



Limericks: Historical and Hysterical

Ray Allen Billington

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The limerick, one of the oldest and most challenging of verse forms, has traditionally been the plaything of Oxford dons, American academicians, and a sprinkling of men of wit. Historian Ray Allen Billington worked on his own collection for fifty years. Here is the cream of that collection--original and classical limericks, irreverent, spicy, funny, and, of course, suggestive.

The book is divided into several parts: the historical uses of the limerick, concentrating on the American frontier and on World War II; limericks assembled from the files of the Society of the Fifth Line, and organization of scholars whose job it is to produce an original verse for each meeting of the membership; samples of the classic limerick form, some original, some contributed, some culled from published and unpublished collections; and an assortment of limericks that reflect the limerick's role as a mirror of social change.

In the arrangement of the material, Billington could not resist "inflict[ing] my academic standards in an area where art should reign, using chapter headings, explanations, some variant readings, and such footnotes as needed to make the page unattractive."

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