

Uncle Walt

*The Poet
Balks*

IF OLD JIM RILEY came to town, to read a bundle of his rhyme, I guess you couldn't hold me down—I'd want to hear him every time. I wouldn't heed the tempest's shriek; I'd walk ten miles and not complain, to hear Jim Hoosier Riley speak. But I would not go round a block to see a statesman saw the air, to hear a hired spellbinder talk, like a faker at the county fair. For statesmen are as thick as fleas, and poets, they are far between; one song that lingers on the breeze is worth a million yawps, I ween. If John McCutcheon came to town, to make some pictures on the wall, I'd tear the whole blamed doorway down to be the first one in the hall; you couldn't keep me in my bed if I was dying there of croup; the push would find me at the head of the procession, with a whoop. But I won't push my fat old frame across a dozen yards of bricks, to list to men whose only fame is based on pull and politics.