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Here, in one volume, are the most popular poems of one of the most popular poets of the twentieth century -- perhaps of the last twenty centuries. Delightfully nonsensical, they in fact make the best of sense, accomplishing what only real poetry can -- allowing the reader to discover what he didn't know he already knew or felt.

The Pocket Book of Ogden Nash Details

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From Reader Review The Pocket Book of Ogden Nash for online ebook

Pamela Shropshire says

I'm not sure where I picked up this book of Ogden Nash poetry, but I've been reading from it over the past 30 days and enjoying it immensely. Nash was a comic genius with puns and almost-rhymes. He was also an astute observer of American daily life in the 20th century. Here are a few of my favorites from the book:

... The only incurable troubles of the rich are the troubles that money can't cure,
Which is a kind of trouble that is even more troublesome if you are poor.
Certainly there are lots of things in life that money won't buy, but it's very funny –
Have you ever tried to buy them without money?
(from The Terrible People)

People on whom I do not bother to dote
Are people who do not bother to vote.

...

... excuse themselves by saying What's the difference of one vote in fifty million?
They have such refined and delicate palates
That they can discover no one worthy of their ballots,
And then when someone terrible gets elected
They say, There, that's just what I expected!
And they go around for four years spouting discontented criticisms
And contented witticisms,
And then when somebody to oppose the man they oppose gets nominated
They say Oh golly golly he's the kind of man I've always abominated,
And they have discovered that if you don't take time out to go to the polls
You can manage very nicely to get through thirty-six holes.
Oh let us cover these clever people very conspicuously with loathing,
For they are un-citizens in citizens' clothing.
They attempt to justify their negligence
On the grounds that no candidate appeals to people of their intelligence,
But I am quite sure that if Abraham Lincoln (Rep.) ran against Thomas Jefferson (Dem.)
Neither man would be appealing enough to squeeze a vote out of them.
(from Election Day is a Holiday)

Pediatric Reflection

Many an infant that screams like a calliope
Could be soothed by a little attention to its diope.

You and Me and P.B. Shelley

What is life? Life is stepping down a step or sitting in a chair,

And it isn't there.

Life is not having been told that the man has just waxed the floor,

It is pulling doors marked PUSH and pushing doors marked PULL and not noticing notices which say PLEASE USE OTHER DOOR.

It is when you diagnose a sore throat as an unprepared geography lesson and send your child weeping to school only to be returned an hour later covered with spots that are indubitably genuine,

It is a concert with a trombone soloist filling in for Yehudi Menuhin.

Were it not for frustration and humiliation

I suppose the human race would get ideas above its station.

Somebody once described Shelley as a beautiful and ineffective angel beating his luminous wings against the void in vain,

Which is certainly describing with might and main,

But probably means that we are all brothers under our pelts,

And Shelley went around pulling doors marked PUSH and pushing doors marked PULL just like everybody else.

Dance Unmacabre

This is the witching hour of noon;

Bedlam breaks upon us soon.

When the stroke of twelve has tolled

What a pageant doth unfold.

Drawers slam on pads of notes,

Eager fingers clutch at coats;

Compact, lipstick, comb and hat,

Here a dab and there a pat;

The vital letter just begun

Can sulk in the machine till one.

Stenographers on clicking heels

Scurry forth in quest of meals;

Secretaries arm in arm

Fill the corridors with charm;

The stolid air with scent grows heavy

As bevy scuttles after bevy;

Like the pipers on the beach,

Calling shrilly each to each,

Sure as arrows, swift as skaters,

Converging at the elevators.

From the crowded lift they scatter

Bursting still with turbulent chatter;

The revolving door in rapture whirls

Its quarters full of pretty girls.

Soignée, comme il faut and chic

On forty or forty-five a week.

When One upon the dial looms

They hurry to their office tombs,

There to bide in dust till five,

When they come again alive.

Crossing the Border

Senescence begins
And middle age ends
The day your descendants
Outnumber your friends.

Rae says

A collection of Nash's poetry...both the serious and the silly...His poems are so simple and yet they are also multi-layered, satirical and witty. Good stuff.

Anne Earney says

I read twenty pages of this, flipped ahead to make sure it was more of the same, and decided it wouldn't be worth my time to finish. Too light, flippant, and punny for my tastes. Also, many of the poems about men and women struck me as sexist. The copy I have was published in the early sixties, so no surprise, but still. Not for me.

Nandakishore Varma says

A sample of Ogden Nash (maybe not **all** from this book!)

A Word to Husbands

To keep your marriage brimming,
With love in the loving cup,
Whenever you're wrong, admit it;
Whenever you're right, shut up.

Children's Party

May I join you in the doghouse, Rover?
I wish to retire till the party's over.
Since three o'clock I've done my best
To entertain each tiny guest;
My conscience now I've left behind me,
And if they want me, let them find me.

I blew their bubbles, I sailed their boats,
I kept them from each other's throats.
I told them tales of magic lands,
I took them out to wash their hands.
I sorted their rubbers and tied their laces,
I wiped their noses and dried their faces.
Of similarities there's lots
Twixt tiny tots and Hottentots.
I've earned repose to heal the ravages
Of these angelic-looking savages.
Oh, progeny playing by itself
Is a lonely little elf,
But progeny in roistering batches
Would drive St. Francis from here to Natchez.
Shunned are the games a parent proposes;
They prefer to squirt each other with hoses,
Their playmates are their natural foemen
And they like to poke each other's abdomen.
Their joy needs another woe's to cushion it,
Say a puddle, and someone littler to push in it.
They observe with glee the ballistic results
Of ice cream with spoons for catapults,
And inform the assembly with tears and glares
That everyone's presents are better than theirs.
Oh, little women and little men,
Someday I hope to love you again,
But not till after the party's over,
So give me the key to the doghouse, Rover.

I Do, I Will, I Have

How wise I am to have instructed the butler
to instruct the first footman to instruct the second
footman to instruct the doorman to order my carriage;
I am about to volunteer a definition of marriage.
Just as I know that there are two Hagens, Walter and Copen,
I know that marriage is a legal and religious alliance entered
into by a man who can't sleep with the window shut and a
woman who can't sleep with the window open.
Moreover, just as I am unsure of the difference between
flora and fauna and flotsam and jetsam,
I am quite sure that marriage is the alliance of two people
one of whom never remembers birthdays and the other
never forgetsam,
And he refuses to believe there is a leak in the water pipe or
the gas pipe and she is convinced she is about to asphyxiate
or drown,
And she says Quick get up and get my hairbrushes off the
windowsill, it's raining in, and he replies Oh they're all right,

it's only raining straight down.

That is why marriage is so much more interesting than divorce,
Because it's the only known example of the happy meeting of
the immovable object and the irresistible force.
So I hope husbands and wives will continue to debate and
combat over everything debatable and combatable,
Because I believe a little incompatibility is the spice of life,
particularly if he has income and she is patable.

The Fly

The Lord in His wisdom made the fly,
And then forgot to tell us why.

The Turtle

The turtle lives twixt plated decks
Which practically conceal its sex.
I think it clever of the turtle
In such a fix to be so fertile.

I could go on and on.

His poetry is available all over the net, so whenever you are in a depressive mood, just google "Ogden Nash" and read a couple. Perfect antidote for the blues!

Anne says

example of his poetry: "When called by a panther, don't anther."

Bonnie says

Great poetry

Cindy Moyer says

A little too weird for me.

Rachel Ann says

Like a grown-up Shel Silverstein. Interesting and hilarious :)

Kelly says

I am down in Charlottesville, VA right now, visiting my friend Andrew for the holiday weekend. Even though we were up until about 4am, I woke up at 8am and found this book beside the bed and started reading it and laughing and have only stopped to write this review, to remind myself to track down a copy for my own when I go home. Ogden Nash is the best and the funniest.

g026r says

Nash is amusing in small doses but tedious in anything larger.

Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

Ogden Nash was a humorist poet who regularly took wild liberties with rhyme and meter, often coming up with delightful and absurd results. As the forward to this collection states: "Nash is the master of surprising words that nearly-but-do-not-quite-match, words which rhyme reluctantly, words which never before had any relation with each other and which will never be on rhyming terms again."

What would you do if you were up a dark alley with Caesar Borgia
And he was coming torgia?

Nash was often cynical:

Come live with me and be my love
And we will all the pleasures prove
Of a marriage conducted with economy
In the Twentieth Century Anno Donomy.
We'll live in a dear little walk-up flat
With practically room to swing a cat
And a potted cactus to give it hauteur
And a bathtub equipped with dark brown water.
. . . And one of these days not too remote
I'll probably up and cut your throat.

But much of his poetry is quieter and quite charming:

THE CHIPMUNK
My friends all know that I am shy,
But the chipmunk is twice as shy as I,
He moves with flickering indecision
Like stripes across the television.
He's like the shadow of a cloud,

Or Emily Dickinson read aloud.

Sometimes he was insightful:

. . . And I have no desire to get ugly,
But I cannot help mentioning that the door of a bigoted mind opens outward so that the only
result of the pressure of facts upon it is to close it more snugly.
Naturally I am not pointing a finger at me,
But I must admit that I find any speaker far more convincing when I agree with him than when
I disagree.

and

The only incurable troubles of the rich are the troubles that money can't cure,
Which is a kind of trouble that is even more troublesome if you are poor.
Certainly there are lots of things in life that money won't buy, but it's very funny--
Have you ever tried to buy them without money?

Not everything he wrote is great, and unfortunately some of his poetry reflects the stereotypes and prejudices of his day (he wrote much of his poetry in the 1930s and 40s). But when he was on, he was really on.

A few parting shots:

All along the highway,
Hear the signs discourse:

Men
SLOW
Working
;
Saddle
CROSSING
Horse

. . . Wisest of their proverbs,
Truest of their talk,
Have I found that dictum:

Cross
CHILDREN
Walk

. . .
When Adam took the highway
He left his sons a guide:

Cross
CHILDREN
Walk

;

Cheerful
CHILDREN
Ride

THE FLY
God in His wisdom made the fly
And then forgot to tell us why.

MY MY
1. My Dream
Here is a dream.
It is my dream--
My own dream--
I dreamt it.
I dreamt that my hair was kempt,
Then I dreamt that my true love unkempt it.

2. My Conscience
I could of
If I would of,
But I shouldn't,
So I douldn't.

Richard says

I picked this up because I remember reading short humorous poems by Nash in grade school. I was expecting flippant light verse with silly end rhymes. And there was plenty of that. But there was also social commentary of surprising depth and relevancy. He talks about issues that are still important today, such as the commercialization of Christmas, gender relations, the generation gap, and even the fashionable deformation of the English language. But just when you think Nash is some sort of cynical stand-up comic who merely pokes fun at society, he writes something tinged with warmth and nostalgia.

Samantha says

Surprisingly racist, at times, and not-so-surprisingly misogynistic at others.
