

The Book of Nonsense

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1867

Edward Lear

There was an Old Derry down Derry,
Who loved to see little folks merry; So he
made them a Book, And with laughter
they shook, At the fun of that Derry down
Derry!

TO THE GREAT-GRANDCHILDREN,
GRAND-NEPHEWS, AND GRAND-NIECES
OF EDWARD, 13th EARL OF DERBY,

THIS BOOK OF DRAWINGS AND VERSES

(The greater part of which were
originally made and composed for their
parents,)

IS DEDICATED BY THE AUTHOR,

EDWARD LEAR

1.

There was an Old Man with a beard, Who
said, "It is just as I feared!-- Two Owls
and a Hen, Four Larks and a Wren, Have
all built their nests in my beard!"

2.

There was a Young Lady of Ryde, Whose
shoe-strings were seldom untied; She
purchased some clogs, And some small
spotty dogs, And frequently walked about
Ryde.

3.

There was an Old Man with a nose, Who said, "If you choose to suppose, That my nose is too long, You are certainly wrong!" That remarkable Man with a nose.

4.

There was an Old Man on a hill, Who seldom, if ever, stood still; He ran up and down, In his Grandmother's gown, Which adorned that Old Man on a hill.

5.

There was a Young Lady whose bonnet,
Came untied when the birds sate upon it;
But she said, "I don't care! All the birds in
the air Are welcome to sit on my bonnet!"

6.

There was a Young Person of Smyrna,
Whose Grandmother threatened to burn
her; But she seized on the Cat, And said,
"Granny, burn that! "You incongruous Old
Woman of Smyrna!"

7.

There was an Old Person of Chili, Whose
conduct was painful and silly; He sate on
the stairs, Eating apples and pears, That
imprudent Old Person of Chili.

8.

There was an Old Man with a gong, Who
bumped at it all the day long; But they
called out, "O law! You're a horrid old
bore!" So they smashed that Old Man
with a gong.

9.

There was an Old Lady of Chertsey, Who
made a remarkable curtsey; She twirled

round and round, Till she sunk
underground, Which distressed all the
people of Chertsey.

10.

There was an Old Man in a tree, Who
was horribly bored by a Bee; When they
said, "Does it buzz?" He replied, "Yes, it
does! "It's a regular brute of a Bee!"

11.

There was an Old Man with a flute, A
sarpint ran into his boot; But he played
day and night, Till the sarpint took flight,
And avoided that man with a flute.

12.

There was a Young Lady whose chin,
Resembled the point of a pin: So she had
it made sharp, And purchased a harp,
And played several tunes with her chin.

13.

There was an Old Man of Kilkenny, Who
never had more than a penny; He spent
all that money, In onions and honey, That
wayward Old Man of Kilkenny.

14.

There was an Old Person of Ischia,
Whose conduct grew friskier and friskier;
He danced hornpipes and jigs, And ate
thousands of figs, That lively Old Person
of Ischia.

15.

There was an Old Man in a boat, Who
said, "I'm afloat! I'm afloat!" When they
said, "No! you ain't!" He was ready to
faint, That unhappy Old Man in a boat.

16.

There was a Young lady of Portugal,
Whose ideas were excessively nautical;
She climbed up a tree, To examine the
sea, But declared she would never leave
Portugal.

17.

There was an Old Man of Moldavia, Who
had the most curious behaviour; For
while he was able, He slept on a table,
That funny Old Man of Moldavia

18.

There was an Old Man of Madras, Who
rode on a cream-coloured ass; But the

length of its ears, So promoted his fears,
That it killed that Old Man of Madras.

19.

There was an Old Person of Leeds,
Whose head was infested with beads;
She sat on a stool, And ate gooseberry
fool, Which agreed with that person of
Leeds.

20.

There was an Old Man of Peru, Who
never knew what he should do; So he
tore off his hair, And behaved like a bear,
That intrinsic Old Man of Peru.

21.

There was an Old Person of Hurst, Who
drank when he was not athirst; When
they said, "You'll grow fatter," He
answered, "What matter?" That globular
Person of Hurst.

22.

There was a Young person of Crete,
Whose toilette was far from complete;
She dressed in a sack, Spickle-speckled
with black, That ombliferous person of
Crete.

23.

There was an Old Man of the Isles,
Whose face was pervaded with smiles; He
sung high dum diddle, And played on the
fiddle, That amiable Man of the Isles.

24.

There was an Old Person of Buda, Whose
conduct grew ruder and ruder; Till at last,
with a hammer, They silenced his
clamour, By smashing that Person of
Buda

25.

There was an Old Man of Columbia, Who
was thirsty, and called out for some beer;
But they brought it quite hot, In a small
copper pot, Which disgusted that man of
Columbia.

26.

There was a young Lady of Dorking, Who
bought a large bonnet for walking; But its
colour and size, So bedazzled her eyes,
That she very soon went back to Dorking.

27.

There was an Old Man who supposed,
That the street door was partially closed;
But some very large rats, Ate his coats
and his hats, While that futile old
gentleman dozed.

28.

There was an Old Man of the West, Who
wore a pale plum-coloured vest; When
they said, "Does it fit?" He replied, "Not a
bit!" That uneasy Old Man of the West.

29.

There was an Old Man of the Wrekin,
Whose shoes made a horrible creaking;

But they said, "Tell us whether, Your shoes are of leather, Or of what, you Old Man of the Wrekin?"

30.

There was a Young Lady whose eyes,
Were unique as to colour and size; When
she opened them wide, People all turned
aside, And started away in surprise.

31.

There was a Young Lady of Norway, Who
casually sat in a doorway; When the door
squeezed her flat, She exclaimed, "What

of that?" This courageous Young Lady of Norway.

32.

There was an Old Man of Vienna, Who lived upon Tincture of Senna; When that did not agree, He took Camomile Tea, That nasty Old Man of Vienna.

33.

There was an Old Person whose habits, Induced him to feed upon Rabbits; When he'd eaten eighteen, He turned perfectly green, Upon which he relinquished those habits.

34.

There was an old person of Dover, Who
rushed through a field of blue Clover; But
some very large bees, Stung his nose and
his knees, So he very soon went back to
Dover.

35.

There was an Old Man of Marseilles,
Whose daughters wore bottle-green veils;
They caught several Fish, Which they put
in a dish, And sent to their Pa at
Marseilles.

36.

There was an Old Person of Cadiz, Who was always polite to all ladies; But in handing his daughter, He fell into the water, Which drowned that Old Person of Cadiz.

37.

There was an Old Person of Basing, Whose presence of mind was amazing; He purchased a steed, Which he rode at full speed, And escaped from the people of Basing.

38.

There was an Old Man of Quebec, A
beetle ran over his neck; But he cried,
"With a needle, I'll slay you, O beadle!"
That angry Old Man of Quebec.

39.

There was an Old Person of Philae,
Whose conduct was scroobious and wily;
He rushed up a Palm, When the weather
was calm, And observed all the ruins of
Philae.

40.

There was a Young Lady of Bute, Who
played on a silver-gilt flute; She played
several jigs, To her uncle's white pigs,
That amusing Young Lady of Bute.

41.

There was a Young Lady whose nose,
Was so long that it reached to her toes;
So she hired an Old Lady, Whose conduct
was steady, To carry that wonderful nose.

42.

There was a Young Lady of Turkey, Who
wept when the weather was murky;

When the day turned out fine, She
ceased to repine, That capricious Young
Lady of Turkey.

43.

There was an Old Man of Apulia, Whose
conduct was very peculiar; He fed twenty
sons, Upon nothing but buns, That
whimsical Man of Apulia.

44.

There was an Old Man with a poker, Who
painted his face with red oker; When they
said, "You're a Guy!" He made no reply,

But knocked them all down with his
poker.

45.

There was an Old Person of Prague, Who
was suddenly seized with the plague; But
they gave him some butter, Which caused
him to mutter, And cured that Old Person
of Prague.

46.

There was an Old Man of the North, Who
fell into a basin of broth; But a laudable
cook, Fished him out with a hook, Which
saved that Old Man of the North.

47.

There was a Young Lady of Poole, Whose
soup was excessively cool; So she put it
to boil, By the aid of some oil, That
ingenious Young Lady of Poole.

48.

There was an Old Person of Mold, Who
shrank from sensations of cold; So he
purchased some muffs, Some furs and
some fluffs, And wrapped himself from
the cold.

49.

There was an Old Man or Nepaul, From
his horse had a terrible fall; But, though
split quite in two, By some very strong
glue, They mended that Man of Nepaul.

50.

There was an old Man of th' Abruzzi, So
blind that he couldn't his foot see; When
they said, "That's your toe," He replied,
"Is it so?" That doubtful old Man of th'
Abruzzi.

51.

There was an Old Person of Rhodes, Who
strongly objected to toads; He paid
several cousins, To catch them by dozens,
That futile Old Person of Rhodes.

52.

There was an Old Man of Peru, Who
watched his wife making a stew; But
once by mistake, In a stove she did bake,
That unfortunate Man of Peru.

53.

There was an Old Man of Melrose, Who
walked on the tips of his toes; But they

said, "It ain't pleasant, To see you at present, You stupid Old Man of Melrose."

54.

There was a Young Lady of Lucca, Whose lovers completely forsook her; She ran up a tree, And said, "Fiddle-de-dee!" Which embarrassed the people of Lucca.

55.

There was an old Man of Bohemia, Whose daughter was christened Euphemia; Till one day, to his grief, She married a thief, Which grieved that old Man of Bohemia.

56.

There was an Old Man of Vesuvius, Who
studied the works of Vitruvius; When the
flames burnt his book, To drinking he
took, That morbid Old Man of Vesuvius.

57.

There was an Old Man of Cape Horn,
Who wished he had never been born; So
he sat on a chair, Till he died of despair,
That dolorous Man of Cape Horn.

58.

There was an Old Lady whose folly,
Induced her to sit in a holly; Whereon by
a thorn, Her dress being torn, She quickly
became melancholy.

59.

There was an Old Man of Corfu, Who
never knew what he should do; So he
rushed up and down, Till the sun made
him brown, That bewildered Old Man of
Corfu.

60.

There was an Old Man of the South, Who
had an immoderate mouth; But in
swallowing a dish, That was quite full of
fish, He was choked, that Old Man of the
South.

61.

There was an Old Man of the Nile, Who
sharpened his nails with a file; Till he cut
off his thumbs, And said calmly, "This
comes-- Of sharpening one's nails with a
file!"

62.

There was an Old Person of Rheims, Who
was troubled with horrible dreams; So, to
keep him awake, They fed him with cake,
Which amused that Old Person of Rheims.

63.

There was an Old Person of Cromer, Who
stood on one leg to read Homer; When
he found he grew stiff, He jumped over
the cliff, Which concluded that Person of
Cromer.

64.

There was an Old Person of Troy, Whose
drink was warm brandy and soy; Which

he took with a spoon, By the light of the
moon, In sight of the city of Troy.

65.

There was an Old Man of the Dee, Who
was sadly annoyed by a flea; When he
said, "I will scratch it," They gave him a
hatchet, Which grieved that Old Man of
the Dee.

66.

There was an Old Man of Dundee, Who
frequented the top of a tree; When
disturbed by the crows, He abruptly

arose, And exclaimed, "I'll return to Dundee."

67.

There was an Old Person of Tring, Who embellished his nose with a ring; He gazed at the moon, Every evening in June, That ecstatic Old Person of Tring.

68.

There was an Old Man on some rocks, Who shut his wife up in a box; When she said, "Let me out," He exclaimed, "Without doubt, You will pass all your life in that box."

69.

There was an Old Man of Coblenz, The
length of whose legs was immense; He
went with one prance, From Turkey to
France, That surprising Old Man of
Coblenz.

70.

There was an Old Man of Calcutta, Who
perpetually ate bread and butter; Till a
great bit of muffin, On which he was
stuffing, Choked that horrid old man of
Calcutta.

71.

There was an Old Man in a pew, Whose waistcoat was spotted with blue; But he tore it in pieces, To give to his nieces,-- That cheerful Old Man in a pew.

72.

There was an Old Man who said, "How,-- Shall I flee from this horrible Cow? I will sit on this stile, And continue to smile, Which may soften the heart of that Cow."

73.

There was a Young Lady of Hull, Who
was chased by a virulent Bull; But she
seized on a spade, And called
out--"Who's afraid!" Which distracted that
virulent Bull.

74.

There was an Old Man of Whitehaven,
Who danced a quadrille with a Raven; But
they said--"It's absurd, To encourage this
bird!" So they smashed that Old Man of
Whitehaven.

75.

There was an Old Man of Leghorn, The
smallest as ever was born; But quickly
snapt up he, Was once by a puppy, Who
devoured that Old Man of Leghorn.

76.

There was an Old Man of the Hague,
Whose ideas were excessively vague; He
built a balloon, To examine the moon,
That deluded Old Man of the Hague.

77.

There was an Old Man of Jamaica, Who
suddenly married a Quaker; But she cried
out--"O lack! I have married a black!"

Which distressed that Old Man of
Jamaica.

78.

There was an old person of Dutton,
Whose head was so small as a button; So
to make it look big, He purchased a wig,
And rapidly rushed about Dutton.

79.

There was a Young Lady of Tyre, Who
swept the loud chords of a lyre; At the
sound of each sweep, She enraptured the
deep, And enchanted the city of Tyre.

80.

There was an Old Man who said, "Hush! I perceive a young bird in this bush!" When they said--"Is it small?" He replied--"Not at all! It is four times as big as the bush!"

81.

There was an Old Man of the East, Who gave all his children a feast; But they all ate so much, And their conduct was such, That it killed that Old Man of the East.

82.

There was an Old Man of Kamschatka,
Who possessed a remarkably fat cur, His
gait and his waddle, Were held as a
model, To all the fat dogs in Kamschatka.

83.

There was an Old Man of the Coast, Who
placidly sat on a post; But when it was
cold, He relinquished his hold, And called
for some hot buttered toast.

84.

There was an Old Person of Bangor,
Whose face was distorted with anger; He

tore off his boots, And subsisted on roots,
That borascible person of Bangor.

85.

There was an Old Man with a beard, Who
sat on a horse when he reared; But they
said, "Never mind! You will fall off behind,
You propitious Old Man with a beard!"

86.

There was an Old Man of the West, Who
never could get any rest; So they set him
to spin, On his nose find his chin, Which
cured that Old Man of the West.

87.

There was an Old Person of Anerley,
Whose conduct was strange and
unmannerly; He rushed down the Strand,
With a Pig in each hand, But returned in
the evening to Anerley.

88.

There was a Young Lady of Troy, Whom
several large flies did annoy; Some she
killed with a thump, Some she drowned
at the pump, And some she took with her
to Troy.

89.

There was an Old Man of Berlin, Whose
form was uncommonly thin; Till he once,
by mistake, Was mixed up in a cake, So
they baked that Old Man of Berlin.

90.

There was an Old Person of Spain, Who
hated all trouble and pain; So he sate on
a chair, With his feet in the air, That
umbrageous Old Person of Spain.

91.

There was a Young Lady of Russia, Who
screamed so that no one could hush her;
Her screams were extreme, No one heard
such a scream, As was screamed by that
Lady of Russia.

92.

There was an Old Man, who said, "Well!
Will NOBODY answer this bell? I have
pulled day and night, Till my hair has
grown white, But nobody answers this
bell!"

93.

There was a Young Lady of Wales, Who
caught a large fish without scales; When
she lifted her hook, She exclaimed, "Only
look!" That ecstatic Young Lady of Wales.

94.

There was an Old Person of Cheadle,
Was put in the stocks by the beadle; For
stealing some pigs, Some coats, and
some wigs, That horrible Person of
Cheadle.

95.

There was a Young Lady of Welling,
Whose praise all the world was a-telling;

She played on the harp, And caught
several carp, That accomplished Young
Lady of Welling.

96.

There was an Old Person of Tartary, Who
divided his jugular artery; But he
screeched to his wife, And she said, "Oh,
my life! Your death will be felt by all
Tartary!"

97.

There was an old Person of Chester,
Whom several small children did pester;
They threw some large stones, Which

broke most of his bones, And displeased
that old person of Chester.

98.

There was an Old Man with an owl, Who
continued to bother and howl; He sate on
a rail, And imbibed bitter ale, Which
refreshed that Old Man and his owl.

99.

There was an Old Person of Gretna, Who
rushed down the crater of Etna; When
they said, "Is it hot?" He replied, "No, it's
not!" That mendacious Old Person of
Gretna.

100.

There was a Young Lady of Sweden, Who
went by the slow train to Weedon; When
they cried, "Weedon Station!" She made
no observation, But thought she should
go back to Sweden.

101.

There was a Young Girl of Majorca,
Whose aunt was a very fast walker; She
walked seventy miles, And leaped fifteen
stiles, Which astonished that Girl of
Majorca.

102.

There was an Old Man of the Cape, Who possessed a large Barbary Ape; Till the Ape one dark night, Set the house on a light, Which burned that Old Man of the Cape.

103.

There was an Old Lady of Prague, Whose language was horribly vague; When they said, "Are these caps?" She answered, "Perhaps!" That oracular Lady of Prague.

104.

There was an Old Person of Sparta, Who
had twenty-five sons and one daughter;
He fed them on snails, And weighed them
in scales, That wonderful person of
Sparta.

105.

There was an Old Man at a easement,
Who held up his hands in amazement;
When they said, "Sir, you'll fall!" He
replied, "Not at all!" That incipient Old
Man at a casement.

106.

There was an old Person of Burton,
Whose answers were rather uncertain;
When they said, "How d'ye do?" He
replied, "Who are you?" That distressing
old person of Burton.

107.

There was an Old Person of Ems, Who
casually fell in the Thames; And when he
was found, They said he was drowned,
That unlucky Old Person of Ems.

108.

There was an Old Person of Ewell, Who chiefly subsisted on gruel; But to make it more nice, He inserted some mice, Which refreshed that Old Person of Ewell.

109.

There was a Young Lady of Parma, Whose conduct grew calmer and calmer; When they said, "Are you dumb?" She merely said, "Hum!" That provoking Young Lady of Parma.

110.

There was an Old Man of Aosta, Who possessed a large Cow, but he lost her;

But they said, "Don't you see, She has
rushed up a tree? You invidious Old Man
of Aosta!"

111.

There was an Old Man, on whose nose,
Most birds of the air could repose; But
they all flew away, At the closing of day,
Which relieved that Old Man and his
nose.

112.

There was a Young Lady of Clare, Who
was sadly pursued by a bear; When she

found she was tired, She abruptly
expired, That unfortunate Lady of Clare.

— — — — The End — — — —

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