A clerihindex?

The complete clerihews of E. Clerihew Bentley have an index as original as its content. A 'clerihew' is described in the introduction by Gavin Ewart as 'a humorous pseudo-biographical quatrain, rhymed as two couplets, with lines of uneven length'; such as:

Sir Christopher Wren
Said, 'I am going to dine with some men.
If anybody calls,
Say I am designing St Paul's.'

The clerihews have been published in a succession of volumes, each with its own index (the work of Bentley himself), starting with Biography for beginners (1905). The first composite index was to Clerihews complete (1951), but was selective only. The complete clerihews (OUP, 1981), was the first complete collection of clerihews published, and was succeeded in 1983 by a revised, paperback edition, including for the first time all entries from all the original indexes.

There are 140 verses in the 1983 volume, provided with an index of 10 pages, double-column, headed, 'Index of Psychology, Mentality and Other Things frequently noted in connection with genius'. The introductory note runs:

In all work of a biographic character it is important to make copious reference to as many as possible of the generally-recognized virtues, vices, good points, foibles, peculiarities, tricks, characteristics, little weaknesses, traits, imperfections, flaws, idiosyncrasies, singularities, morbid symptoms, oddities, faults, and regrettable propensities set forth in the following table. The form of an alphabetic index, with references to the examples given in the preceding pages, has been chosen, so that the beginner who may be desirous, when trying his hand at work of this sort, of seeing how any given one of these subjects may best be treated, is enabled at once to turn to one or more model passages.

The index cites merely the subjects of the verses, which are printed in alphabetical order of subjects' names—one to a page, illustrated. The quatrain quoted above yields a reference under each letter of the alphabet; a proportion of index to text of >650%!

We print below some sample entries from this most unusual and attractive index, by courtesy of Oxford University Press.

- action, prompt and decisive, unfitness for position requiring (OTTO)
- agitation, reluctance to explain (BEIT)
- atrocity (WREN)
- bankruptcy, moral (WREN)
- Bellona, embraces of, narrow escape from (SHAW)
- blessedness, single, undervaluation of (HENRY VIII)
- blood, heyday in the, inability to tame (BEDE, HENRY VIII)
- Norman, capacity to lose (RUFUS)
- bowl, the, disinclination to shun (DANTE, POINCARE)
- cheering, loud and prolonged, during which the honourable gentleman did not resume his seat (COMTE)
- conduct, disingenuous (WREN)
- contretemps, awkward, liability to (HENRY VIII, ODO, SNOWDEN)
- domesticity (HENRY VIII, IBSEN)
- domestic servants, dishonesty among, encouragement of (WREN)
- done, simply not, repugnance to what is (PEEL, STUBBS)
- escutcheon, blot on, action involving (WREN)
- fact, cynical perversion of (WREN)
- frequency, nuptial (HENRY VIII)
- gametomania (HENRY VIII)
- glamour, negative reaction to (KNOX)
- guile (WREN)
- habits, repugnant personal, often found in association with fine spiritual gifts (BUNYAN)
- hypocrisy, calculated (WREN)
- integrity, low standard of (WREN)
- Jesuitical dealing (WREN)
- knavery (WREN)
- lie, bouncing circulation of (WREN)
- Machiavelli, unholy precepts of, tendency to act upon (WREN)
- mercy, bowels of, non-equipment with (TORQUEMADA)
- monogamy, recurrent (HENRY VIII)
- noblesse oblige, disregard of apothegm (WREN)
- openness, want of (CANUTE, WREN)
- principle, lack of (WREN)
- queenhood, lavishness in the matter of (HENRY VIII)
- quickening, spiritual, need of (WREN)
- Restoration, lax morality of, readiness to fall in with (WREN)
- Satanism, revolting display of (WREN)
- temperament, artistic, the: its acute sensitiveness (VAN EYCK); deliberate eccentricity (FIFE); drunkenness (ERASMUS); high value set upon it by Frenchmen (TIZIANO); irresistibly attracted by the sublime (GRIEG); love of violent action (LISZT); naive self-appreciation (CIMABUE)
- turpitude (WREN)
- untruth, plausible, ability to frame (WREN)
- uxory (HENRY VIII, IBSEN)
- variety, thirst for (BENN, HENRY VIII)
- veracity, departure from (WREN)
- width (HENRY VIII)
- wood-notes wild, native, unfair competition with (SHAKESPEARE)
- world, the next, neglect of prospects in (WREN)
- Xmas, failure to merit gifts at (WREN)
- YMCA, unfitness for (WREN)

Zion, outcast from (WREN)