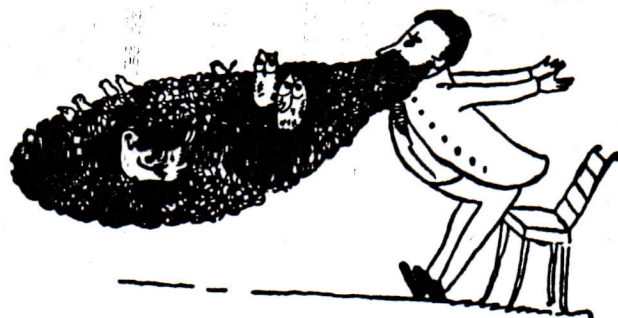


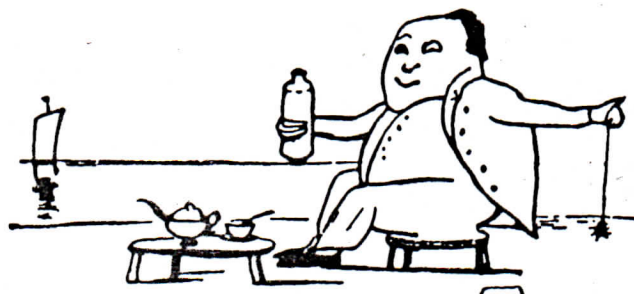
COMPLETE NONSENSE

Edward Lear must always be regarded as one of the most curious figures in English literature. He secured a permanent niche in the Temple of Fame by what he regarded as a mere pastime, till the literary world of the nineteenth century proclaimed its delight in it. He is known as the father of English 'Nonsense', but his serious ambition and what he regarded as his serious work was landscape painting.

Born in 1812, Lear was not twenty years of age when he was invited by the Earl of Derby to stay at Knowsley to paint the collection of birds there. He remained at Knowsley four years, and it was during that period that he wrote the nonsensical limericks, illustrated with pen drawings, to amuse the juvenile members of the Earl's family. They were dashed off at odd moments, and so little did he think of them that they were not published till ten years later – 1846. Then the reception accorded to them was extraordinary. All sorts of rumours got about as to their authorship, this being ascribed to Lord Brougham, Lord Derby and others, and attempts were made to read into them political and personal references. But Lear's fantastic absurdities are as void of symbolic meaning as they are of vulgarity and cynicism; they are nonsense pure and simple, and that is their charm.



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!'



There was an Old Person of Putney,  
Whose food was roast spiders and chutney,  
Which he took with his tea,  
Within sight of the sea,  
That romantic Old Person of Putney.



There was an Old Person of Wilts,  
Who constantly walked upon Stilts;  
He wreathed them with lilies  
And daffy-down-dillies,  
That elegant Person of Wilts.



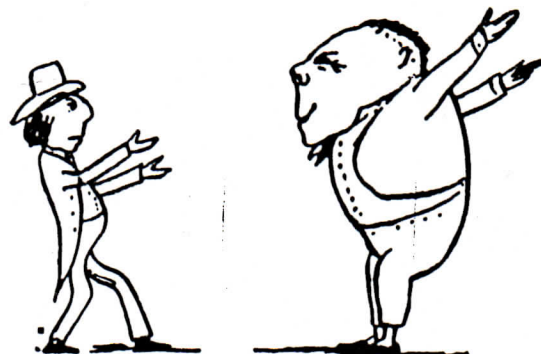
There was an Old Person of Chili,  
Whose conduct was painful and silly;  
He sat on the stairs  
Eating apples and pears,  
That imprudent Old Person of Chili.



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.



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



There was an Old Person of Wick,  
Who said, 'Tick-a-Tick, Tick-a-Tick;  
Chickabaw, Chickabaw.'  
And he said nothing more,