining unconcerned as ghouls
With Bentham's bones
As chaperons

THOREAU

Thoreau went into Walden wild
(Though still in Concord's sphere)
There to live like Nature's child
(But only for a year).

**THE PRINCE
BY NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI**

Unemployed, Old Nick
Sought a Medici-an job
For teaching them the trick
Of how to rule the mob.

Informed already, they paid him no attention,
Begetting, thus, two popes, two queens, and
dukes too numerous to mention.

HEGEL

George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel
Often praised his morning bagel.
And that's the only theme of which I's heard
Whereon he spoke a wise or truthful word.

THE REPUBLIC

To make the city just
Each person of us must
Today
Obey
That oxymoron thing,
The wisdom-loving king.

SO SAID MISTRESS COKE*

My Lord Chief Justice Coke
The Widow Hatton wed,
Leapt into the marriage bed,
Felt the child within and said,
"What? Flesh in the Pot?"
"Yea," quoth she, "Why not?"

"Why else would I marry a cook?"

*per John Aubrey

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

With satisfaction he announced:
"This is the way the ball has bounced
From history without a plan:
God is Dead
We have instead
Kryptonite SU-U-Uperman."

THE WEALTH OF NATIONS

BY

ADAM SMITH

Visible rules in all lands
Deprecate this book because
It shows us that invisible hands
Improve upon their visible laws.

LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN

**or How the Camel Crept Toward the Eye of
the Needle**

Tender-hearted Wittgenstein
Renounced his wealth with fine design,
Endowed his sister, wealthier than he,
And took from the none the grace of poverty.

JOHN MAYNARD KEYNES

John Maynard Keynes,
Though well endowed with brains,
Thought he could manage the business cycle!
He might as well have prayed to St. Michael.

ALFRED MARSHALL

Alfred Marshall
Was fanatically partial
To supply and demand
As the unseen hand.

THE EARL OF OXFORD*

Bowing low before the Queen
The Earl of Oxford farted
Abashed, abased, he fled the scene,
For seven years departed,

Returned (with time his shame the less)
To play his courtly part.
"My greetings warm, My Lord," said Bess,
"I'd quite forgot the fart."

* per John Aubrey

GEN. SIR HARRY FLASHMAN, K.C.B*

Old Flashy,
Drunk and whoring,
Always trashy,
Never boring,
Toady, coward,
Rugby riff-raff,
Honor showered,
Roaring horse-laugh.

* Detail on the Victorian anti-hero Harry Flashman appears in Thomas Hughes, *Tom Brown's School Days* (1856) and in the many volumes by George Macdonald Fraser, beginning with *Flashman* (1969).

MARQUIS DE CONDORCET

You opened up Pandora's box
And gave us all some awful shocks.
So Condorcet
Please lock away
Your nasty little paradox.

CONDORCET REPLIES

Listen here, my whining heir,
Science simply doesn't care
Whether or not
It suits your thought.
The paradox was always there
So revelation shouldn't scare.
And now you wot
What God begot
Because I had the sit to share
The cycles whirling everywhere.

EMILE

BY JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

Jean Jacques Rousseau
Took great pains to show
He was the perfect tutor for the fictional
Emile
But he left by the door of the foundling home
The babes he fathered for real.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Ralph Waldo dug a hole
In which there dwells a giant mole.
About its state
There swirls debate:
Can it be the Oversoul?

SAMUEL PEPYS

Samuel Pepys
A diary keeps.

It lacks a prefiss
By Samuel Pepiss.

And code device
By Samuel Pepice

But counts the anniversaries
Of cutting for the stone disease
Performed on Samuel Pepease.

**SHERLOCK HOLMES
BY ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE**

Observe with shock
Watson, not Holmes,
Returns from Reichenback.

Reason for this disparity:
Watson is Moriarity.

HAMLET

Failure to decide
On regicide
Results in
Multiple homicide.

THE ODYSSEY

Odysseus bred Penelope,
And then, expecting her fidelity,
He sailed away for twenty years,
And she, despite her suitor's jeers,
Was true and won her just reward,
Which was departure of her lord
To search for men so far from shore
They did not recognize an oar.

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

Sadly partin'
Sydney Carton
(An error of the Terror)
But not so say,
If Sid is glad.

**PRIDE AND PREJUDICE
BY JANE AUSTEN**

Squire Bennet, a many-daughtered man,
His wealth in tail
By descent male,
His girls must marry as they can.

Bull and Hasty merely hitch,
But Wit and Beauty marry rich.

**LITTLE WOMEN
BY LOUISA MAY ALCOTT**

Four more girls without a dowry,
Louisa pulls a switch:
So first comes death
For gentle Beth
Then Wit and Virtue learn to be
Devoted wives in poverty
And only Snippy marries rich.

DON QUIXOTE

A good man in a bad place
Living crazily in grace:

But chivalry is not unique
Among romances madmen seek.

Were he a medieval man,
Would he preserve his pristine plan,

Or would he yearn for ancient Rome
(Where civic virtue ruled the home)

And Cincinnatus imitate
With Dulcinea matron-mate?

Or would he opt for decadence,
As when the empire was immense,

Petronious-ly thus to share
In Dulcinea's joyful snare?

Quixotic as his choice might seem,
T'would fit some five-dimension dream.

SAMSON

Old Man Samson was a judge.
Old Man Samson had a grudge.
Every day in a way pristine
He liked to kill a Philistine.

With the jawbone of an ass,
He wiped out a human mass.

All his strength was in his hair,
And so he never scissored there.

But there was something pretty wrong
With the way that he was strong

For he lay with many ladies
But there were never any babies.

Delilah is the one he told
The reason that he was so bold.

And so she cut and shaved his hair
Until he was entirely bare.

Then he wasn't worth a bean
Against the horrid Philistine.

And so they took away his sight
To scorn him for his feeble fight.

But by Jehovah's awful will
He finally made another kill,

Pushing down the granite posts
Within the house that held his hosts.

Old Man Samson was a judge
Old Man Samson had a grudge
So much so that he finally tried
To mix revenge and suicide.

LEVIATHAN

by **Thomas Hobbes**

Whence came this Artificial Man,
Leviathan,
Concentrated Might,
Aweful Sight,
Accepted as just better than
The natural fight of man with man
Because we fear the life that is, by his report,
Solitary, poore, nasty, brutish and short?

Why, here's its advent:

Remarkable accident:

Early to labor, with Armada near,
His mother twinned, T.H. and fear

THOMAS MORE

Sir Thomas caged by Tower door
Received a call from Mistress More.
She bade him see the bishops' force
Approving of the King's divorce.
She bade him be expedient,
Forget that God requires dissent.
And, for the children, ease distress.
She bade him think of Chelsea place,
His house, his books, his garden space.
Responding to the nagging shrew,
He asked her if it was not true
That he's "as close to God right there
As he would be in Chelsea fair?"
And likely thought with inner malice
"I'm farther sure from Mistress Alice."

PARETO OPTIMALITY

Vilfredo Pareto:
It's he who guessed
The social best
Occurs when I
Cannot espy
Another move
That all approve.

Such harmony
Can hardly be
The social best
If those oppressed
A bit improve
On every move
While elites score
A great deal more.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON

Colonel Alex Hamilton
Detested Aaron Burr.
All right! But t'were not wise to fight
A man whose shot was sure.

WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS

William Dean Howells
A man of japes and scowls
As for merchants, he'd like to scrap 'em,
So he wrote *The Rise of Silas Lapham*.

MORTE D'ARTHUR

The table round, the castle fair
The knights have come from everywhere

To feast and pray and joust and train
With Gareth, Tristram, and Gawaine.

And what will these brave knights attack,
Lancelot and Lamorack?

Why, they'll seek out the Holy Grail,
Galahad and Percivale.

A pointless purpose thus has brought
The sorry end of Camelot.

ELECTIONS AT THE NATIONAL ACADEMY

Facile judges of recruits,
Grey beards in grey suits,
Beards a-wagging
Niggling-nagging
Ruff beards, scruff beards,
Spike beards, Van Dyke beards,
Wistful and searching for
Their cleverness of yore
By picking out
The boys to tout
As if this bit of common sense
Would give them back intelligence.

OEDIPUS REX

I. Before Freud

Oedipus Res:

Fatal effects

From failure to investigate

The lineage of the mate.

II. At Freud

Oedipus Rex:

All sex.

III. After Freud

Oedipus wrecks

All sex

THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Every college has its treasure:

Some make money, some give pleasure.

London wins the prize world-wide:

The head of Bentham mummified.

A DISPUTATION ON SEMIOTICS BETWEEN

SENATOR CHAUNCEY DEPEW

AND

PRESIDENT WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT

Said a Senator, name of Chauncey,

"Mr. Prez, you're getting paunchy,"

Laid his hand on that corporation,

"What'll you name the new formation?"

The Prez replied, as the room grew still,

"Why 'f it's a boy, I'll name him Will,"

A response mile to a question raunchy --

"But, 'f it's gas, I'll call it Chauncy."

A WARNING FROM JANE GOODALL

If you're a baby chimpanzee
It will hardly ever be
A blatant impropriety
To lick a termite from a stick.

But if you are a human child
Some punishment, however mild,
Will be imposed by parent riled
If you should duplicate the trick

THE ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES

Endangered species, relocate!
Find another niche and eat,
Voraciously. And then your fate
Will be to speciate,
As your progeny repeat.

If fitness is to be alive,
Then the fittest do survive.

SPOTTED OWL

Hooray for the cute spotted owl,
A delicate, celibate fowl,
To keep it a-nesting
Its home we are wresting
From loggers and joggers a-prowl.

PLEASE RATE THE PRESIDENTS ON A SCALE OF ONE TO TEN

Now Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D,
Heroes from here to eternity,
Ten, at least, they're supposed to be,
But I'll give them five or maybe four:
They got their kicks from going to war.

Down at the bottom at one or less
Are LBJ and Harry S.:
They copied heroes and left a mess.

Just above'em is Tricky Dick,
He started well but left us sick.

Now Silent Cal, he slept a lot,
But he gets an eight for the wealth he brought.

Though brief the time for Warren G.
He gets a five for normalcy.

I've got a seven for Jerry Ford
Who made no laws and drew no sword.

For Georgia's Jimmy a six or such:
He kept very busy but didn't do much.

Now Jacky K., a two he's got
For playing in an empty Camelot.

Perhaps a six for the rider rough,
Very noise, but not very tough.

The great humanitarian
Who left his job a broken man,
I'll give him two or maybe three
For we were broker than was he.

Good old Ronnie, a eight at least:
He clobbered Gorby and gave a feast.

Billy Taft and General Ike
These are the guys I really like:
Helpers, healers, modest men,
I'll give them a great big ten.

TO DICK, ON FEBRUARY 29

Of anniversaries deprived
By happy fetal accident,
Our Dick has nonetheless contrived
A main quadrennial event.

By using strange arithmetic
And jumping beans for keeping score
His four sixteens (non-arabic)
Are greater far than sixty-four.

CHIT-CHAT IN THE FACULTY LOUNGE

"Professor Austen-Smith is God,"
He quotes a student questionnaire.
From Wolkoff comes deflating prod,
"It's strange you have dyslexics there."