

**REMINISCENCES OF  
JAMES  
WHITCOMB RILEY**

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Reminiscences of James Whitcomb Riley by Clara E. Laughlin

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**CLARA E. LAUGHLIN**

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With all best greetings and esteem  
- James Wilkinson Riley

Reminiscences  
of  
James Whitcomb Riley



By  
Clara E. Laughlin



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## I

**M**Y acquaintance with Mr. Riley began by correspondence. I began it. A ridiculously young editor, with soaring ambitions and the least money imaginable, I was gravely trying to conduct the literary departments of a Chicago weekly. I had a yearly allowance for my editorial purchases, and so long as I kept within that sum I was permitted to have whatever my eighteen-year-old tastes dictated and my purse would buy.

I decided to have a Riley poem. To this end I skimped and saved until I had amassed the staggering sum of {twenty-five dollars, which, without any preliminary negotiations, I sent to Mr. Riley with a

## REMINISCENCES OF

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polite note requesting twenty-five dollars worth of his very best poetry. I had no idea of the temerity of my request. That twenty-five-dollar check looked big enough to me to buy "In Memoriam" or "Paradise Lost."

I got the poem. How many hundreds of dollars many another editor would gladly have paid for that poem I am now ashamed to think. But I wasn't ashamed then. I didn't know enough.

I was appreciative, though; and while Mr. Riley was no stranger to appreciation, he doubtless liked it as well as we all do. So, what with the passing back and forth of proof (Mr. Riley was a most punctilious reader of proof) and grateful acknowledgments, and so on, our correspondence began.

In June following that Christmas when I proudly presented my readers