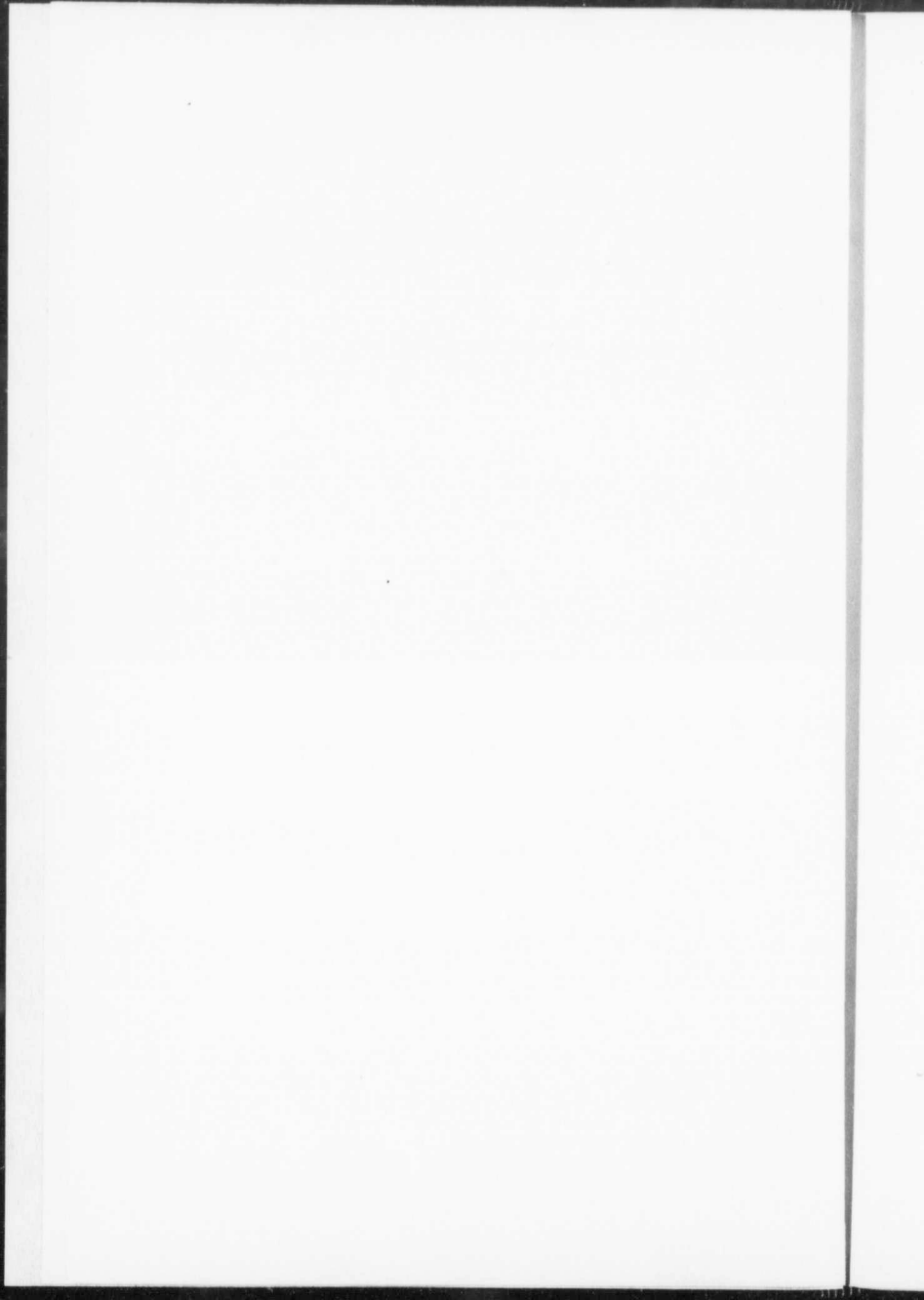




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Bliss Caruan



JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY
AN ESSAY AND SOME LETTERS

BLISS CARMAN

HE is the morning's poet—
The bard of mount and moor,
The minstrel fine of daisy shine,
The dawning's troubadour:

The brother of the bluebird,
Mid blossoms, throng on throng,
Whose singing calls, for orchard walls,
Semi-glitterings of song.

He meets, with brow uncovered,
The sunrise through the mist—
With raptured eyes that range the skies
And seas of anthyats.

The brambled rose clings to him;
The breezy wood receives
Him as the quest she loves the best,
And laughs through all her leaves.

Pan and his nymphs and dryads
They hear, in breathless pause,
This earth-born night lilt his delight,
And envy him because....

He is the morning's poet—
The bard of mount and moor,
The minstrel fine of daisy shine,
The dawning's troubadour.

—James Whitcomb Riley

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

AN ESSAY BY

BLISS CARMAN

AND SOME LETTERS TO HIM FROM

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

[AUGUST 30, 1898—OCTOBER 12, 1915]



NEW YORK
PRIVATELY PRINTED FOR
GEORGE D. SMITH



TO
MR. HENRY E. HUNTINGTON

THE PUBLISHER DEDICATES
HIS SHARE IN THIS VOLUME



JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

AN ESSAY



JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

MY friendship with James Whitcomb Riley extended over a period of more than twenty years, from the time of our first happy meeting in Washington in the early nineties to the time of his death a year ago. It was a friendship very warm and strong in affection, very constant too, always delightful, always quiet, maintained on his part with all that simple generosity of spirit and unaffected depth of feeling of which he was so capable, and on my part, I know, with great admiration and respect, and with a devotion which I am sure he felt although it was never expressed.

Riley was like that, fine and reserved in his personal relations, but also very loyal and full of sentiment. He was never effusive nor false for a moment, though always most unfailing in comradeship and in loyalty to the few he really cared for. He was reticent to a degree, when he chose, and you felt that he abhorred familiarities or liberties of any kind. He would take your arm and carry you off down the street for many a hospitable surprise; he would talk by the hour, with stories and jokes, and delicious quotations of poems humorous or lofty,

and more serious discourse and questionings as well; but he was never hail-fellow-well-met with the chance acquaintance. No one could slap him on the back. His manner and his speech and his ways were all those of a modest and retiring man. Only his sensitiveness, his refinement of preferences, his scrupulous care in his life as in his art, and his warmth of heart, were excessive.

In his letters appear the traits which made him so beloved by his friends. Their exquisite neatness, exactness, and care in the handwriting as well as in the matter show his liking for refinement. The careless, free-and-easy style of writing, and the hurried, slap-dash scrawl, were very distasteful to him. Every note of his was as neat as an engraving, was itself a little piece of art. So far did he carry this preference, that it irritated him to receive a hurried, scribbled line or an obscure signature. And this handwriting, it is to be noted, was deliberately acquired. In his early days he used a more current and ordinary hand, one much less easily legible. But when he came to write for the papers, he found that the odd spellings of his dialect poems were often not followed or not understood by printers. To obviate this annoyance and render his text as accurate as possible, he came to use this print-like character of penmanship. Richard Hovey used the same method in preparing his manuscripts,—when he hadn't a typewriter at hand.

Behind this precise and scrupulous artistry you

find, in the subject matter, all the freedom of fancy, the playfulness, the sincerity, and the unassuming genuineness of the man, expressed just as they existed in his own inimitable personality. His poems, too, have this characteristic, a blend of subtle and careful artistry with a freedom of spirit. They are so masterfully done, that they sound like the unstudied utterances of every-day, bubbling with humor and warm with sentiment, and you never notice the vigorous and skilled craftsmanship which has been expended upon them. And both his letters and his poems are indicative of the man himself, always careful of his person and his dress, always respectful of conventions and traditions and public opinion, and yet bountifully original and spontaneous. He used the restraints of art and life as cheerfully as a stream uses a mill-race, gleaming and flashing within its bounds, with never a thought of narrowing limitations and restrictions imposed on it, and keeping up all the while the merry song of the mill.

Riley's work is very voluminous. There are some sixteen volumes of his poems, and a mass of uncollected trivial rhymes and jingles done in his early newspaper days with surprising ease and gusto,—many of them, of course, of a slender character, but all of them, so far as I know, touched with his inimitable drollery. So that he was in the long run a productive writer. In actual execution, however, I believe he was rather slow. When an idea came to him, he would work over it with great patience

and care, not scribbling readings all over the page, but laboriously erasing a line again and again, and as laboriously rewriting it in that neat chirography.

This generous use of time over the mere manual task of writing made his letters all the more welcome. He never sent a mere scrawled message. His envelope and paper always brought more of himself than one often gets from a friend in these hurried times, something charming in itself, to be held in the hand, not torn across and thrown into the scrap basket. Their contents, too, always held something worth keeping.

A few years before he died Riley was stricken with paralysis, and while he recovered sufficiently to move about he felt his affliction sorely, particularly as it was his right arm and hand that were most affected. He schooled himself, however, to use the left hand in writing, and went on to some extent with his poetry as before. But it was a great vexation to him that he could only write so slowly, although he really succeeded remarkably well, and the last fragments were unmistakably Riley's—so nearly did the new writing resemble the old.

I found a few months since, in looking over a box of papers long unopened, that I only had a mere handful of Riley's letters to me, not a score in all,—a sadly inadequate number, considering how greatly I valued his friendship. And yet every one of them has something of his incomparable whimsicality and comradery, that makes them delightful even to

others than myself. They hold something of that humane personality which cannot be lost, and should be preserved, just as they are, breathing the air of another age. For even those of us whose hearts were nourished in the Victorian time, when Tennyson and Browning and Arnold were alive, when Swinburne was the fashion and Emerson in vogue, must realize how far off that age has suddenly become. Indeed, perhaps we more than others cannot help realizing how far the world has travelled since August, 1914, and as we glance back for a moment cannot help a natural feeling of regret for the utter passing of the age that was ours and can never return. Better ages are in store, no doubt, and those who are young and bold to-day will welcome them gladly, but they will be strange to us, and all this vivid inspiration will be difficult for us to receive. We shall learn to breathe their atmosphere, but it will never be like our native air.

Riley belonged to that past time even more completely than many of his fellows. His chief glory as a poet is that he, and he alone, enshrined in his work the very life of a large class, indeed of the most typical class, of Americans of that day. It is a class that still exists, and whose solid virtues and delightful humor and sentiment will always exist, for they are the heart of humanity. But its manners, its customs, its habits of life, its speech, have been changing, and will change more and more with the ruthless march of what is called progress. Per-

For-

Bliss Carman, Esq.

With all hale greetings and esteem

- James Whitcomb Riley

Indianapolis, Nov. 20:

1896

.
The liquid, dripping songs of orchard birds -

The war bass of the bees -

With lucid claps of silver afterwards;

The gay, claudens whisperings of the breeze

And glad leaves of the trees.

haps it would not be very wide of the truth to say that Riley's greatness lies in these two facts,—that the gist of his poetry was all genuinely human, and so will always be cherished as long as men and women care more for the true than the false, and that the manner and guise of his work was a faithful delineation of his own time, and for that reason will never be lacking in interest.

Even to his contemporaries many of Riley's most lovable traits had a touch of old-fashionedness about them. Even in this early twentieth century he was in many ways out of date. The dashing young fellow of the seventies, fond of fun and dress and genial companionship, was yet in many of his ideals and standards very different from the confident free-and-easy youth of to-day. For Riley never grew old, never grew up. Perhaps because he lived the life of his young manhood with so much zest and satisfaction, he could never leave it behind him. It would seem as if his sentiments and opinions never changed. He had no part nor interest in affairs. To current history, to domestic and foreign politics, he was utterly indifferent. The news of the day passed him by more unheeded than a morning breeze. The frightful and stupendous drama of the great war hardly drew his eye from his book,—from Longfellow and Swinburne and the favorites he had loved and lived with so long. He never voted, but he knew every man and woman of letters born in Indiana, and could quote something mem-

orable, either beautiful or grotesque, from almost any one of them. If he ever read the election returns of his own city it was only because one of the candidates happened to be his personal friend. Party loyalty had no meaning to him, and he never could have had any preference in political principles, since he never would have taken time to consider them.

During the last happy period of our friendship, when I enjoyed his generous hospitality for more than a month in Indianapolis, in the first autumn of the war, we were together for hours almost every day, either at his home in the evening over a fire and a book, or abroad in the sunshine of October driving through the mellow fields of his beloved country. Yet in all that time I don't think he once broached the subject of the war; and once or twice if I made an exclamation at the morning's news that was in all men's mouths, he only exclaimed, "Awful, awful! N y God, it's awful. They are all crazy, all crazy." Then he would put it out of his mind. He was still living in the seventies, with a faith in the Monroe Doctrine, and a fear of "entangling alliances," common to so many of his fellow-citizens, but with a singleness of purpose and an almost childish insistence characteristic only of himself. He had wisdom of heart and was shrewd in his generation, but the march of Time could not hurry his step nor change his natural bent. What he was as a little boy at school, that he was, I think,

till the day he died, a whimsical pure poet and a constant lovely friend. Perhaps that is why he was so widely beloved and honored, in his town, in his state, in his country. He took no share in all our wars and wranglings and bitter disputations, our passionate social reforms and novel enthusiasms in religion, in education, in economics, in public conduct. He lived in our world and found it good, taking what it offered with a thankful appreciation, with amazement at all its improvements, facilities and inventions, but never caring to understand its aims and methods, never quite reconciled to the loss of the old in exchange for the new. He was not exactly an indifferent dreamer, as nothing human was alien to him. He was rather a happy sentimentalist, living on in a practical and intellectual age; a fanciful child of merriment and romance, reared to homely joys, wedded to homely ways, surviving in a time whose different standards he scarcely cared to appraise or comprehend. Perhaps this is not an exact estimate of his character; it is hard to understand another human being; but I think it contains elements of truth, and certainly it is made with a wish to do justice to one of those men who have made life to me seem most worth while and somehow good.

Nothing for us now can bring back the charm of that rare personality, and give us its full savor. Still we have his poems, which to an unusual degree give us a lively sense of the man himself. He is all

there, immortalized more completely, I fancy, than most poets are in their verses. His cast of mind, his likes and dislikes, his little preferences, his harmless foibles, his fun and sentiment and humanity, even his accent and turns of homely phrase, are there preserved for us. And in a few phonographic records we shall always have some suggestion of his living voice and manner of delivering his own lines, though not the voice of his prime, but somewhat blurred by age. In addition to this his letters, which are soon to be published, will still further aid those who never knew the man to understand his great vogue and the deep hold he had upon the affection of his friends.

The earliest letter which I have of Riley's, I see, is dated August, 1898, and is called forth by an article of mine in *The Atlantic Monthly*, which I have not seen in years, but which evidently touched him. It was, I dare say, one of the things that helped to win his confidence, never lightly bestowed, yet which I always felt I enjoyed.

Riley was not easily trustful; he was even more on his guard than most men of experience come to be; he had none of the hardihood which can brave public disapproval and endure public exploitation with equal self-sufficiency. With all his breadth of humor and appreciation of rustic wit, he never acquired any of the cynicism and effrontery that so often characterize so-called men of the world. With many surprising prejudices, he retained always his sweet

Aug. 30
1898

Bliss Carver, Esq. -

My dear Mr. Carver:

Over and over I am joyously reading your sagacious
and yet generous estimate of "Mr. Riley's Poetry" - until indeed
you seem to me the fatest, fairest critic in the lettered
world and the Atlantic the very first of magazines on earth!

"When that I was a little boy," my first worshiped con-
temporary was an old poetic farmer, with his mind a trifle
clouded - sufficiently at least to invent a flying machine
which he used to lecture on - not fly. I shall never
forget his startling handbills, opening thus: -

"The time long wished for is at hand,
When man, grown tired of sea and land,
On artificial wings shall fly,
And navigate the liquid sky." etc. etc.

And one awesome night I heard his lecture, in the countenance
on a pasteboard model of his machine; and I came away through
the thick sweet summer night in a rapt state, planning up
and turned the north for the lecture on his way home on his
machine - for then I doubted not that he could fly - and
now I know I can. And, even so, behold me in the

far azure heights, cirily lifted and hallowed there by the in-
spiration of your tribute to my late, lonely-but now lofty
Ryder. And that you grant the same a too great honor,
as I fear, at times, only makes me flinch into newer
intensity of flight and prize; and as you name me
the first American Eagle of them all, I simply just spread
out my wings and lo! there in the central heavens

"— faint and white

(Yea, and light)

"As a schoolboy's paper kite!"

At the last New Year's Watch-night at The Authors Club,
I for the first time met your post friend Roberts, whose
worthy verse I must needs take in as mountain air.
And he talked most righteously of your fine strong work;
And, all incidentally told me of this very estimate you
were then fashioning for the Atlantic. So, although
not wholly unprepared, I have still most frankly to
confess that it's high appreciation, in main spirit together
with its hale sincerity of might and measurement, combine
for me a state of satisfactory error before surprised
into tingling life and action. What you say, in every way,
touches me as would the grave judicial Council of the nearest
most friend; your conscience no less than your magnanimous heart—
Your subtlety of observation, analysis and vivisection of living facts—all

extrude even the upbuilders - nay, the poets? I would better say - of the fabric that
you sound and gauge and classify minutely, as the mathematical architect
you are. —

Yet here am I - as far from thanking for it all as at any
opening page. But I do thank you - beyond words, - with brimming heart and
soul. And, come other time there in this new and in this way, I hope to

"Even up" my vast indebtedness.

To me, as to your world of comrades friends, it is a joy to see the steadfast
march that you are making. God keeps your blithe soul ever young and young as
when He first unleashed it on the morning heights. You have been greatly
made and greatly staunch and furthered on a great career - and all.
Ready, too, greatly are you arriving.

Fraternal, as ever, and always your friend

- James Westcott Fiske

wholesomeness of spirit, and a certain modesty of youth. He was as sensitive and intuitive as a woman and as reticent as a boy, with an undue spiritual timidity rather rare, I fancy, in artistic and poetic natures.

And yet, for all his self-protective caution, when I made my last visit to him, with a commission to secure from him a series of detailed interviews or reminiscences of his life for a magazine, although he refused in a characteristic sort of panic to entertain the idea for a moment, he placed generously at my disposal all the material which his nephew, Mr. Edmund Eitel, had been collecting for some years, with his assistance, for his eventual biography.

"No, no," he said, "don't ask me to do any talking! But you have a free hand with all the material Ed has. Go ahead and write anything you like. Whatever you say will be all right."

His confidence was a great honor certainly. But I doubt if any one except a great novelist or a very clever woman can ever portray quite adequately such a personality and temperament as Riley's. All our efforts are too rough, too vague, too general, and our friend escapes us at last into the inexorable past, where none can follow, and where even our memories can only stray for a little while.

At the head of this first letter appears the emblem which he devised and always used on his correspondence paper, a firefly with wings outspread, tiny rays of light streaming from his body, and above him

the inscription A. T. H. L., "According to His Lights," Riley's motto, which he would interpret to you with a quizzical smile. The device is reproduced on the title page of this little volume.

His next message, from Greenfield, his old hometown near Indianapolis, where he used to spend some of his time in Summer, is dated nearly three years later, and seems to indicate that there must have been some correspondence between us in the meantime, though of his share in it I have no record. There is a reference to Hovey, who died in 1900, and to Mother Hovey, who had adopted Riley into the clan as one of her boys, though he was considerably older than her own son Richard. And there is, too, the reference to Stevenson, who was, of course, Robert Louis to Riley, as he affectionately became to all the world.

Greenfield, Ind.,

June 19:

1901

Bliss Carman, Esq.

My dear Carman—

No-sir! I never received a letter from
you written at Washington in May. Had I,
you would have received as prompt and
"eager" an answer as this—both for your
own sake and that of "The Mother of
Poets," whose address I have lost, and which
same I pray you supply me with at once,
as I've owed her a letter this many a
month, for which helpless delinquency she is
doubtless thinking of me at about the esti-
mate your present note suggests. Well, I
think better of you—and steadfastly—whether

Ho
her
at
Uni

You write to me or fail to, — for,
God bless ye! I see the poems you
print, and they're all mine to read, re=
read and read again — and Ho! what
glorious songs they are — and their glory
Ever growing! Over and over I wonder if
the dear boys on the Other Side have'n't
a hand in it all —

"David and Donald and Cherley and a' —"

Aye, and the quivering Richard, and Robert Louis
himself. Hail to them, and to you, and
God bless everyone!

Ho Always your fraternal

— James Whitcomb Riley.

Have been three parts ill for a long, long time, but now
here in the country am galloping well again. If you write
at once, address Greenfield, Ind.; if delayed, write care
Union Trust Co., Indianapolis.

In the letter of March 11th, 1903, the honored recipient appears in the most unhappy guise of a delinquent, and, let us trust, penitent correspondent; while the reference, "psstt! vanished," recalls an amusing occurrence in our comradeship. I believe it must have happened on the occasion when I went out to Indianapolis to read or speak at Butler College. We had parted in the late afternoon, as I was to be busy for the rest of the evening, with an agreement to meet next day for lunch at the Dennison, where I was staying. The hour arrived, but no Riley. A hurried search of his usual haunts and an appeal to the telephone failed to locate the absentee, and finally, much to my regret, but not of course with the least irritation, I was forced to leave for New York without seeing him to say good-bye.

It was not till several years afterwards that I found out, when visiting him again, what had happened. It seems he had forgotten the engagement, had been told somewhere that I was looking for him for luncheon, had recalled the appointment, and had sailed away at once to keep it, but had never arrived at the designated haven. No doubt he had made harbor safely in some other equally attractive port of missing men, for he was known and welcomed everywhere in his beloved city.

March 11:
1903

Bliss Cornua —

Dear friend:

What a fine strong portrait
they have of you in The Reader —
which some counterpart I am just
now, in fancy, striking hands with.
First real sight of you I've had since
we last met here and these part! —
vanished. When did you go? I don't
know yet where I did. But — days
later — I kept a nebulous promise and
sent you a book — yes, two of 'em — and
a poem. It's never a word from you. So this
is trying for you once more — by another
address. Your always grateful and affectionate
— James Whitcomb Riley

The next three letters recall one of the happiest times in those days which are now getting to be old, when I went over to Philadelphia to meet him. The sittings he refers to were being given to John S. Sargent, for the famous portrait which he had been commissioned to paint, and which now hangs in the John Herron Art Institute in Indianapolis. It was on this visit that we had another instance of Riley's well-known inability to find his way about,—a trait that I fear he did not try very hard to eradicate, yet whose vexatious consequences he elaborately deplored, as part of the persecution of his personal hoodoo. He was never tired of enlarging vehemently on the contrariness of events wherever he was concerned. Trains were always late, roads were always blocked, everything went wrong whenever he wanted to go anywhere. If it were possible to go astray he always would, he declared. And all because of his hoodoo. Every day while these sittings to Sargent were going on, some of his friends would call for him in the morning at the hotel and pilot him round to the studio,—then back again when the sitting was over and luncheon was in order. He told me one evening how the night before he had lain awake tracing the daily course of the journey from the hotel to the studio and back, and had finally decided that he could make it by himself; and how he had boasted to the boys that *he* would show *them* the way to the studio that morning, and that at the last corner when he insisted on turning to the left,

To—

Bliss Carman — that incessant Boy! —
From his ever-loving playmate,

— James Watson Pileus

Aug. 5.
1903

Yet himself a child at play,
Old Bliss Carman knows the way! —
He can even play he's sad
When he's most outrageous glad!

they had said no, he was wrong, and had borne him off to the right, and By Gosh, they came to the studio. Another evening we were invited to some friends' house out of town; Riley was convoyed to his destination; and when I arrived alone half an hour later, he professed utter amazement that I had been able to find the way, and declared it must have been because I was brought up in the woods over in Canada. And all with never a smile or hint of anything but the most perfect faith in his own credulity. If he were really fooling on the sly, and was not actually as helpless as appeared, it is only my base suspicion that suggests such a thing. He was quite deep enough to carry off the joke.

It was shortly after this that I received from him another of his books duly inscribed in that beautiful hand, warmly as ever, and with an original quatrain in his happy vein. Poetry was an immortal ebullition with him. It bubbled out of him continually, like clean sparkling water from a living spring.

"Yet himself a child at play,
Old Bliss Carman knows the way!—
He can even play he's sad
When he's most outrageo's glad!"

Indpls., May 7: 1903

Dear Cannon:

Your letters "come" slower than butter by the old churning process, but they're equally rich and delicious when they do "come". Just as this last one arrives I am packing my trunk for a brief and long some passer over toward your way, for I can't possibly attain New York - but I'm inspired to hope that You can come the differing distance, as my guest, mind you, - joining me at Philadelphia (Hotel Walton), where I'm to arrive the coming 10th - and to remain 3, 4, 5 or 6 days.

And now - do come, and we'll have
a glorious session of real serious
hopeful, helpful interchange. You will
find me weller than you've ever seen
me, and you'll see me growing better
and better "visibly, before your very eyes!"

Hastily, but most heartily and affectionately,
- James Whitcomb Riley

STAFFORD HOTELS
HOTEL IMPERIAL
BROADWAY & 42ND STREET, NEW YORK
HOTEL WALTON
BROAD & LOCUST STS. PHILADELPHIA



May 12:
1903

Dear Carman —

Good for you! — Spoken like a true
man and brother! So I'll look for
your coming Thursday — though you
haven't told me of the hour. No odds! —

At my busiest I'll not be long from
the hotel here — beside, I'll have word
for you at the office. Only, don't you
fail to come, God bless you.

No, I sadly fear I can't go back
to New York with you — even for a day —
that's why I so selfishly want you to
come here. You know I've been scared pale —
all these wicked months — but my poem had
not pleased you, as I wanted it to please
But we'll talk everything all out straight when
you're here. As ever fraternally and affectionately,
— James Whitcomb Riley

STAFFORD HOTELS
HOTEL IMPERIAL
BROADWAY & 32ND STREET, NEW YORK
HOTEL WALTON
BROAD & LOCUST STS. PHILADELPHIA



May 14

Dear Carman —

If you get here while I'm out
this morning, please call for me — up
to 30 minutes of One o'clk — at Lam-
berts Studio where I'm sitting.
Thence we are to go to Owen Wister
and Harrison Morris, et al, for luncheon.

Hastily, — J. W. Riley.

Mr. Lambert's Studio number is

324 South Seventh Street.

His next letter, written from Lockerbie Street, bears no date, contrary to his usual custom. It is postmarked, however, Jan. 21, 1904. The library of poetry of which he speaks is "The World's Best Poetry," a subscription work in ten large volumes, which was undertaken and put through by The University Society, a New York publishing house then under the management of the late George J. Bryan. In connection with his unsuccessful effort to get Riley to assist in editing the volume of humorous poetry, I remember Mr. Bryan telling me with amusement how vainly he had tried to enlist Riley in the undertaking, and how Riley pretended that on no account could he assume any such discriminating task. "Why there are four hundred poets right here in Indiana," he said, "and they are all my friends." No, he never would have done that. He would have been afraid of giving offence. And while he was very discriminating in his taste, he never ventured on any public declaration of his likes and dislikes. Besides being naturally timid, he was always deferential to authority and mistrusted his own judgment. At least he wouldn't avow it. For although he was exceptionally well versed in English and American poetry, he felt his lack of formal academic training,—rating it at a higher worth, very possibly, than it deserves. Still his aversion to pronouncing an opinion was probably even more a matter of temperament than of diffidence over what he considered his insufficient equip-

528 Locksbur St.,

Dear Camrose:

How I would like to join you in that truly fine library of poetry, but just now I'm showing some really serious symptoms of long overwork, and my best friend, who is first a physician, says I must at once rid myself of all responsibilities now so weighing me lop-sided - and instead of any work for a long indefinite time, I'm just to shed my literary overalls and go gambolin' round the pastur-lands a-doin' nothin' but browsin' and grazin' on the coarsest grass and fodder findable - and no more tryin' to kick the stars loose for a long, elaborate, listless, loitering, lazy year, anyhow!

Have seen your friend Mr. Bryan - and
glad to see him - but had to talk
this way to him, - but 'more dulcet,
delicious and dreamy!' - so mildly, indeed,
I'm half fearful now that he quit me,
thinking I was favoring his proposition -
as God knows I would favor it, were
there, a living, breathing chance for me to
do it - I meant to join with you in the
certainty of the success awaiting the ^{now} al=
most completed and most worthy work.
But - as I tried to say to Mr. B. - if there
is some indirect way in which I might
be of service, you are to command me.
Can't you take a recess yourself for a few days
and come help me, loaf, and we'll talk, anyhow.
Other friends here, too, want a sight of you, well
as - Your always fraternal and abiding friend,
- James Whitcomb Riley.

Postscript.

Inured, not until I do find you in talking-range
Can I at all hope to be able to express to
you a tithe of my still increasing gratefulness
for your recent gracious words of tribute to my
latest chirps, chirps and trillings - which voice of
praises in various truth

".....Shakes me like a com
Of bugles going by."

ENR

ment. Even his several honorary Doctor's degrees did not give him self-confidence.

With all this, he was most generous of praise and recognition of new work in poetry, and did not hesitate to commend what seemed to him good,—as witness his letter to John D. Morris, on the publication of "The World's Best Poetry," in the following year. His instinct for the best was acute. And if he could not find much to like in the modern fads of contemporary versifying, one can hardly blame him. An artist of his delicacy is not likely to be very tolerant of the wilful and slipshod in poetry. It is a fairly long stride from the "Tales of a Wayside Inn" to the vagaries of Free Verse at its freest. As for the extreme inanities of the Imagists, and half a dozen other cults, they left Riley stunned and speechless. He could only read them and murmur helplessly, "My Gawd, My Gawd!"

In the Spring of 1904 I find no fewer than four letters from Riley, two of them showing that he was heartily interested in the Anthology, though he could not bring himself to be actively engaged upon it. "The Song of the Savoyards," by Henry Ames Blood was included in "The World's Best Poetry," as he suggested. The other, "The Widder Plunkit's Kittle," does not appear there, I find, and I don't recall it. This hunting up of little known poems was a favorite occupation of Riley's. He had many such gems stored away in his library and in his memory,

March 1:
1904

Bliss Carman, Esq.—

Dear friend:

And now I am happy—getting your good letter, at last, assuring me that you do understand why I couldn't come in on that most inviting work—as indeed indeed I would so like to do, but for the positively interfering conditions peculiarly in my individual path. With you—thank just fitness, critical high worth and recognition—it is different; and despite your tremors and fears for the outcome, I know you'll emerge, with still newer honors to your credit.—So don't you dare think otherwise. Wish you would come out here for a breathing spell. It would do you lots o' good I know—and me lots more. Is am your grateful and fraternal.

Tell Mr. Williams not to use but most judiciously ^{of which} — James S.
welcome to all the list he sends, though I hear he's too kindly disposed to my stuff—that's all. Better too little than too much, of course.

particularly poems of fine quality by almost unknown poets,—those hopeless children of the Muse who are often only blessed with inspiration of undoubted authenticity once or twice in their lives, and yet are possessed by a mild rapture of poets all their days. Their lot in this distracted world is often a pathetic one, with neither the strength to prevail in an indifferent and toilsome age, nor the resolution entirely to abandon the attempt. There were many such, doubtless, among those four hundred who were all Riley's friends.

One poem that Riley much prized, a copy of which he sent me, was "Aholah," taken from "The Fiddle and the Bow," by Hudson Evans, of Tell City, Indiana. It is a companion poem to Swinburne's "Aholibah," whose gorgeous diction and sonorous style appealed strongly to Riley, as did all of Swinburne's magnificent verse.

In a third letter of this year, dated April 14, is Riley's very generous reply to a letter of mine. In "Our Lady of the Rain," a long lyric, I wrote

"Go watch, by brimming river
Or reedy-marged lagoon,
The wild geese drive their harrow
Across the rising moon."

The lines were so printed in *The Sunday Magazine*, and I afterwards found the phrase in one of Riley's poems that I was familiar with. It was

April 14:
1904

Dear Bliss Carman:

Your instinctive use of the wildgoose-harrow:
figure simply and most happily demonstrates
to me its true poetic worth - as much
yours as my use of it is mine, - for
of course it has been used long genera-
tions before either of us sniped it in with
a honk of righteousness-delight over our cocksure first
discovery of it. Moreover, your masterful poem of
"Our Lady of the Rain" has numberless reaches
superior to the altitude attainable by any wild-
goose of mine. Therefore, I pray you, dismiss
utterly our further thought of challenges of mine
or any sagamaw's blat with
"The harvest of the Quiet Eye."

With great haste but most deliberately faith-

And Affection yours

- James

When are
you coming to
see me? Now's
a splendid time. Do catch it.

quite evident that I had unconsciously "lifted it" for myself, and I at once wrote to Riley acknowledging the plagiarism,—receiving this delightful reply. In the poem as printed in my volume "Songs of a Northern Garden," the metaphor has been changed to

"The wild geese row their galley,"

which is hardly as good. I am not sure that I won't restore the first reading, if only for the sake of having borrowed from this happy lover of nature. I once had a similar experience with a phrase of Archibald Lampman's. Such happenings are very embarrassing, and may be entirely innocent. It is a most natural blunder on the part of those faithful sentries, the imps of memory and imagination, who probably rush about in the storeroom of the mind eager to fulfil our behests and find the most fitting phrase for any given outward event or impression. Often they succeed in digging up something that may be called original. Sometimes, evidently, they go to a wrong pigeon-hole in the brain and fish out a treasured but forgotten simile belonging to another.

Indpls, Apr. 21, '04.

Dear Carman —

Here's a real ringing poem and its history in my memory and experience:—At its original first appearance (Evidently) in Scribner's Magazine, June, 1875, I read it—thrilled by it, and remembering bits of it ever since, and vainly trying to recapture it in its entirety. Well—a few months since I asked a friend here on a paper, and next day he picked up a just-published vol. and Behold! The Joy of the Savoyards. The vol.—under title, Selected Poems

Henry A. Blood

Washington, D. C. The Neale Publishing Company
431 Eleventh Street, N. W., MCM I — The copy is right like this:

Copyright, 1901, by Mary M. Blood.

Age of which means that I hope you can be the first to give it to the general world in your Anthology. — So I've had copy of it carefully and send it herewith. Do write me its not too late, And I've another band = up M.S. poem — a great diabatic poem, by a preacher; and it's called "The Widder Phinnix's Kitten." It simply beats the band, and ought to be preserved throughout the ages. Write and I'll promptly find and send it. Forward your affectionate
Carman

In May of this year, 1904, there came from Riley another gleeful quatrain, duly inscribed on a small piece of paper to be pasted in my copy of "Songs of the Sea Children," which was dedicated to him. These were the playful things he was always up to. And if he didn't make up a couplet of his own, he would have a pat quotation.

James Whitcomb Riley.
Indianapolis.

May 7:
1904

Bliss Carman, Esq.

Dear friend:

When your Pipes of Pan volume III came yesterday I gave a great ecstatic jump, upon finding it dedicated to - myself! - truly the best man in the world I'd expected - therefore the now happiest and most grateful. All my night-session of reading and reveling I gave to these Songs of the Sea-Children - and over and over I said to you aloud, "God bless you, this is fine!" and "What uplift is in this - what force, and what grace and loveliness!" and "What derry freshness of the very morning is here - nervousness - your own ringing statements of your own thoughts!" And 'way in the night I wrote and pasted a scroll in the erior Pan-scape in the front of the book - across the Century-foilage of the trees - a copy of which scroll I make this morning and fold herein - hoping you'll likewise paste it in your personal vol. Have creased scroll just as it should set in hinge of the pages. And if you're not the most skilled of pasters, behold look out or the dam thing'll curl up on you to hell and gone!

To Error and always Your grateful and fraternal - James W.

In a letter of the following June he quotes from the classic and immortal Christobel, to express his feelings and ease that groundless but generous sense of ennui which all artists know at times. But who ever came to the point so precisely and neatly? Ridiculous man that he was.

June 9:
1905

Dear Carman:

All hail to you wherever faces
your wandering, mistful path through
all the sunny weather! Your glad
call came just as I needed it.

Do I age, in those long, later
days - or "what doth ail the mastif
bitch?" Seems I never can rouse
up and set to work again. Just
as you found and left me, I
keep straight on at utter idleness -
seemingly fit only for that state
of worthless being. How I wish you
had either stayed here or taken
me away. But your letter has

in
the

helped a heap: Have gone scheming
on a new series of old songs—
(Some new ones) and should the book
turn out fit, the poem to you shall
be the volume's proem— and God bless you.

At last I've tried to express my
great joy over your fine, vast work
The World's Best Poetry.— A copy of which
estimate, just received from your publishers,
I hasten to submit to you herewith.
With kindest love and cheers of Howland,
Nicholson and "The King's Own,"
I remain, as erstwhile and henceforward,

Your Ever-grateful

James.

Mrs. Holstein is now

in New York, and I know would be

glad of a sight of your cherry smile at

the home of her kinman, Mr. and Mrs. Conley, 2647 Broadway.

His missive of November, 1905, has one hint of a certain very strong characteristic; namely, his detestation of cold. The first nip of frost in the air always shrivelled him up and stung him to resentment. "The Bradawl jabs of dam'd over-jocund Winter" exactly portray his sentiments toward that salubrious season. He wanted none of it, and in the last years of his life he was fortunately able to spend a large part of his time at Miami in Florida. As soon as November set in he was eager to be off, and there he abode until April. In several of his poems this strong preference appeared. Even as a child he disliked the Wintry time, and would stick indoors over a book and a fire while other boys were snowballing. And I have heard him berate the cold as if it were a malignant enemy. It was just such surface pin-pricks of inconvenience that most inflamed his ire. He would defame the railroad with blood-curdling and blasphemous murmurs, if the gates of a crossing happened to close just as he drew up; while in the face of a great sorrow or misfortune he had a stoic courage. He could stand a jolt of outrageous fortune more calmly than a jounce in his automobile.

THE GALLERY
THE BOBBS-MERRILL COMPANY
Indianapolis

Nov. 2: 1905

Bliss Cannon, Esq. —

To hear again the voice o' your pen
is a glory unto me! Just as for
the thousandth time I was wondering
why under the heavens you didn't
write, here comes your blessed
message, with the same old serenity
and solidity of repose that simply
anchors a fellow 'way out in center
of the roarin' deeps o' Ark, Care & Com=
pany, where he can calmly address such remarks
to em as To hell with ye!

Well - it's mighty glad I am you're back home, where, once more, extended from the weathered, frosty shores and the broadland of the David over-ground winter, you may find the peace and comfort by your own most radiant and up-reveries ingh - I'm as your life is settling to it right here and now!

Yes! publishers here have been getting on a series of my old rhymes together which they named "Song o' (their that is) all I had to do with it was the little o' Well, "Chug", of course, kept me thinking of you - so I've dared to dedicate

the volume to my dear old friend Bliss (Gannett), who will now, I trust, cheerfully present to take his medicine. I'm sure personal copy of the book (the very first in my hands), with signed dedication, together with another - which you might care to send over - or not nothing are in route with this, by Express. In fact, I have about ~~eleven~~ ^{one for Edith} ^{you!} names about ^{and at by fire and office} ^{Mr. Holland - Nicholson - Robb - Merrill} ^{Every body that ever met you and you had acquaintance} ^{with most of mine. And God bless us every one!} ^{James McKim & Co.}

"I have written in for my extra copies of "Song o' (Gannett)" and "Chug" and some small number of your book came to me."

and I shall like to see and send some small number of your book came to me."

The poem "Jaqueline," which he copied from memory and sent to me, was one of those exceptional pieces of newspaper verse that he was so fond of finding and rescuing from oblivion. He had quoted it once when we were together, and I had been haunted by the cadences as I recalled them in his lingering voice. When I wrote asking for a copy, he was only too glad to give, as he always was. Any poem that one ever heard Riley recite became memorable. He was a good reader of verse, not making too much of metrical effects, and yet giving them their full value, with a quiet delight and zest in the beauty of inevitable words.

And Gladly I'll give and send any number you'd care to have. I'll give you your friend my

To Bliss Carman, Esq.

Nov. 16. 1905. Haste. Sent 4 sig. vols.

^{Promptly returned}
The haunting poem "Jaqueline" must have appeared
20 to 30 years ago where I saw it - evidently contributed -
in The Boston Transcript, and signed at end with simple
initials - G.P. or G.P.D. Anyway, I'd swear the old B.T.
files will give up the poem entire, and possibly the
poet's name as well. See my old friend and editor in
those days Charles E. Hurd. Can only give you fragments -
First stanza:-

"The stars tonight were dim and pale.

O how the glamour above us thins! -

The world was beautiful - did fail.

In no good thing - for of all men

I thought me king - and you were queen...

Do you remember, Jacqueline?

"None dare speak at, but whisperingly, - [?]

I thought the soul should come unfulfilled

As a fly in the breeze: There came a sea

Of bright glad waters - all the world

My conquest - mine,!! [?]. Black waters bore

Heavily against me, Jacqueline.

Why could it not be as you said?

O how the heart throbbed strong and bold!

You promised we should sometime wed -

And I believed you - all you told.

I cannot think that you should mean

To hurt so deeply, Jacqueline.

* Lines underlined in original.

A
A
M
C
A
S
UP

All I could give — I knew it small —

I wondered you could even look
Upon my love, — but it was all —

All that I had, and by the Book

And Him who made it I did mean

To love you truly, Jacqueline.

As one the Sarum garment = hem,

So I kissed yours and thought no sin.

O rare flower-days! — the worth of them

And all the wealth there was therein

I could not know. — These days between

Have told it rudely, Jacqueline.

I hardly dare to hope for rest

Till all of life be better done.

As those far clouds out in the west

Were fair and splendid by the sun —

Are dark and shapeless now, — so even

My life seems to me, Jacqueline.

I pray the years to lightly touch

All things you love and bring to you

All hope and happiness — as much

As if you had been always true.

Shall we go now. and will you lean

Upon my arm, fair Jacqueline?

O [Last stanza here is as in original — sure.]
Very truly — DW

The last letters I have written in his own hand are messages sent forth in the Summer of the year, one in May, 1907, the other in June, 1908. They both breathe the warmth of friendship, calling for news of the distant comrade. The last one is particularly eloquent in its very simple way. When he speaks of being "well stricken in years," it is still with the old mockery, and yet there is a touch of the truth. He grew, of course, more and more devoted to his "ain fireside" and averse to moving abroad. As old friends passed on he naturally felt more dependent on those that were left, and made few new ones, if any. Never a ready mixer, his joy in life had been found only with those whom he particularly cared for. And while we gather from all his writings an undoubted liking for folks, it is still true that he was a lonely man. As he went on after middle life, his bachelorhood and retiring habits made him more so. He had neither children nor an interest in affairs of the day to divert him, and renew his taste for living. He hated age, and never admitted his own. It was a guarded secret with him, and he liked to think he had eluded publicity on the subject,—a harmless illusion which his intimates helped him in maintaining.

This dread of old age, and the realization of its approach, made the irksome days of his recovery hard to bear. When he was able to be about again, and allowed himself the unusual luxury of a car of his own, he took immense satisfaction in it, and be-

B=M. Co., Inds.

THE BOOK NOOK.

INDIANAPOLIS.

May 11: 1907

Blue Canyon, Inds.
Dear old friend:

Wonder where you're at now
this other week you at hand=
end of 10=first or

"Sailing on Indiana Bay."

Anyway I've been missing you

for nearly a handsome later year.

For a long time I've been waiting
to write, but personally in only
average low health and spirit, I've

waited and waited and likewise waited
till, veritably, the epoch-breaking Corr has
come home! I've been holding for you
here - for a year at least - a Homestead
Edition set of my priceless works. Won't you
please come personally and get 'em - or
must I send 'em to you - where and
when? For! how I would like to see
you now, and rest - and talk at you!...
Dear old Portie target! - Intellectual Bullseye!
To give me a line you're comin' right away.
On coming 22 our Indianapolis literary contingent goes
to Authors Reading - at La Fayette, for the poet

Miss Evalena Stinson - Among the participants -

Miss Follen, Stein, - Among the participants whose
presence is already assured will be one and
found the Only George Hale; the McCutcheon Bros., Romancer
and Cartoonist; Miss Elizabeth Miller, Religious novelists
author of The Fort, (her first great book) and Saul of Tarsus, her
last; Mr. Meredith Nicholson, who in both prose and verse
has done delicious things; and last and least -

Your old friend

James.

Do write, saying you'll
come and be my guest or
guest of the whole gang - should you prefer that.

came more sociable than he had been before his illness,—going out every day, morning and afternoon, for long rides and always taking with him any friend he could pick up. It is a happiness to remember those rides, and to think that his popularity had brought him the substantial means to make his stricken years comfortable, and give him all that his simple needs demanded.

My last letters from Riley were, of course, not in his own hand. They were brief messages, one or two from his winter resort in Florida, where he went to enjoy the grateful sun, and one or two from the beloved old Lockerbie Street. They show him cheery and alert of mind as always, and with his unfailing friendliness and thought of others; and he is full of praise of the Miami weather, which I must be thankful for, remembering his shrinking from the first shafts of Winter air as we drove about Indiana in early November.

He makes reference in one letter to a poem that pleased him. It was called "After a Parting," and was written a day or so after we bade him good-bye setting out on his annual pilgrimage to the South. There is nothing in the verses to indicate the actual occasion of their composition; only the sentiment of our separation is there.

So I must close my small packet of letters again, with a last glance. And here are the words that must linger in my remembrance of this royal generous-hearted friend, "Be blithe and joyous." That

June 11,
1908.

Dear friend Carnau—

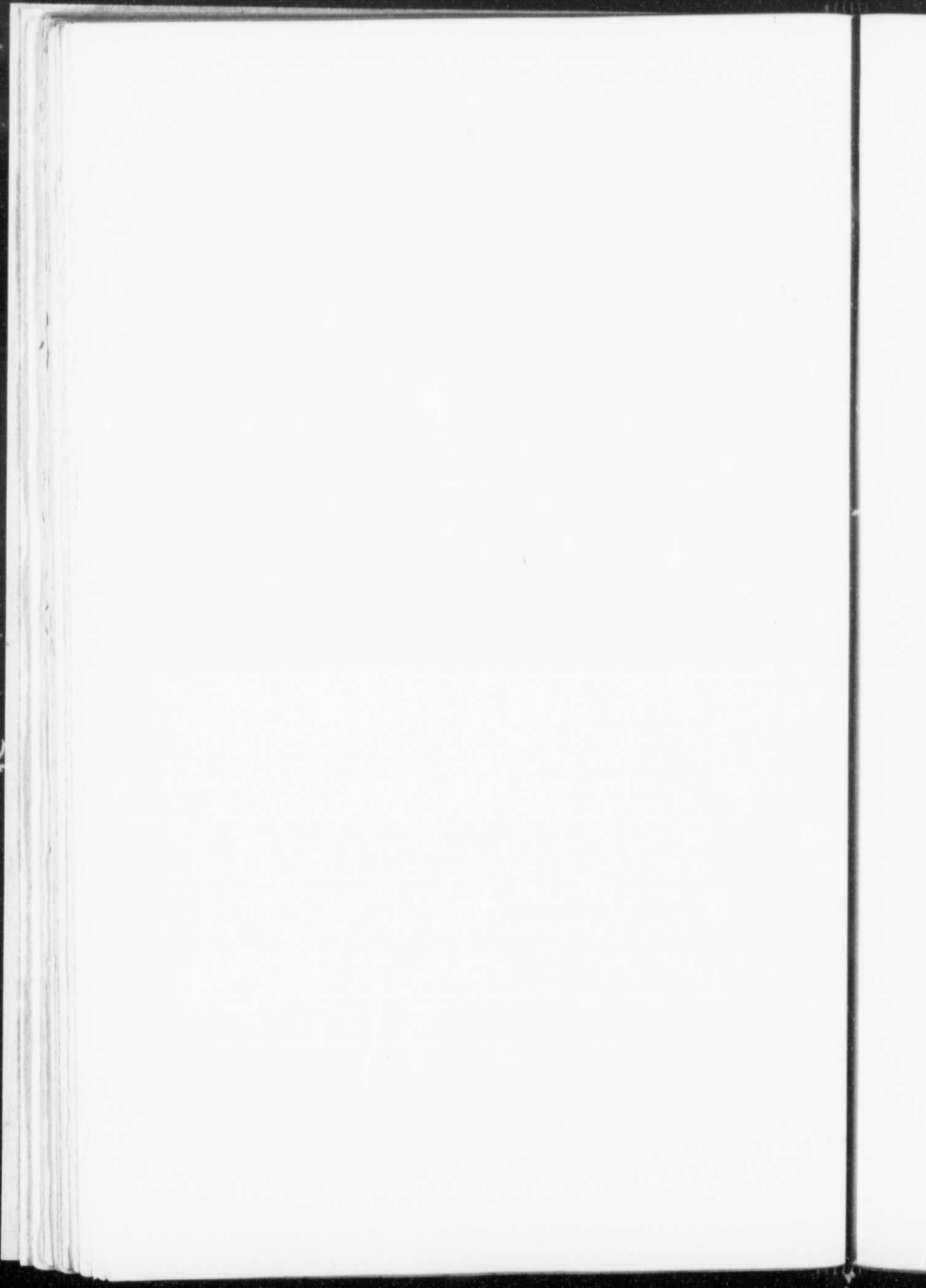
This wireless to try and find out
where you're really at! Uncertain
for such an age, and now well stricken
in years, I can but feel a sort of
a loneliness that only the sound of
your voice and the touch of your
hand can entirely about. Dang it! Why not
you out here now! You're long due
and overdue, and we all want to
see you—Specially me.

As ever your fraternal old
—Janssy.

was Riley's message to the world, in spite of all sorrows and disappointments and trials of heart. So I must keep him always as he subscribed himself at the last, "With old-time love and affection, yours faithfully and cheerily, JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY."

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

LETTERS



Aug. 30, 1898.

BLISS CARMEN, ESQ.

My dear Mr. Carmen:

Over and over I am joyously reading your sagacious and yet generous estimate of "Mr. Riley's Poetry"—until indeed you seem to me the featest, fairest critic in the lettered world and *The Atlantic* the very first of magazines on earth! "When that I was an little tiny boy." my first worshiped contemporary was an old poetic farmer, with his mind a trifle canted—sufficiently at least to invent a flying machine which he used to lecture on—not fly. I shall never forget his startling handbills, opening thus:

"The time long wished for is at hand,
When man, grown tired of sea and land,
On artificial wings shall fly,
And navigate the liquid sky," etc., etc.

And one awesome night I *heard* him lecture in the courthouse, on a pasteboard model of his machine; and I came away through the thick-sweet summer night, in a rapt state, staring up and toward the north for the lecturer on his way home on his ma-

chine,—for then I doubted not that he could fly—
and now *I know I can*. And, even so, behold me in
the far azure heights, eerily lifted and havened there
by the inspiration of your tribute to my late lowly—
but now lofty—rhyme. And that you grant the
same a too great honor, as I fear, at times, only
makes me flinch into newer intrepidity of flight and
poise; and as you name me the first *American Eagle*
of them all, I simply just spread out my wings and
loll there in the central heavens

“—— faint and white

(Yea, and light)

As a schoolboy's paper kite!”

At the last New Year's Watch-night at The Authors Club, I for the first time met your poet friend Roberts, whose worthy verses I must needs take in as mountain air. And he talked most righteously of your fine strong work; and, all incidentally told me of this very estimate you were then fashioning for *The Atlantic*. So, although not wholly unprepared, I have still most frankly to confess that its high appreciation in main spirit, together with its hale sincerity of weight and measurement, combine for me a state of satisfaction never before surprised into tingling life and action. What you say, in every way, touches me as would the grave judicial counsel of the nearest wisest friend. Your conscience no less than your magnanimous heart—your subtlety of

observation, analysis and vivisection of living facts—all astonish even the upbuilder—nay, the framer, I would better say—of the fabric that you sound and gauge and classify minutely, as the master mental architect you are—Yet here am I—as far from thanking for it all as at my opening page. But I *do* thank you—beyond words,—with brimming heart and soul. And, some other time than in this now and in this way, I hope to “even up” my vast indebtedness.

To me, as to your world of comrade-friends, it is a joy to see the steadfast march that you are making. God keep your blithe soul ever young and lyric as when He first unleashed it on the morning heights! You have been greatly made and greatly launched and furthered on a great career—and already, too, greatly are you arriving.

Fraternally, as ever and always your friend,
JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

GREENFIELD, IND.

June 19, 1901.

BLISS CARMAN, ESQ.

My dear Carman:

No-Sir! I never received a letter from you written at Washington in May. Had I, you would have received as prompt and eager an answer as this—both for your own sake and that of “The Mother of Poets,” whose address I have lost, and which same I pray you supply me with at once, as I’ve

owed her a letter this many a moon, for which helpless delinquency she is doubtless thinking of me at about the estimate your present note suggests. Well, I think better of *you*—and steadfastly—whether you write to me or fail to,—for, God bless ye! I see the poems you print, and they're all mine to read, re-read and read again—and Ho! what glorious songs they are—and their glory ever growing! Over and over I wonder if the dear boys on the Other Side haven't a hand in it all——

"*David and Donald and Cherley and a' "*——

Aye, and the questing Richard, and Robert Louis himself. Hail to them, and to you, and God bless every one!

As always your fraternal

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

Have been three-parts ill for a long, long time, but now here in the country am galluping well again. If you write at once, address *Greenfield, Ind.*; if delayed, write *care Union Trust Co., Indianapolis.*

March 11, 1903.

BLISS CARMAN.

Dear friend:

What a fine strong portrait they have of you in *The Reader*—which same counterpart I am just now, in fancy, striking hands with.—First real sight of you I've had since we last met here and then—psstt!—vanished. Where did you go? I don't know yet where *I* did. But—days' later—I kept a

nebulous promise and sent you a book—yes, two of 'em—and a poem. Yet never a word from you. So this is trying for you once more—by another address. Your always grateful and affectionate

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

INDPLS.,

May 7: 1903

Dear Carman:

Your letters "come" slower than butter by the old churning process, but they're equally rich and oleaginous when they do "come." Just as this last one arrives I am packing my trunk for a brief and lonesome *pasear* over *toward* your way, for I can't possibly attain New York—but I'm inspired to hope that *you* can come the differing distance, as my guest, mind you,—joining me at Philadelphia (Hotel Walton) where I'm to arrive the coming 10th—and to remain 3, 4, 5 or 6 days. And now—do come, and we'll have a glorious session of real serious hopeful, helpful interchange. You will find me *weller* than you've ever seen me, and you'll see me growing better and better "wisibly before your wery eyes!"

Hastily but most heartily and affectionately,

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

HOTEL WALTON
PHILADELPHIA

May 12, 1903

Dear Carman:

Good for *you!*—Spoken like a true man and brother! So I'll look for your coming Thursday—though you haven't told me of the *hour*. No odds!—At my busiest I'll not be long from the hotel here—beside, I'll leave word for you at the office. Only, *don't you fail to come*, God bless you.

No, I sadly fear I can't go back to New York with you—even for a day,—that's why I so selfishly want you to come here. You know I've been scared pale all these voiceless months—lest my poem had not pleased you, as I *wanted* it to please. But we'll talk everything all out straight when you're here. As ever fraternally and affectionately,

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

HOTEL WALTON
PHILADELPHIA

May 14 [1903].

Dear Carman:

If you get here while I'm out this morning, please call for me—up to 30 minutes of One o'clk—at Lamberts Studio where I'm sitting. Thence we are to go to Owen Wister and Harrison Morris, et al, for luncheon.

Hastily,

J. W. RILEY.

Mr. Lambert's Studio number is 324 South Seventh Street.

528 Lockerbie St.,

[Postmark on letter Jan. 21, 1904]

Dear Carman:

How I would like to join you in that truly fine library of poetry, but just now I'm showing some really serious symptoms of long overwork, and my best friend, who is first a physician, says I must at once rid myself of all responsibilities now so weighing me lop-sided—and instead of any work for a long indefinite time, I'm just to shed my literary overalls and go gamb'lin' round the pastur'-lands a-doin' nothin' but browsin' and grazin' on the coarsest grass and fodder findable—and no more tryin' to kick the stars loose for a long, elaborate, listless, loitering, lazy year, anyhow!

Have seen your friend Mr. Bryan—and *glad* to see him—but had to talk this way to him,—but “more dulcet, delicious and dreamy!”—so mildly, indeed, I'm half fearful *now* that he quit me, thinking I was favoring his proposition—as God knows I would favor it, were there a living, breathing chance for me to do it—I mean,—to join with you in the certainty of the success awaiting the now almost completed and most worthy work. But—as I tried to say to Mr. B.—if there is some *indirect* way in which I might be of service, you are to command me. Can't you take a recess yourself for a few days and come help me loaf, and we'll talk, anyhow. Other friends here, too, want a sight of you, well as

Your always fraternal and abiding friend,

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

Postscript: Indeed, not until I do find you in talking-range can I at all hope to be able to express to you a tithe of my still increasing gratefulness for your recent gracious words of tribute to my latest chirps, cheeps and twitterings—which voice of praise, in veriest truth,

“ . . . Shakes me like a cry
Of bugles going by.”

J. W. R.

March 1, 1904

BLISS CARMAN, ESQ.

Dear friend:

And now I am happy—getting your good letter, at last, assuring me that you do understand why I couldn't come in on that most inviting work—as indeed *indeed* I would so like to do, but for the positively interfering conditions peculiarly in my individual path. With you—thank just fitness, critical high worth and recognition—it is different; and despite your tremors and fears for the outcome, I *know* you'll emerge, with still newer honors to your credit.— So don't you dare think otherwise. Wish you *would* come out here for a breathing spell. It would do you lots o' good I know—and me lots more. As ever your grateful and fraternal

JAMESY.

Tell Mr. Williams not to use but most *judicious* few selections of mine. You're welcome to all the list he sends, though I fear he's too kindly disposed

to my stuff—that's all. Better too little than too much, of course.

April 14, 1904.

Dear Bliss Carman:

Your instinctive use of the wildgoose-harrow-figure simply and most happily demonstrates to me its true poetic worth—as much yours as my use of it is mine,—for of course it has been used long generations before either of us swiped it in with a honk of righteous delight over our cocksure-first discovery of it. Moreover, your masterful poem of "Our Lady of the Rain" has numberless reaches superior to the altitude attainable by any wild goose of mine. Therefore, I pray you, dismiss utterly one further thought of challenge of mine or any sagaman's blest with

"The harvest of the Quiet Eye."

With great haste but most deliberate faith

And affection, Yours

JAMESY.

When are you comin' to see me? Now's a splendid time. Do elect it.

INDPLS,

Apl. 21, '04.

Dear Carman:

Here's a real ringing poem and its history in my memory and experience:— At its original first appearance (evidently) in *Scribner's Magazine*, June, 1875, I read it—thrilled by it, and remembering bits of it ever since, and vainly trying to recapture it in

its entirety. Well—a few months since I asked a friend here on a paper, and next day he picked up a just-published vol. and Behold! The Song of the Savoyards. The vol.—under title,

Selected Poems

Of

Henry Ames Blood

Washington, D. C., The Neale Publishing Company 431 Eleventh Street, N. W., MCMI—The copyright line thus:

Copyright, 1901, by Mary M. Blood.

All of which means that I hope you can be the first to give it to the general world in your Anthology.—So I've had copy of it carefully typed and send it herewith. Do write me it's not too late. And I've another bang-up MS. poem—a great dialect poem, by a preacher; and it's called "The Widder Plunkit's Kittle." It simply beats the band, and ought to be preserved throughout the ages. Write and I'll promptly find and send it.

As ever your affectionate

JAMESY.

INDIANAPOLIS.

May 7, 1904.

BLISS CARMAN, ESQ.

Dear friend:

When your Pipes of Pan volume III came yesterday I gave a great exstatic jump, upon finding it

dedicated to—myself!—truly the last man in the world I'd expected—therefore the now happiest and most grateful. All my night-session of reading and reveling I gave to these Songs of the Sea-Children—and over and over I said to you aloud, "God bless you, this is fine!" and "What uplift is in this—what force, and yet what grace and loveliness!" and "What dewy freshness of the very morning is here—newness—your own ringing statements of your own thoughts!" And 'way in the night I wrote and pasted a scroll in the eerie *Pan-scape* in the front of the book—*across the center-foliage of the trees*,—a copy of which scroll I make this morning and fold herein—hoping you'll likewise paste it in your personal vol. Have *creased* scroll just as it should set in hinge of the pages. And if you're not the most skilled of pasters, better look out or the dam thing'll curl up on you to hell-and-gone!

As ever and always your grateful and fraternal

JAMESY.

JOHN D. MORRIS & Co.,

PUBLISHERS THE WORLD'S BEST POETRY,

PHILADELPHIA, PA.

Gentlemen:

Permit me to extend my congratulations both to the publishers and Mr. Carman upon the issuance of this great work, THE WORLD'S BEST POETRY.

For several months I have been carefully surveying the work throughout, and the favored volumes

occupy the most accessible center of my library—justly, as well as naturally, earning that position by reason of the volumes' admirable contents—so well selected—so soundly edited—so beautifully and conveniently arranged and displayed. It is indeed a noble work. The present hour is ripe for a perfect anthology of this kind and the universal people will welcome it.

A feature of the work which particularly commends itself is that herein are found not only the classics and translations from other tongues but our own day's most worthy exemplars in the art—all so truly indicating that no care or research has been left unconsidered in bringing together this strong, fine, masterpiece of literary and editorial excellence.

Very truly yours,

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

May 19, 1905.

June 9, 1905.

Dear Carman:

All hail to you wherever fares your wandering, wistful path through all the Juney weather! Your glad call came just as I needed it. Do I age, in these lorn later days—or "what doth ail the mastif bitch?" Seems I never can rouse up and set to work again. Just as you found and left me, I keep straight on at utter idleness—seemingly fit only for that state of worthless being. How I wished you had either staid here or taken me away. But your letter has

helped a heap. Have gone scheming on a new series of old songs—(Some new ones). And should the book turn out fit, the poem to you shall be the volume's proem—and God bless you.

At last I've tried to express my great joy over your fine, vast work, *The World's Best Poetry*.—A copy of which estimate, just received from your publishers, I hasten to submit to you herewith. With halest love and cheer of Howland, Nicholson and "The King's Own,"

I remain, as erstwhile and henceforward,
Your ever-grateful

JAMESY.

Mrs. Holstein is now in New York, and I know would be glad of a sight of your cheery smile at the home of her kinsmen, Mr. and Mrs. Comley, 2647 Broadway.

INDIANAPOLIS

Nov. 2, 1905.

BLISS CARMAN, ESQ.

To hear again the voice o' your pen is a glory unto me! Just as for the thousandth time I was wonderin' why under the heavens you didn't write, here comes your blessed message, with the same old serenity and solidity of repose that simply anchors a feller 'way out in center of the roarin' deep 'o Cark, Care & Company, where he can ca'mly address such remarks to 'em as *To hell with ye!*

Well—it's mighty glad I am you're back home,

where, once more entrenched from the weather's frosty shears and the bradawl jabs of the dam'd over-jocund Winter, you may find true peace and comfort by your own most radiant and uproarious ingle—even as your likes is settling to it right here and now!

The publishers here have been getting another series of my old rhymes together which they named "Songs o' Cheer" (that is, all I had to do with it was the little o'). Well, *Cheer*, of course, kept me thinkin' of you,—so I've dared to dedicate the volume to my dear old friend Bliss Carman, who will now, I trust, cheerfully proceed to take his medicine. Your own personal copy of the book (the very first in my hands), with signed ded.', together with another—which you might care to send overseas—or cast within,—are en route with this, by express. In God's name don't electrocute me for electrotyping you! Come, instead, and sit by my fire and spin.

Mr. Howland—Nicholson—Bobbs-Merrill retinue and ever'body that ever met you, send you haldest greetings with these of mine. And God bless us everyone.

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

Hope you'll write me for any extra copies of "Songs o'," and gladly I'll sign and send any number you'd care to have seen by your friends any- and everywhere.

Nov. 16, 1905.

Haste. Send 4 sig. vols.
prompt yesterday.

TO BLISS CARMAN, ESQ.

The haunting poem "Jaqueline" must have appeared *20 to 30 years ago* where I saw it—evidently *contributed*—in the Boston Transcript, and signed at end with simple initials—G. P. or G. P. D. Anyway, I'd swear the old B.-T.-files will give up the poem entire, and possibly the poet's name as well. See my old friend and editor in those days Charles E. Hurd. Can only give you fragments. Lines underscored are guesswork.

First stanza:—

"The stars to-night are dim and pale,
O how the gleamed above us then!—
The world was beautiful—did fail,
In no good thing,—for of all men
I thought me King—and you were queen . . .
Do you remember, Jaqueline?

* * * * *

When love spake out but whisperingly,—(?)

I thought the soul should come unfurled
As a flag in the breeze: There came a sea
Of bright glad waters—all the world
My conquest—mine! (?) Black waters lean
Heavily against me, Jaqueline.

* * * * *

Why could it not be as you said?—

O how the heart throbbed strong and bold!

You promised we should sometime wed—

And I believed you—all you told.

I cannot think that you should mean

To hurt so deeply, Jaqueline.

* * * * *

All I could give—I knew it small —

I wondered you could even look

Upon my love,—but it was all—

All that I had, and by the Book

And Him who made it I did mean

To love you truly, Jaqueline.

* * * * *

As one the Saviour's garment-hem,

So I kissed yours and thought no sin.

O rare flower-days!—the worth of them

And all the wealth there was therein

I could not know.—These days between

Have told it rudely, Jaqueline.

* * * * *

I hardly dare to hope for rest

Till all of life be better done . . .

As those far clouds out in the west

Were fair and splendid by the sun—

Are dark and shapeless now,—so e'en

My life seems to me, Jaqueline.

* * * * *

I pray the years to lightly touch
 All things you love and bring to you
 All hope and happiness—as much
 As if you had been always true . . .
 Shall we go now . . . and will you lean
 Upon my arm, fair Jaqueline?

(Last stanza here is as in original—sure)

Very truly,

J. W. R.

INDIANAPOLIS

May 11, 1907.

BLISS CARMAN, ESQ.

Dear old friend:

Wonder where you're at! Will this ahoy reach
 you at lands'-end o' No-where or

"Sailing on Fonesca Bay."

Anyway I've been missing you for many a lonesome
 later year. For a long time I've been *wanting* to
 write; but, persistently in only average low health
 and spirits, I've waited and *waited* and likewise
 WAITED till, veritably, the epoch-breaking cow has
 came home! I've been holding for you here—for a
 year at least—A Homestead Edition set of my price-
 less works. Won't you please come personally and
 git 'em—or must I *send* 'em to you—where and
 when? Lor! how I would like to see you now, and
 rest—and talk at you! . . . *Dear old Poetic Tar-*

get!—Intellectual Bullseye! Do gimme a line you're comin' right away. On coming 22 our Indianapolis litry contingent goes to Authors Reading—at La Fayette, for the poet Miss Evaleen Stein,—Among the participants whose presence is already assured will be seen and heard the Only George Ade; the McCutcheon Bros., Romancer and Cartoonist; Miss Elizabeth Miller, Religious Novelist, author of "The Yoke" (her first great book) and "Saul of Tarsus," her last; Mr. Meredith Nicholson, who in both prose and verse has done delicious things; and last and least

Your old friend,

JAMESY.

Do write, saying you'll come and be my guest—
or guest of the whole gang—should you prefer that.

June 11, 1908.

Dear friend Carman:

This *wireless* to try and find out where you're really at! Uncertain for such an age, and now well stricken in years, I can but feel a sort of lonesomeness that only the sound of your voice and the touch of your hand can entirely abort. Dang it! why'nt you out here *now*! You're long due and *overdue*, and we *all* want to see you—specially me.

As ever your fraternal old

JAMESY.

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY 85

HOTEL HALCYON
On Biscayne Bay and the Sea

MIAMI, FLA.,
Nov. 27, 1914.

Dear Carman:

At last I write you briefly—just coming out of a severe visitation of a terrible medicine I am taking in which I suffer the pangs of the d——. I am now upright again and rejoiced. Every day I miss you more and more, but hope you are bearing the separation with like fortitude. How is Ed, and how are you two getting along? Famously I hope. Here the weather is exceedingly beautiful, mild and balmy as pure sunshine—"showing a gaudy summer morn where with puffed cheek the belted hunter blew his wreathed bugle horn." Always this quotation from the Master comes into my mind—when I would describe the Miami weather.

Be blithe and joyous. With best greetings to all the force about the Bobbs-Merrill Co. Tell Ed to express to me "Little Orphant Annie" book (Child book), also "Raggedy Man," also copy of "When She Was Sixteen."

Faithfully,
JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

(dictated)

MIAMI, FLA.,
Dec. 17, 1914.

Dear Carman:

Your letter is good, very good, *mighty* good, and yet not so good as the Poem. By jove, you were

inspired when you wrote that. I can see you smiling evasively at yourself when you rounded it into its perfect perfection. I fear I shall be delinquent with my Christmas gift to you—but you must be prepared for it at any future moment. Wish you were here, and Ed likewise—but be patient, “‘And so we plow along,’ as the fly said to the ox.”

Hope you and Ed are hitting it off *finely*.

Yours gratefully and faithfully,

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

INDIANAPOLIS.

October 12th, 1915.

Dear Carman:

Your fine letter and, doubtless, the letter to Ed likewise, remain unanswered. Simply, we can not write you a worthy message in the stress of these very epistolary times, further than to thank you for the birthday greetings, send you the *Star*, in which your poem marched very happily in tribute, and the *News* where the speeches were recorded. I can not tell how sorry I was that you could not join us at the dinner.

With old-time love and affection,

Yours gratefully and cheerily,

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

Bliss Carman, Esq.,

New Canaan, Connecticut.

