

John Betjeman (1906-84)

1 *The Arrest of Oscar Wilde at the Cadogan Hotel*

He sipped at a weak hock and seltzer
As he gazed at the London skies
Through the Nottingham lace of the curtains
Or was it his bees-winged eyes?

To the right and before him Pont Street 5
Did tower in her new built red,
As hard as the morning gaslight
That shone on his unmade bed,

“I want some more hock in my seltzer,
And Robbie, please give me your hand — 10
Is this the end or beginning?
How can I understand?

“So you’ve brought me the latest *Yellow Book*:
And Buchan has got in it now:
Approval of what is approved of 15
Is as false as a well-kept vow.

“More hock, Robbie — where is the seltzer?
Dear boy, pull again at the bell!
They are all little better than *cretins*,
Though this *is* the Cadogan Hotel. 20

“One astrakhan coat is at Willis’s —
Another one’s at the Savoy:
Do fetch my morocco portmanteau,
And bring them on later, dear boy.”

A thump, and a murmur of voices — 25

