THE COMPLETE WORKS OF JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY IN TEN VOLUMES, INCLUDING POEMS AND PROSE SKETCHES; VOL. VII, PP. 1705-1963

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649553877

The Complete Works of James Whitcomb Riley in Ten Volumes, including Poems and Prose Sketches; Vol. VII, pp. 1705-1963 by James Whitcomb Riley

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd. Cover @ 2017

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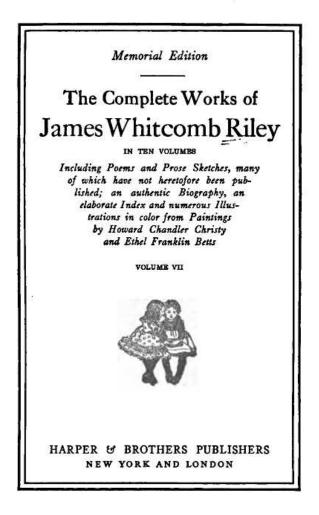
JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

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"Wunst they wuz a little boy went out in the woods to shoot a bear"



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The Complete Works of James Whitcomb Riley

CASSANDER

"CASSANDER! O Cassander!"-her mother's voice seems cle'r

As ever, from the old back-porch, a-hollerin' fer her----

Especially in airly Spring-like May, two year' ago-

Last time she hollered fer her,—and Cassander didn't hear!

Cassander was so chirpy-like and sociable and free, And good to ever'body, and wuz even good to me Though I wuz jes' a common—well, a farm-hand, don't you know,

A-workin' on her father's place, as pore as pore could be!

Her bein' jes' a' only child, Cassander had her way A good-'eal more'n other girls; and neighbers ust to say

She looked most like her Mother, but wuz turned most like her Pap,-

Except he had no use fer town-folks then-ner yit to-day!

CASSANDER

- I can't claim she incouraged me: She'd let me drive her in
- To town sometimes, on Saturd'ys, and fetch her home ag'in,
 - Tel onc't she 'scused "Old Moll" and me,---and some blame' city-chap,
- He driv her home, two-forty style, in face o' kithand-kin,
- She even tried to make him stay fer supper, but I 'low
- - Her mother callin' at her, whilst her father stood and shook
- His fist,—the town-chap turnt his team and made his partin' bow.
- "Cassander! You, Cassander!"-hear her mother jes' as plain,
- And see Cassander blushin' like the peach tree down the lane,
 - Whilse I sneaked on apast her, with a sort o' hang-dog look,
- A-feelin' cheap as sorghum and as green as sugatcane!
- (You see, I'd skooted when she met her town-beau —when, in fact,
- Ef I'd had sense I'd stayed fer her.-But sense wuz what I lacked!

CASSANDER

- So I'd cut home ahead o' her, so's I could tell 'em what
- Wuz keepin' her. And—you know how a jealous fool'll act!)
- I past her, I wuz sayin',—but she never turnt her head;
- I swallered-like and cle'red my th'oat—but that wuz all I said;
 - And whilse I hoped fer some word back, it wuzn't what I got.—
- That girl'll not stay stiller on the day she's layin' dead l
- Well, that-air silence lasted !---Ust to listen ever' day

I'd be at work and hear her mother callin' thataway; I'd sight Cassander, mayby, cuttin' home acrost the blue

- And drizzly fields; but nary answer-nary word to say!
- Putt in about two weeks o' that-two weeks o' rain and mud,
- Er mostly so: I couldn't plow. The old crick like a flood:
 - And, lonesome as a borried dog, I'd wade them old woods through---
- The dogwood blossoms white as snow, and redbuds red as blood.

CASSANDER

- Last time her mother called her-sich a morning like as now:
- The robins and the bluebirds, and the blossoms on the bough-
 - And this wuz yit 'fore brekfust, with the sun out at his best,
- And hosses kickin' in the barn-and dry enough to plow.
- "Cassander! O Cassander!" . . . And her only answer-What?--
- A letter, twisted round the cook-stove damper, smokin'-hot,
 - A-statin': "I wuz married on that day of all the rest,
- The day my husband fetched me home-ef you ain't all fergot l"
- "Cassander! O Cassander!" seems, allus, 'long in May,
- I hear her mother callin' her-a-callin', night and day-

"Cassander! O Cassander!" allus callin', as I say, "Cassander; O Cassander!" jes' a-callin' thataway.