

42 QUOTATIONS



Ogden Nash

(1902-1971)

Ogden Nash is the best American poet of witty light verse. He published over 500 comic poems collected in 14 volumes from 1931 to 1972. "I think in terms of rhyme, and have since I was six years old," he said. Nash descended from the brother of General Francis Nash, whose name was given to Nashville, Tennessee. He attended Harvard for one year, became an editor at Doubleday, began to write verses and attained popularity with his first book: "People who work sitting down get paid more than people who work standing up." For most of his life he made his home in Baltimore: "I could have loved New York had I not loved Balti-more." He married, had two daughters and was an avid sports fan. As he became increasingly popular he lectured at colleges, co-wrote scripts and appeared on comedy shows. He died of Crohn's disease and an infection from contaminated cole slaw. Nash's light verse is characterized by brevity, wit, commonplace subjects, coined words, clever couplets, faulty rhymes, irregular meter, and lines that gallop-running too long. The humor often derives from his forcing effects:

Candy
Is dandy
But liquor is quicker.

Song of the Open Road

I think that I shall never see
A billboard lovely as a tree.
Indeed, unless the billboards fall
I'll never see a tree at all.

Lather as You Go

Beneath this slab

John Brown is stowed.
He watched the ads
And not the road.

Biological Reflection

A girl whose cheeks are covered with paint
Has an advantage with me over one whose ain't.

Good Intentions

There was a young belle of old Natchez
Whose garments were always in patchez.
When comment arose
On the state of her clothes,
She drawled, When Ah itches, Ah scratches!

I Do, I Will, I Have

I believe a little incompatibility is the spice of life, particularly if he has income and she is patable.

What's the Use

Sure, deck your limbs in pants,
Yours are the limbs, my sweeting.
You look divine as you advance...
Have you seen yourself retreating?

A Word to Husbands

To keep your marriage brimming
With love in the loving cup,
Whenever you're wrong, admit it;
Whenever you're right, shut up.

Good Intentions

Women would rather be right than reasonable.

The Perfect Husband

He tells you when you've got on too much lipstick,
And helps you with your girdle when your hips stick.

What Almost Every Woman Knows Sooner or Later

Husbands are things that wives have to get used to putting up with.
And with whom they breakfast with and sup with.

They interfere with the discipline of nurseries
And forget anniversaries,
And when they have been particularly remiss
They think they can cure everything with a great big kiss,
And when you tell them about something awful they have done they
just look unbearably patient and smile a superior smile,
And think, Oh she'll get over it after awhile...

The Cuckoo

Cuckoos lead Bohemian lives,
They fail as husbands and as wives,
Therefore they cynically disparage
Everybody else's marriage.

Reflections on Babies

A bit of talcum
Is always walcum.

Grandpa Is Ashamed

A child need not be very clever
To learn that "Later, dear" means "Never."

The Romantic Age

This one is entering her teens,
Ripe for sentimental scenes,
Has picked a gangling unripe male,
Sees herself in a bridal veil,
Presses lips and tosses head,
Declares she's not too young to wed,
Informs you pertly you forget
Romeo and Juliet.
Do not argue, do not shout;
Remind her how that one turned out.

Family Court

One would be in less danger
From the wiles of a stranger
If one's own kin and kith
Were more fun to be with.

from No, You Be a Lone Eagle

I find it very hard to be fair-minded
About people who go around being air-minded....

The Hunter

The hunter crouches in his blind
'Neath camouflage of every kind
And conjures up a squeaking noise
To lend allure to his decoys.
This grown-up man, with pluck and luck,
Is hoping to outwit a duck.

Everybody Tells Me Everything

I find it very difficult to enthuse
Over the current news.
Just when you think that at least the outlook is so black
that it can grow no blacker, it worsens,
And that is why I do not like the news,
because there has never been an era when so many things were
going so right for so many of the wrong persons.

from A Bas Beb Adhem

My fellow man I do not care for.
I often ask me, What's he there for?
...Not that I think much depends
On how we treat our feathered friends,
Or hold the wrinkled elephant
A nobler creature than my aunt.
It's simply that I'm sure I can
Get on without my fellow man.

The Fly

God in his wisdom made the fly
And then forgot to tell us why.

Hymn to the Thing That Makes the Wolf Go

O money, money, money, I'm not necessarily one of those who think thee holy,
But I often stop to wonder how thou canst go out so fast when thou comest in so slowly.

I'm a Stranger Here Myself

There are two kinds of people who blow through life like a breeze,
And one kind is gossipers, and the other is gossipees.

Inter-Office Memorandum

There is only one way to achieve happiness on this terrestrial ball,
And that is to have either a clear conscience, or none at all.

A Clean Conscience Never Relaxes

I think remorse ought to stop biting the consciences that feed it.

A Drink with Something in It

There is something about a Martini,
A tingle remarkably pleasant;
A yellow, a mellow Martini;
I wish that I had one at present.
There is something about a Martini,
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.

Lines on Facing Forty

I have a bone to pick with Fate.
Come here and tell me, girlie,
Do you think my mind is maturing late,
Or simply rotting early?

Let's Not Climb the Washington Monument Tonight

Middle age is when you've met so many people
that every new person you meet reminds you of someone else.

The Middle

When I remember bygone days
I think how evening follows morn;
So many I loved were not yet dead,
So many I love were not yet born.

Crossing the Border

Senescence begins
And middle age ends
The day your descendants
Outnumber your friends.

He Digs, He Dug, He Has Dug

My garden will never make me famous,
I'm a horticultural ignoramus,
I can't tell a stringbean from a soybean,
Or even a girl bean from a boy bean.

A Caution to Everybody

Consider the auk:
Becoming extinct because he forgot how to fly,
And could only walk.
Consider man,
Who may well become extinct
Because he forgot how to walk
And learned how to fly before he thought.

A Dog's Best Friend Is His Illiteracy

A dog is what a door is perpetually on the wrong side of.

An Introduction to Dogs

Dogs display reluctance and wrath
If you try to give them a bath.
They bury their bones in hideaways
And half the time they trot sideways.

The Dog

The truth I do not stretch or shove
When I state that the dog is full of love.
I've also found, by actual test,
A wet dog is the lovin'gest.

The Firefly

The firefly's flame
Is something for which science has no name.
I can think of nothing eerier
Than flying around with an unidentified glow
on a person's posterior.

The Turtle

The turtle lives 'twixt plated decks
Which practically conceal its sex.
I think it clever of the turtle
In such a fix to be so fertile.

The Camel

The camel has a single hump;
The dromedary, two;
Or else the other way around.
I'm never sure. Are you?

The Abominable Snowman

I've never seen an abominable snowman.
I'm hoping not to see one,
I'm also hoping, if I do,
That it will be a wee one.

The Cow

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

The Catsup Bottle

First a little
Then a lottle