

**THE PONGO  
PAPERS: AND THE  
DUKE OF BERWICK**

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The Pongo Papers: And the Duke of Berwick by Alfred Douglas

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**ALFRED DOUGLAS**

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PONGO PAPERS  
AND  
THE DUKE OF BERWICK

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## PREFACE

SOME sort of explanation seems advisable as to the reasons for the appearance of this book of rhymes. Now-a-days it is apparently required of an author that he should give reasons for doing anything at all different from what he or others have done before. About a year ago, I ventured to publish a volume of rhymes entitled *The Placid Pug*, and I ventured, with the advice of the publishers, to issue it as an illustrated book, and to allow it to appear at or about Christmas. But it appears that I ought

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not to have done this. Illustrated books which appear in the Christmas season are, I gather, considered the property of children, and my book was not a book for children, (the publishers of the book actually went to the length of enclosing a printed notice to that effect with every copy that was sent for review,) and my book was therefore a source of annoyance in some cases, of anger in others. Most of the critics who reviewed my book treated it in the very kindest manner, and some of them praised it in an altogether extravagant manner; others were less enthusiastic, and one gentleman in the *Saturday Review*, said that "no child would trouble to read it," which seemed to me rather unkind. Not unkind because I wished it to be read by



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children, but unkind because it seemed to imply that the gentleman in question had ignored the message which my publisher has endeavoured to convey to intending critics.

There is, as all readers of the advertisements on the hoardings of railway stations and building-plots, and the front-sheets of daily newspapers are aware, a soap which will not wash clothes, and when I read that cruel comment on my book I felt much as the proprietors of that soap would have felt had they submitted it to a soap-expert, and had that soap-expert, after prolonged and careful examination of the soap, summed up his opinion in the words, "No clothes could ever be washed by this soap."

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Now all this only shows how very careful one ought to be to explain carefully and accurately what a book is intended to be, if it is at all different from the average book, and it behoves me to endeavour to make it as clear as possible that this book, *The Pongo Papers*, is a book of nonsense rhymes. Now I make no pretence to be an authority on nonsense rhymes, and my knowledge of them is confined to a very limited area. I am not aware of the existence of any nonsense rhymes in the English language before those of Edward Lear. Edward Lear wrote perhaps the most perfect specimens of the nonsense verse, from the point of view of nonsense. Where he failed was in form. In that respect he is easily out-classed by Lewis Carroll and

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by Sir W. S. Gilbert. As the most perfect nonsense rhyme ever written I should be inclined to name the rhyme in *Alice through the Looking-Glass*.

"I sent a message to the fish,  
I told them this is what I wish.

"The little fishes of the sea  
They sent an answer back to me.

"The little fishes' answer was :  
'We cannot do it, sir, because.'"

and so on. It is quite perfect, it is absolute nonsense, untainted by the least trace of satire or parody or caricature. This is one of the most difficult things in the world to attain to, and I may say at once that I have not attempted to do it, either in the "Pongo Papers" or in the "Duke of Ber-