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# EVERY MAN HIS OWN POET.

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## EVERY MAN HIS OWN POET:

OR,

### *The Inspired Singer's Recipe Book.*

BY A

NEWDIGATE PRIZEMAN.

*Nuper ventosa isthæc et enormis loquacitas animos  
juvenum ad magna surgentes veluti pestilenti  
quodam sidere afflavit.—PETRONIUS.*

**Oxford :**

THOS. SHRIMPTON & SON, BROAD STREET.  
1872.

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#### Transcriber's Note

Minor typographical errors have been corrected without note. A table of contents, though not present in the original publication, has been provided below:

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## INTRODUCTION.

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O have attempted in former times a work of this description, would have seemed, we cannot deny, to savour either of presumption or of idiotcy, or more probably of both. And rightly. But we live in times of progress. The mystery of yesterday is the commonplace of to-day; the Bible, which was Newton's oracle, is Professor Huxley's jest-book; and students at the University now lose a class for not being familiar with opinions, which but twenty years ago they would have been expelled for dreaming of. Everything is moving onward swiftly and satisfactorily; and if, when we have made all faiths fail, we can only contrive to silence the British Association, and so make all knowledge vanish away, there will lack nothing but the presence of a perfect charity to turn the nineteenth century into a complete kingdom of heaven. Amongst changes, then, so great and so hopeful—amongst the discoveries of the rights of women, the infallibility of the Pope, and the physical basis of life, it may well be doubted if the great fathers of ancient song would find, if they could come back to us, anything out of the way or ludicrous in a recipe-book for concocting poetry.

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Some, indeed, object that poetry is not progressive. But on what grounds this assertion is based, it is not possible to conjecture. Poetry is as much progressive as anything else in these days of progress. Free-thought itself shews scarcely more strikingly those three great stages which mark advance and movement. For poetry, like Free-thought, was first a work of inspiration, secondly of science, and lastly now of trick. At its first stage it was open to only here and there a genius; at its next to all intelligent men; and at its third to all the human race. Thus, just as there is no boy now, but can throw stones at the windows which Bishop Colenso has broken, so there is scarcely even a young lady but can raise flowers from the seed stolen out of Mr. Tennyson's garden.

And surely, whatever, in this its course of change, poetry may have lost in quality, is more than made up for by what it has gained in quantity. For in the first place it is far pleasanter to the tastes of a scientific generation, to understand how to make bad poetry than to wonder at good; and secondly, as the end of poetry is pleasure, that we should make it each for ourselves is the very utmost that we can desire, since it is a fact in which we all agree, that no man's verses please him so much as his own.

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## OF THE NATURE OF POETRY.

[5]



POETRY as practised by the latest masters, is the art of expressing what is too foolish, too profane, or too indecent to be expressed in any other way. And thus, just as a consummate cook will prepare a most delicate repast out of the most poor materials, so will the modern poet concoct us a most popular poem from the weakest emotions, and the most tiresome platitudes. The only difference is, that the cook would prefer good materials if he could get them, whilst the modern poet will take the bad from choice. As far, however, as the nature of materials goes, those which the two artists work with are the same—*viz.*, animals, vegetables, and spirits. It was the practice of Shakespeare and other earlier masters to make use of all these together, mixing them in various proportions. But the moderns have found that it is better and far easier to employ each separately. Thus Mr. Swinburne uses very little else but animal matter in the composition of his dishes, which it must be confessed are somewhat unwholesome in consequence: whilst the late Mr. Wordsworth, on the contrary, confined himself almost exclusively to the confection of primrose pudding, and flint soup, flavoured with the lesser-celandine; and only now and then a beggar-boy boiled down in it to give it a colour. The robins and drowned lambs which he was wont to use, when an additional piquancy was needed, were employed so sparingly that they did not destroy in the least the general vegetable tone of his productions; and these form in consequence an unimpeachable lenten diet. It is difficult to know what to say of Mr. Tennyson, as the milk and water of which his books are composed chiefly, make it almost impossible to discover what was the original nature of the materials he has boiled down in it. Mr. Shelley, too, is perhaps somewhat embarrassing to classify; as, though spirits are what he affected most, he made use of a large amount of vegetable matter also. We shall be probably not far wrong in describing his material as a kind of methylated spirits; or pure psychic alcohol, strongly tinctured with the barks of trees, and rendered below proof by a quantity of sea-water. In this division of the poets, however, into animalists,

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spiritualists, and vegetarians, we must not be discouraged by any such difficulties as these; but must bear in mind that in whatever manner we may neatly classify anything, the exceptions and special cases will always far outnumber those to which our rule applies.

But in fact, at present, mere theory may be set entirely aside: for although in the case of action, the making and adhering to a theory may be the surest guide to inconsistency and absurdity, in poetry these results can be obtained without such aid.

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The following recipes, compiled from a careful analysis of the best authors, will be found, we trust, efficient guides for the composition of genuine poems. But the tyro must bear always in mind that there is no royal road to anything, and that not even the most explicit directions will make a poet all at once of even the most fatuous, the most sentimental, or the most profane.

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## RECIPES.

[8]



THE following are arranged somewhat in the order in which the student is recommended to begin his efforts. About the more elaborate ones, which come later, he may use his own discretion as to which he will try first; but he must previously have had some training in the simpler compositions, with which we deal before all others. These form as it were a kind of palæstra of folly, a very short training in which will suffice to break down that stiffness and self-respect in the soul, which is so incompatible with modern poetry. Taking, therefore, the silliest and commonest of all kinds of verse, and the one whose sentiments come most readily to hand in vulgar minds, we begin with directions,

### HOW TO MAKE AN ORDINARY LOVE POEM.

Take two large and tender human hearts, which match one another perfectly. Arrange these close together, but preserve them from actual contact by placing between them some cruel barrier. Wound them both in several places, and insert through the openings thus made a fine stuffing of wild yearnings, hopeless tenderness, and a general admiration for stars. Then completely cover up one heart with a sufficient quantity of chill church-yard mould, which may be garnished according to taste with dank waving weeds or tender violets: and promptly break over it the other heart.

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### HOW TO MAKE A PATHETIC MARINE POEM.

This kind of poem has the advantage of being easily produced, yet being at the same time pleasing, and not unwholesome. As, too, it admits of no variety, the chance of going wrong in it is very small. Take one midnight storm, and one fisherman's family, which, if the poem is to be a real success, should be as large and as hungry as possible, and must contain at least one innocent infant. Place this last in a cradle, with the mother singing over it, being careful that the babe be dreaming of angels, or else smiling sweetly. Stir the father well up in the storm until he disappears. Then get ready immediately a quantity of cruel crawling foam, in which serve up the father directly on his re-appearance, which is sure to take place in an hour or two, in the dull red morning. This done, a charming saline effervescence will take place amongst the remainder of the family. Pile up the agony to suit the palate, and the poem will be ready for perusal.

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### HOW TO WRITE AN EPIC POEM LIKE MR. TENNYSON.

*(The following, apart from its intrinsic utility, forms in itself a great literary curiosity, being the original directions from which the Poet Laureate composed the Arthurian Idylls.)*

To compose an epic, some writers instruct us first to catch our hero. As, however, Mr. Carlyle is the only person on record who has ever performed this feat, it will be best for the rest of mankind to be content with the nearest approach to a hero available, namely a prig. These animals are very plentiful, and easy to catch, as they delight in being run after. There are however many different kinds, not all equally fit for the present purpose, and amongst which it is very necessary to select the right one. Thus, for instance, there is the scientific and atheistical prig, who may be frequently observed eluding notice between the covers of the "Westminster Review;" the Anglican prig, who is often caught exposing himself in the "Guardian;" the Ultramontane prig, who abounds in the "Dublin Review;" the scholarly prig, who twitters among the leaves of the "Academy;" and the Evangelical prig, who converts the heathen, and drinks port wine. None of these, and least of all the last, will serve for the central figure, in the present class of poem. The only one entirely suitable is the blameless variety. Take, then, one blameless prig. Set him upright in the middle of a round table, and place beside him a beautiful wife, who cannot abide prigs. Add to these, one marred goodly man; and tie the three together in a bundle with a link or two of Destiny. Proceed, next, to surround this group with a large number of men and women of the nineteenth century, in fancy-ball costume, flavoured with a great many very possible vices, and a few impossible virtues. Stir these briskly about for two volumes, to the great annoyance of the blameless prig, who is, however, to be kept carefully below swearing-point, for the whole time. If he once boils over into any natural action or exclamation, he is forthwith worthless, and

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you must get another. Next break the wife's reputation into small pieces; and dust them well over the blameless prig. Then take a few vials of tribulation and wrath, and empty these generally over the whole ingredients of your poem: and, taking the sword of the heathen, cut into small pieces the greater part of your minor characters. Then wound slightly the head of the blameless prig; remove him suddenly from the table, and keep in a cool barge for future use.

#### HOW TO WRITE A POEM LIKE MR. MATTHEW ARNOLD.

Take one soufull of involuntary unbelief, which has been previously well flavoured with self-satisfied despair. Add to this one beautiful text of Scripture. Mix these well together; and as soon as ebullition commences grate in finely a few regretful allusions to the New Testament and the lake of Tiberias, one constellation of stars, half-a-dozen allusions to the nineteenth century, one to Goethe, one to Mont Blanc, or the Lake of Geneva; and one also, if possible, to some personal bereavement. Flavour the whole with a mouthful of "faiths" and "infinities," and a mixed mouthful of "passions," "finites," and "yearnings." This class of poem is concluded usually with some question, about which we have to observe only that it shall be impossible to answer.

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#### HOW TO WRITE A POEM LIKE MR. BROWNING.

Take rather a coarse view of things in general. In the midst of this, place a man and a woman, her and her ankles, tastefully arranged on a slice of Italy, or the country about Pornic. Cut an opening across the breast of each, until the soul becomes visible, but be very careful that none of the body be lost during the operation. Pour into each breast as much as it will hold of the new strong wine of love: and, for fear they should take cold by exposure, cover them quickly up with a quantity of obscure classical quotations, a few familiar allusions to an unknown period of history, and a half-destroyed fresco by an early master, varied every now and then with a reference to the fugues or toccatas of a quite-forgotten composer.

If the poem be still intelligible, take a pen and remove carefully all the necessary particles.

#### HOW TO WRITE A MODERN PRE-RAPHAELITE POEM.

Take a packet of fine selected early English, containing no words but such as are obsolete and unintelligible. Pour this into about double the quantity of entirely new English, which must have never been used before, and which you must compose yourself, fresh as it is wanted. Mix these together thoroughly till they assume a colour quite different from any tongue that was ever spoken, and the material will be ready for use.

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Determine the number of stanzas of which your poem shall consist, and select a corresponding number of the most archaic or most peculiar words in your vocabulary, allotting one of these to each stanza; and pour in the other words round them, until the entire poem is filled in.

This kind of composition is usually cast in shapes. These, though not numerous—amounting in all to something under a dozen—it would take too long to describe minutely here: and a short visit to Mr. —'s shop in King street, where they are kept in stock, would explain the whole of them. A favourite one, however, is the following, which is of very easy construction. Take three damozels, dressed in straight night-gowns. Pull their hair-pins out, and let their hair tumble all about their shoulders. A few stars may be sprinkled into this with advantage. Place an aureole about the head of each, and give each a lily in her hand, about half the size of herself. Bend their necks all different ways, and set them in a row before a stone wall, with an apple-tree between each and some large flowers at their feet. Trees and flowers of the right sort are very plentiful in church windows. When you have arranged all these objects rightly, take a cast of them in the softest part of your brain, and pour in your word-composition as above described.

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This kind of poem is much improved by what is called a burden. This consists of a few jingling words, generally of an archaic character, about which we have only to be careful that they have no reference to the subject of the poem they are to ornament. They are inserted without variation between the stanzas.

In conclusion we would remark to beginners that this sort of composition must be attempted only in a perfectly vacant atmosphere; so that no grains of common-sense may injure the work whilst in progress.

#### HOW TO WRITE A NARRATIVE POEM LIKE MR. MORRIS.

Take about sixty pages-full of the same word-mixture as that described in the preceding; and dilute it with a double quantity of mild modern Anglo-Saxon. Pour this composition into two vessels of equal size, and into one of these empty a small mythological story. If this does not put your readers to sleep soon enough, add to it the rest of the language, in the remaining vessel.

#### HOW TO WRITE A SATANIC POEM LIKE THE LATE LORD BYRON.

*(This recipe is inserted for the benefit of those poets who desire to attain what is called originality. This is only to be got by following some model of a past generation, which has*

*ceased to be made use of by the public at large. We do not however recommend this course, feeling sure that all writers in the end will derive far more real satisfaction from producing fashionable, than original verses; which two things it is impossible to do at one and the same time.)*

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Take a couple of fine deadly sins; and let them hang before your eyes until they become racy. Then take them down, dissect them, and stew them for some time in a solution of weak remorse; after which they are to be devilled with mock-despair.

#### HOW TO WRITE A PATRIOTIC POEM LIKE MR. SWINBURNE.

Take one blaspheming patriot, who has been hung or buried for some time, together with the oppressed country belonging to him. Soak these in a quantity of rotten sentiment, till they are completely sodden; and in the mean while get ready an indefinite number of Christian kings and priests. Kick these till they are nearly dead; add copiously broken fragments of the Catholic church, and mix all together thoroughly. Place them in a heap upon the oppressed country; season plentifully with very coarse expressions; and on the top carefully arrange your patriot, garnished with laurel or with parsley; surround with artificial hopes for the future, which are never meant to be tasted. This kind of poem is cooked in verbiage, flavoured with Liberty, the taste of which is much heightened by the introduction of a few high gods, and the game of Fortune. The amount of verbiage which Liberty is capable of flavouring, is practically infinite.

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## CONCLUSION.

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Regret to have to offer this work to the public in its present incomplete state, the whole of that part treating of the most recent section of modern poetry, *viz.*, the blasphemous and the obscene, being entirely wanting. It was found necessary to issue this from an eminent publishing firm in Holywell street, Strand, where by an unforeseen casualty, the whole of the first edition was seized by the police, and is at present in the hands of the Society for the Suppression of Vice. We incline however to trust that this loss will have but little effect; as indecency and profanity are things in which, even to the dullest, external instruction is a luxury, rather than a necessity. Those of our readers, who, either from sense, self-respect, or other circumstances, are in need of a special training in these subjects, will find excellent professors of them in any public-house, during the late hours of the evening; where the whole sum and substance of the fieriest school of modern poetry is delivered nightly; needing only a little dressing and flavouring with artificial English to turn it into very excellent verse.

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