

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

as a

Poet of Childhood.

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T O
W I L L I A M N . T R U E B L O O D ,
Friend and Teacher.

P R E F A C E .

Two things have led me to write this thesis: First, the genuine beauty of Riley's poetry; and second, the fact that my own boyhood was spent not far from the scenes which Riley has used in so much of his genre poetry. The beauty of the poetry was impressed upon me under the remarkably inspirational teaching of William N. Trueblood of Earlham College.

I here express my appreciation of the sympathetic guidance of Professor Selden L. Whitcomb, of the University of Kansas, who has helped me so much in the preparation of this thesis.

All foot-notes and page references are to the Biographical Edition of Riley's Works, published by the Bobbs-Merrill Company.

W. B. F.

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C O N T E N T S .

	Page.
Introduction	1
Table showing the number of child poems and Riley's developing interest in the subject	12
Part I The Child Self-Revealed	14
Grouping of the Dialect Poems	17 = 45
Adventure Poems	17
Pathos	45
The Child's Sense of Morality	52
The Child's View of Heaven	55
The Child's Observing Mind	58
Part II The Child as Seen in Riley's Memory	62
Riley's Interest in the Backward Look	64
Interest in Elemental Nature	67
Interest in Parents	76
Interest in the Home and the Neighbor- hood.	78
Part III The Diction	90
Verse Form	90
Diction Proper	92
Words and Figures	94
Hoosier Dialect	97
Part IV The Sociology of the Child Poems	101
Riley's Children are Home-keeping children	101
The Child's Relation to Parents	103
The Child's Relation to the Home	105
The Child's Relation to the Neigh- borhood	108
The Child's Relation to the School	111
The Child's Relation to the Outside World	112
Appendix	
Grouping of the Child Poems on the basis of Stanza Form.	
General Index.	

Introduction.

James Whitcomb Riley, the man, ever has his thoughts turned back to James Whitcomb Riley, the boy. A note of sweet melancholy runs through his verses as he recalls the happy times of his boyhood. And often as he thus goes back in thought to those times, he becomes again the child whom he remembers and all unaffectedly he speaks in the language of the boy, with the boy's ungrammatical sentences and his mispronounced words. For Riley passed his boyhood in Greenfield, Indiana, then a small country town in a rich farming country, where the emphasis in society was upon neighborly hospitality and not upon a very high degree of intellectual culture.

" My boys and girls are town boys and girls, not children living in the country," says Riley. " They touch the country but are not actually of it. Were they country boys and girls,

they would not, as I take it, see any novelty in country life." Thus he himself loved the country neither as a city boy, for whom the country is no more than a novelty to be reveled in for a day and then given up, nor as a country boy to whom the delights of the open country are often not revealed and who often desires to get away from surroundings which speak only of hard work. Riley loved the country because there was " the old-swimmin' hole," and the " old hay-mow"; there were the people whom a boy could love, " the Raggedy Man " and " Lizabeth Ann " and the country-baked cakes and pies such as are never to be found in the city. The natural freedom-loving spirit of the boy found in the country a chance to exercise itself in wandering among the hills and fields. And always there was a new wonder to behold or an old one to give delight.

As the boys tramp from town " out to Old Aunt Mary's " the things they observe, which stir within them those strange " intia-

mations of immortality," are things which the country boy knows about indifferently if he is pressed to tell of them, but which the town boy not only knows about, but loves to be among, because they thrill him with longings and desires which only the boy can ever feel. The reader may find mentioned in one poem - Out to Old Aunt Mary's - more than forty things which are characteristic of the country and country folk, but which a country-bred boy would not mention as particularly noticeable, though the town-boys found in them cause for memorable enjoyment.

In all Mr. Riley has written 232 poems for or about children, 104 of which are in dialect. Two favorite subjects for his dialect poems were The Raggedy Man and Uncle Sidney, imagined characters who in reality would be, from the boys' standpoint, ideal companions. Speaking of children's dialect Mr. Riley himself says: 1

"In connection with this last (Helen's Babies) let us very seriously inquire what this

real child has done that Literature should so persistently refuse to give him an abiding welcome? Since for ages this question seems to have been left unasked, it may be timely now to propound it. Why not the real child in Literature? The real child is good enough (we all know he is bad enough) to command our admiring attention and most lively interest in real life and just as we find him in the raw. Then why do we deny him any righteous place of recognition in our Literature? From the immemorial advent of our dear old Mother Goose, Literature has been especially catering to the juvenile needs and desires, and yet steadfastly overlooking, all the time, the very principles upon which Nature herself founds and presents this lawless little brood of hers - the children. It is not the children who are out of order; it is Literature. And not only is Literature out of order but she is presumptuous; she is impudent. She takes Nature's children

and revises and corrects them till their own mother doesn't know them. This is literal fact. So, very many of us are coming to inquire, as we've a right, why is the real child excluded from a just hearing in the world of letters as he has in the world of fact? For instance, what has the lovely little magamuffin ever done of sufficient guilt to consign him eternally to the monstrous penalty of speaking most accurate grammar all the literary hours of the days of the years of his otherwise natural life? -

" Oh, mother, may I go to school
With brother Charles today?
The air is very fine and cool;
Oh, mother, say I may! "

- Is this a real boy that would make such a request, and is it the real language he would use? No, we are glad to say that it is not. Simply it is a libel, in every particular, on any boy, however fondly and exaotingly trained by parents however zealous for his ever-de-

corous future. Better, indeed, the dubious sentiment of the most trivial nursery jingle, since the latter at least maintains the lawless though wholesome spirit of the child-genuine, -

" Hink! Minx! The old witch winks -
The fat begins to fry;
There's nobody home but Jumping Joan,
Father and Mother and I."

Though even here the impious poet leaves the scar of grammatical knowledge upon childhood's native diction; and so the helpless little fellow is again misrepresented, and his character, to all intents and purposes, is assaulted and maligned outrageously thereby.

" Now in all seriousness, this situation ought not to be permitted to exist, though to change it seems an almost insurmountable task. The general public, very probably, is not aware of the real gravity of the position of the case as even unto this day it exists. Let the public try, then, to

contribute the real child to the so-called Child Literature of its country, and have its real child returned as promptly as it dare show its little tousled head in the presence of that scholarly and dignified institution. Then ask why your real child has been snanked back home again, and the wise mentors there will virtually tell you that Child Literature wants no real children in it, that the real child's example of defective grammar and lack of elegant deportment would furnish to its little patrician patrons suggestions very hurtful indeed to their higher morals, tendencies and ambitions. Then, although the general public couldn't for the life of it see why or how, and might even be reminded that it was such a rowdying child itself, and that its father - the Father of his Country - was just such a child; that Abraham Lincoln was just such a lovable, lawless child, and yet was bless-

ed and chosen in the end for the highest service man may render unto man, - all - all this argument would avail not in the least, since the elegantly minded purveyors of Child Literature cannot possibly tolerate the presence of any but the refined children - the very proper children - the studiously thoughtful, poetic children; - and these must be kept safe from the contaminating touch of our rough-and-tumble little fellows in "hoden gray," with frowzy heads, begrimed but laughing faces, and such awful, awful vulgarities of naturalness, and crimes of simplicity, and brazen faith and trust, and love of life and everybody in it. All other people are getting into Literature; and without some real children along will they not soon be getting lonesome, too?"

These children are real Hoosier children, good-natured, lazy, freedom-loving children, caring little for school but learning

many things in their frolics and tramps. Chiefly, as Riley shows them to us, they learn to feel with Nature and are kind-hearted, loving and lovable.

But the outward life of these natural children is not the only thing about which Mr. Riley writes. He has a remarkable appreciation of the sensitiveness of children. Children feel more intensely than adults. The sense of loss experienced by a child at the death of one dear to him is far more intense than that of an adult. An anticipated joy has nothing to mar it for a boy, and he has but a faint sense of the truth of the maxim "anticipation is greater than realization." The child's life, therefore, in its emotions and conceptions, viewed through the eyes of a grown-up person, who is able to retain impressions upon his childhood, is an idealized life. The emotional experiences of the child are vivid and when expressed objectively

by a mature mind. they have something inexp-
plainably beautiful about them. Many poets,
notably Blake and Wordsworth, have felt this.
In *The Angel* Blake has expressed the intense
sorrow and delight of the child whose tears
are wiped away by an angel. Then the angel
fled, but

" Soon my angel came again:
I was armed, he came in vain;
For the time of youth was fled,
And gray hairs were on my head."

So, too, Riley with his ability to re-
tain and express this mystic characteristic
of childhood, does not so avowedly attempt a
philosophical or psychological explanation of
it, but with a more truly poetic insight does
express its beauty; making us feel with him
the strange nearness of the child to the in-
finite. The child is not a little man in the
sense that he strives to be good and do right
with any moral consciousness, but he is near
the Source of good even in his mischief and
suggests heaven and the angels to Riley.

" But with crown tipped out behind.
 And the glad hand off the wind
 Smoothing back your hair, I see
 Heaven's best angel smile on me, -
 Little Tommy Smith. " 2

He, too, had " intimations of immortality," and ascribes to the babe an almost congenital sense of The Beautiful City. In the poem of this name, he says of the Beautiful City that

" We slacken our lips at the tender
 White breasts of our mothers to hear
 Of its marvelous beauty and splendor:-
 We see -- but the gleam of a star. "

In this connection Riley has almost a passion for the pathetic mystery of a dead babe. He expresses this in " Give me the Baby." but better in " The Way the Baby Slept."

" This is the way the baby slept:
 A mist of tresses backward thrown
 By quavering sighs where kisses crept
 With yearnings she had never known:
 The little hands were closely kept
 About a lily newly blown -
 And God was with her, and we wept -
 And this is the way the baby slept. "

The following table shows that more than one-fifth of all Riley's poems are on childhood.

Poems on Child Life.

Date.	Total no. of poems.	In dialect.	Not in dialect.
1870-1879	171	3	17
1880	100	1	3
1881	56		1
1882	46		5
1883	45		5
1884	53	1	3
1885	41	2	
1886	28	4	
1887	25	1	1
1888	29	2	4
1889	11	1	2
1890	50	23	6
1891	27	1	2
1892	36	6	3
1893	15	1	2
1894	33	7	5
1895	9	1	
1896	29	5	25 (24 in
1897	10		4 Child
1898	11	1	2 World)
1899	9		
1900	27	7	1
1901	12		3
1902	64	26	17
1903	13	3	1
1904	6	1	2
1905	11	1	3
1906	6		2
1907	41	5	9
1908	5	1	
1909	1		
1910			
1911	1		

Date.	Total no. of poems.	In dialect.	Not in dialect.
1912	1		
1913	1		
	-----	-----	-----
	1023	104	128
Total number of child poems			232.

Part I.

The Child Self-Revealed.

When a writer recalls the days of his childhood he links the present with the past and the picture which he gives in his poems is not a picture true in all its details to that past. Whitier, invoking a blessing upon the barefoot boy, does so because he sees his own lot as a man less delightful than the lot of the boy, a thought which could never come to the mind of the boy. Wordsworth, too, philosophizes upon childhood and so does Mr. Riley in many of his poems.

In about half of his child poems, however, the child speaks for himself. In such poems it is obvious that the child ought to express only childish thoughts. His own speaking precludes retrospection and consequent speculation in that direction. But the child may express truths intuitively about which he

could not have any speculations at all. The little maid of eight years was unable to conceive of death as Wordsworth conceived of it, yet in her persistent contention that "We are seven," she expressed the incontrovertible truth that those who were lying in the churchyard had gone away just as those two at sea had gone away; and for the little maid, at least, one pair was no more dead and no more alive than the other.

Since 1907, Mr. Riley has written only about a dozen poems, two of which are in the language of the child.

The first of these poems written in the language of the child is Johnson's Boy, dated 1876. It expresses fairly accurately a true boyish sentiment. Johnson's Boy is that unlucky, mistreated chap who gets blamed for everything. But the language of the boy is not altogether what the language of such a boy would be. Riley has not yet become the

master of child language to whom we listen with
delight in Little Orphant Annie and The
Bear Story.

" You tackle any scholar
In wisdom's wise employ. "

is hardly the phrase of a boy, nor would he
likely choose " sonorous " to rhyme with
chorus.

But in the second of these poems,
Prior to Miss Belle's Appearance. dated
1877, Riley has caught not only the spirit of
the child, but the language as well. Nobody
but a real " Willie " could speak as this
child does with his repeated appeals for
confirmation from " Charley " and his pro-
nunciation of such words as " th'uther,"
"chawk'lut drops" , " An' nen, bime-by,"
" noller " and " mucher." In this poem, too,
Riley exhibits that characteristic in which
he excels above all other humorous poets,
the combining of the humorous and pathetic.

than which there is no other quality in poetry that can so stir the feelings of the large majority of readers. After the ridiculous recital which Willie makes to Miss Belle's sweetheart, he ends with

" But our sister Fanny's in Heaven!
 Nere's where you go ef you die! -
 Don't you Charley? - Nen you has wings -
 Ist like Fanny! An' purtiest things! -
 Don't you Charley? An' nen you can fly -
 Ist fly - an' evervthing Wisht I'd die! 3

And now that Riley has caught the viewpoint and the language of the child we find him expressing, as a child, a variety of childish conceptions and emotions. His poems are most genuinely child poems, that is the child speaking in the first person speaks most nearly as a child does, in the poems in which he relates an adventure.

The first of these adventure poems is Jack the Giant Killer, dated 1880. Riley has designated it the " Bad Boy's Version," probably with a little touch of his gentle
 3 Biographical Edition, I, 175.

irony, for the boy is not bad - he is only a typical boy in his love of adventure and in an exaggerated conception of bravery. " The story is of a boy. " name wuz Jack." who with his " sword and buckle and 'visibul oan " killed giants " 'at et whole cows." He finally swims a river to attack " ole Bumblebore " of the four heads, whom he slays without any difficulty. The boy ends the story with

" Wisht 'at I'd been Jack! - Don't you?"

The diction of the poem is full of mispronunciations, but they are the characteristic mistakes of the boy of the small Indiana town. The o in once, the a in was, the o in other, the e in castle are given a broad u sound resulting in such words as wunst, wuz, uther and castul. The boy fore-shortens and contracts words: Fact is fao', invisible is 'visibul, that is 'at, and is an', old is ole, before they knew is 'fore 'ey knowed, because is 'cause, Giants is Gi'nts, and then

is nen. The subject of the verb is often omitted, as is also the relative pronoun in relative clauses.

The meter of the poem is predominantly the iambic tetrameter although this varies, the anapest frequently giving emphasis to a phrase as - " Tell you a Story - "

An Impetuous Resolve reveals the very small boy's delight in imagining a time when he can have in large what his boyish fancy conceives of as the most delightful of all enjoyments. Three of his little friends are going to be a tailor, a sailor and a carriage-maker, respectively, when they grow up. The little fellow who is speaking is "go' to be a Baker " and the height of his ambition is to drive off with his three playmates

" A-slingin' pie-crust long the road
for ever an' forever."

The childish delight in simple things is further shown in At Aunty's House. The

little town boy has gone to visit " Away in
the country! " where

" They's iat but woods - and pigs and cows -
An' all's outdoors and air! -
An' orchurd-swing; an' ohurry trees -
An' ohurries in 'em! "

In all this paradise for a boy's heart the climax of delight was reached when

" we et out on the porch! "

This is almost an anticlimax for an adult reader who cannot feel the delight with the boy. The reader's understanding is not sufficient to appreciate it. It is a childish delight which only a child's heart can feel. This, of course, is the charm of all Riley's child poetry. He himself is a child in his sensitiveness, his imagination and his appreciation.

One poem alone is sufficient proof of this - A Runaway Boy. The little boy's resolve to run away when his father has punished him, his taking of all his " copper-cents," his entrance into the outside world through

the jimson-weeds " all down the road," his fright at all the strange things he sees, his delight in being rescued by a big girl, and his joyous return, when his mother kisses him, on his promise not to run away again - all this is Riley, the little boy, speaking, and it is just an accident that Riley is a man when he writes it.

In 1896 Mr. Riley wrote to his brother, John A. Riley, a letter⁴ expressing his intention of writing " a child poem of a whole book's length - and the which, God bless it! I have very happily started and advanced in many pages. " He asks his brother to furnish him with all the little incidents which he can recall, and this the latter did.

" We are all embraced in the simple history, though under names known only to the family " writes Mr. Riley in the same letter, - " since I find it necessary, in order to acco-

⁴ Note to A Child World. Biog. Edit. Iv, 548.

moderate the very modest writer, that he also must appear in third person."

Mr. W. D. Howells reviewing the poem says: " From beginning to end it moves through the world of childhood, the childhood of that vanished West which lay between the Ohio and the Mississippi, and was, unless memory abuses my fondness, the happiest land that ever there was under the sun. There were no very rich nor very poor in that region, which has since become the very hotbed of millionairism, but an equality of condition never matched before or since, so that the picture of the peaceful, kindly life in one village family, which Mr. Riley gives, is the portrait of all village family life then and there." 5

There are in the poem really twenty three separate poems, each setting forth some incident or some story of childhood. The poem

is a beautiful lyric, reminiscent of his child world - A Fairy Paradise - a lyric of pathos, recalling all of the mystic happiness of childhood and ending with an idea which suggests Wordsworth and what nature meant to him in childhood:

" Oh Child-World, After this world - just as when
I found you first sufficed
My soulmost need - If I found you again
With all my childish dream so realized,
I should not be surprised. "

The second of the series is The Child-World, from which the entire poem takes its name. It is really an introductory poem giving the setting of the whole. Riley speaks of his old home as

" A simple old frame house - eight rooms in all -
Set just one side the center of a small
But very hopeful Indiana town - "

This is Greenfield, at that time a typical country town of 300 inhabitants thirty miles east of Indianapolis on the National Road, which as Riley says, the

" old timers, all
 Who linger yet will happily recall
 and tell
 Of its importance. "long and long afore
 Railroads wuz ever dream' of. 6

These as Mr. Riley says were the times
 "Called Good Old. And why 'Good Old?' Once a rare
 Old Chronicler was asked, who brushed the hair
 Out of his twinkling eyes and said - "Well John,
 They're 'good old times' because they're dead and
 gone! " 7

Next Riley describes " the old home
 site . . . portioned into three distinctive
 lots, " " the front one " facing south and
 blossoming in old fashioned flowers, "lilies,
 dahlia, rose, and flowering vine." Behind this
 on the left was the woodhouse, half of which
 was piled with wood, the other half being used
 for the workshop. This must have been a de-
 lightful place to the boy Riley for he describes
 minutely all of the tools, recalling his delight
 in them, as " Rapture infinite! " Three trees,
 he recalls, were planted about this woodhouse,

6 Biographical Edition, IV, 355.

7 Ibid., 356.

" ' The Prince's Harvest ' - magic phrase. " The
Old Sweet-Apple Tree," and

" There was a cherry tree. Its bloomy snows
Cool even now the feverish sight that knows
No more its airy visions of pure joy
As when you were a boy." 8

The third lot was the garden behind
the front lot on the right, opposite the wood-
house. He recalls it surrounded by apple trees.
" a stand of bees," a white-winter-permain,"
current-bushes " and a quince or so," with

" The old grape-arbor in the center, by
The pathway to the stable, with the sty
Behind it, and upon it, cootering flocks
Of pigeons,- and the cutest 'martin-box' !
Made like a sure-enough house - with roof and doors,
And windows in it, and veranda - floors
And balusters all around it - yes, and at
Each end a chimney - painted red at that
And pencilled white, to look like little bricks;
And, to cap all the builder's cunning tricks,
Two tiny little lightning rods were run
Straight up their sides, and twinkled in the sun.
Who built it? Nay, no answer but a smile -
It may be you can guess who, after while." 9

The poem closes with lines which recall
the open-hearted neighborliness of the inhabi-
tants of the little town:

" and the spade
 And the hoe and rake and shovel all, when laid
 Aside, were in their places, ready for
 The hand of either the possessor or
 Of any neighbor, welcome to the loan
 Of any tool he might not chance to own." 10

After Riley has introduced the reader to the place of the child world, he recalls in memory the personnel of the Child World in the next poem. The Old Home Folks. In its scheme the poem resembles somewhat The Prelude of Wordsworth. It recalls all of the children and older people who made up this 'world.' These were, first, the children of his own family: "Johnnty," the poet's older brother; Bud, the poet himself; Maynnie, the elder of the poet's two sisters; Alex, a younger brother; and "baby Lizzie." Next the poet mentions his father, with "his hale manhood, a lawyer and a leading citizen." His mother he recalls as

"The gentle mother. Her mild, plaintive face
 Was purely fair and haloed with a grace
 And sweetness luminous when joy made glad

Her features with a smile; or saintly sad
 As twilight fell the sympathetic gloom
 Of any childish grief, the curtain drawn
 Across the window and the sunshine gone.
 Her brow, below her fair hair's glimmering strands
 Seemed meetest reating-place for blessing hands
 Or holiest touches of soft finger tips
 And little rose-leaf cheeks and dewy lips. " 11

Following this tribute to his mother,
 he refers to himself

" Prone on the floor above a book
 Of pictures with a rapt ecstasie look,
 Even as the mother's "

And he imagines that she was listening to
 " some poem going by." This poem, *The
 Child-heart*, which follows, shows that
 Riley idealizes the innocence and purity of
 childhood as Wordsworth did; but whereas
 Wordsworth lessens the force of his ideal
 by his psychological study of it, Riley
 creates the ideal and reverently withdraws
 to contemplate it, not to study it, leaving
 us a far more beautiful and therefore truer

11 *The Old Home Folks*, Biog. Edition IV, 367.

picture of childhood.

" Nay, little child-heart, you have never need
 To fear us; - we are weaker far than you -
 'Tis we who should be fearful - we indeed
 Should hide us, too, as darkly as you do, -
 Safe as yourse;f, withdrawn,
 Hearing the world roar on
 Too wilful, woeful, awful for the child-heart! " 12

This ideal conception is shown, too,

in the four line refrain to each verse:

" Child-heart! - mild heart! -
 Ho my little wild heart! -
 Come up here to me out o' the dark,
 Or let me come to you! "

As elsewhere in his poetry, Mr. Riley
 expresses all sense-perceptions vividly. His
 ear and eye are sensitive to beauty and to
 all sights and sounds that impress childhood.
 As he recalls his old home,

 " a rose
 Taps at the window, as the sunlight throws
 A brilliant, jostling checkerwork of shine
 And shadow
 Across the home-made carpet. " 13

and

" Sounds drop in visiting from everywhere "

12 Ibid., 369.

13 Ibid., 370.

But Riley never descends to the sensual and even the less refined phases of the sensuous he can not express with the poetic fineness that marks the diction of his better poetry. He often attempts to recall the famishing hunger and the keen enjoyment in eating which is characteristic of the boys of the out of doors, but such passages are less suggestive than those of the senses of sound or sight. The part of *The Old-Home Folks*, therefore, which recalls the kitchen with its "Redolent savorings of home-cured meats" lacks the poetic merit of the rest of the poem.

Two other older members of the family 'Cousin Rufus' and 'Uncle Mart', Mr. Riley also recalls, the latter a favorite, perhaps because he was just such a dreamer as his famous nephew, for

" Like some lone castaway in alien seas,
He built a house up in the apple trees." 14

for the children, but found an equal delight with them in spending the afternoon " mooning over some novel."

After the members of his own family, Riley recalled the boyhood chums of the neighborhood. He named them for us, but who they were is perhaps of less interest to the reader than their characteristics. None are "bad boys." Probably in real life these boys were not bad boys, but whether they were or not it is not likely that Riley would so picture them. For Riley is thoroughly moral in all his poetry. All that is ugly, that is all that does not harmonize with poetic truth (and for Riley poetic truth and poetic beauty are synonymous) is foreign to his poetry. Probably it is for this reason that Riley's children are all below that age to which Psychologists apply the terms moral and immoral.

The boys are, however, lovers of adventure. They read "wild west" tales and enact them afterwards. We note here that Riley also became acquainted, along with his companions, with Robin Hood and Don Quixote. And as he recalls this acquaintance he breaks forth into the most artistically beautiful part of the entire poem:

" O Wonderland of wayward childhood! What
 An easy, breezy realm of summer calm
 And dreamy gleam and gloom and bloom and balm
 Thou art! The Lotus-Land the poet sung,
 It is the Child-world while the heart beats young." 15

and he prays:

" O green and gold old Earth of ours, with
 azure overhung
 And looped with rainbows! - Grant us yet this
 grassy lap of thine -
 We would be still thy children, through
 the shower and shine!" 16

Another boy, Noey, whom Riley pictures as a special friend of his little sister, Lizzie, was a boy of many talents. He could make bows and arrows, fish-traps, and all such

15 Ibid., 379.

16 Ibid., 380.

things that fed the adventurous spirit of the boyhood days of the poet and his chums. Noey knew the names of all the flowers and birds, and he could whistle "phenomenally unmelodious."

The last character mentioned in The Old-Home Folks. is "The Noted Traveler." who came one day, an old friend of the elder Mr. Riley but a stranger to the children. He spends several days with the family and in the series of Child-World poems takes part as a teller of tales and a doer of sleight-of-hand tricks greatly mystifying but delighting the children.

To a child with its imagination keenly alive, a little journey of a half mile to a neighbor's house may be commensurate in adventurous interest to the thousand mile journey of a man. Thus in the poem At Noey's House, Riley reveals the boy's interest in

a neighborly visit and describes all those things which the keen eyes of the children delighted in.

" At Noey's house, - when they arrived with him
 How snug seemed everything and neat and trim:
 The little picket-fence and little gate -
 Its little pulley and its little weight, -
 All glib as clockwork, as it olicked behind
 Them, on the little red brick pathway, lined
 With little paint-keg vases and tea-pots
 Of wee moss-blossoms and forget-me-nots;
 And in the windows, either side the door,
 Were ranged as many little boxes more
 Of like old-fashioned larkspurs, pink and moss
 And fern and phlox: while up and down across
 Them rioted the morning glory vines
 On taut-set cotton strings, whose snowy lines
 Whipped in and out and under the bright green
 Like basting-threads; and here and there between
 A showy, shiny hollyhook would flare
 Its pink among the white and purple there. " 17

Although Riley is revealing a "child-world," this is not entirely a world in which only children dwell. The children find delight in neighborly visits of older folk. In The Loehrs and the Hammonds such a visit is described. A neighbor boy leaping over the back

fence announces the arrival:

"'Hey, Bud! O Bud!' rang out a gleeful call. "
 ' The Loehrs is come to your house!'. " 18

and Riley remembers this as

" Glorious news! - "

and speaking for all of them he adds:

" Nor until their earth-life ends
 Will that bright memory become less bright
 Or dimmed indeed. " 19

Here, as is his wont in so many of his poems, Riley introduces the touch of romantic tenderness and pathos, that characteristic which, even before his humor, puts the stamp upon what he writes that carries it through the land into the hearts of the common people. As the candles are lighted in the evening the story of " the stranger guests," who have come with the Loehrs is quietly told. It is the story of a delicate wife and a strong man who " had no children."

18 The Loehrs and the Hammonds, IV, 396.

19 Ibid., 397.

" As he answered so,
 The man's arm went about his wife and she
 Leaned toward him, with her eyes lit prayerfully;
 Then she arose - he following - and bent
 Above the little sleeping innocent
 Within the cradle at the mother's side
 He patting her all silent as she cried - " 20

Here Riley breaks from his story to
 insert a poem of six stanzas on this suggested
 theme. But the narrative element is wholly sub-
 ordinated to the lyric, the rhythm and emotion
 of which have scarcely been surpassed in En-
 glish poetry. I quote the first two verses and
 the last:

" In the warm health-giving weather
 My poor wife and I
 Drive up and down the little town
 And the pleasant roads thereby:
 Out in the wholesome country
 We wind from the main highway,
 In through the woods' green solitudes -
 Fair as the Lord's own day.

We have lived so long together,
 And joyed and mourned as one,
 That each with each, with a look for speech,
 Or a touch, may talk as none
 But Love's elect may comprehend -
 Why the touch of her hand or mine
 Speaks volume-wise and the smile of her eyes
 To me, is a song divine.

.

The dusk, the dew, and the silence!
 "Old Charley" turns his head
 Homeward then by the pike again,
 Though never a word is said -

One more step and a lingering one -
 After the fields and farms -
 At the old Toll-gate with the woman await
 With a little girl in her arms. " 21

From this poem of pathos Riley turns to the portraying of a homely scene in the next poem, 'The Hired Man and Floretty. It represents the hired man and Floretty and the children gathered in the kitchen, the hired man eating his supper while the children pop corn. Then they all go into the " sitting room " where "the company had been increased in number," a neighborhood gathering such as Mr. RRiley must have known and highly delighted in when a boy. Of the twenty-two poems in 'The Child-World,' the fifteen remaining recount the tales told and the songs sung by the various members of the company as each one contributes his share to the entertainment. Of these fifteen three are stories told by chil-

21 Ibid., 398-399.

dren and are by far the best. Maynnie's Story of Red Riding Hood, Bud's Fairy Tale and The Bear Story. They are best because in them Mr. Riley shows an instinctive appreciation of the child nature. In these three poems there is not a line that betrays the speaker a grown up man. The language is exactly that of a Hoosier child, imaginative, full of exaggeration and of grammatical errors. The children hesitate in the telling of their stories just as children actually do. Their imaginations involve the stories in many inconsistencies; but the intensity of the children's interest carries the tales on triumphantly and the reader is fascinated not only by the tales themselves but by the children's evident belief in the truthfulness of their own exaggeration.

Maymie's Story of Red Riding Hood is, of course, told by a little girl. Being a girl, she desired to be quite proper in the telling

of the story, . careful not to exaggerate too much and to make "Little Red Riding Hood" a very good little "lady." But Maymie's own little acts of waywardness and her unconventional manners reveal themselves, though she tries hard to conceal them and promptly corrects herself when she makes a slip. After Red Riding Hood's mother has filled a basket full of good things to eat she

" - tell her take 'em to her old Dran'ma -
And not to spill 'em neever - cause ef she
'Ud stomp her toe an' spill 'em, her Dran'ma
She'll haf to punish her." 22

Then the little girl goes " a skippin off "

" No!
She didn't do a skippin, like I said:-
She ist went walkin' - careful like and slow -
Ist like a little lady - walkin' long
As all polite an' nice - an' slow - an' straight -
An' turn her toes - ist like she's marchin' in
The Sunday School p-session! " 23

As she goes through the wood walking thus properly

" she 'ud ketch
The purty butterflies, and drasshoppers,

22 Maymie's Story of Red Riding Hood, IV. 413.

23 Ibid., 413.

And stick pins frough 'em - No!

I ist said that!

'Cause she's too dood an' kind an' 'bedient
To hurt things thataway. " 24

True to what a child should wish Maymie ends the story with the complete overthrow of the wolf which is "dead an' killed - an ever'thing! " Probably recognizing the improbabilities in the story and wishing to impress upon her hearers that there are no improbabilities, she ends the story thus:

" An' story's honest truth - an' all so, too! "

Not only has Riley caught the spirit of the child in this poem, he has caught the spirit of the feminine child. As I have pointed out he has represented the little girl as trying to be quite conventional, in spite of her instinctive tendency toward the mischievous if not improper. There is also a gentleness, even in the "drowl" of the wolf, which "Alex" or

24 Ibid., 414.

"Bud" would have made a veritable roar. If Maymie's story is read with "The Bear Story" that Alex 'ist maked up his-own-se'f, the difference between Riley's boy and girl is evident.

"The Bear Story" is more original than Maymie's story, for the girl keeps pretty close to the story of Red Riding Hood as she has heard it. The story is of a little boy who, being chased by a big bear and a little bear, climbs up into a tree. As he climbs the bears pursue him. The narrator who tells his story somewhat disconnectedly, owing to his concern with making the story sound as wonderful as possible, keeps recurring to the boy's climbing higher and higher until one must imagine him several hundred feet above the ground. But the limitations of a child's world are shown in this, for this imaginery height to which the boy has climbed is designated by "Alex" as

"Higher'n iss here house is! "

The boy's exaggerations are much greater than the girl's for he is not hampered by as fine a sense of truthfulness as she is. The impression of the bigness and ferocity of the bear and the terrible plight of the boy are the all important things to which all questions of truth must be subordinated. The bear is killed, but when this fact interferes with the story he comes to life at once. Likewise the little boy's gun falls to the ground and breaks causing the little boy many tears, but when the story demands a gun with which the old bear is accidentally to kill himself, the little boy's gun is whole again.

The masculine tone in the poem is shown in various ways. In spite of the little boy's fear, upon having to remain in the tree all night, he discovers that it is an apple tree and he

"Et apples - ist all night - an' cried - and cried."

And after the bear accidentally kills himself
with the boy's gun, the boy grows brave at
once,

" An' nen the little boy clumb down the tree
An' chopped his old wooley head off,
- Yes, and killed
The other bear ag'in, he did - an' killed
All boff the bears, he did - and tuk 'em home
And cooked 'em, too, an' et 'em."
- An' that's all." 25

But the reader wishes it were not all, for
there is in our literature no more delightful
story to be found anywhere.

Bud's Fairy Story, while a delightfully
naive child's tale, is full of a finer poetic
quality than either Maymie's story or the
Bear Story. The imagination that could create
the story is no more active than the imagination
of many children, but the imagery of the
poem in several places betrays the poet, the
master of poetic imagination and of power of
suggestion. The poem represents what a little
boy saw as he sat in his father's grape arbor;

25 The Bear Story, IV. 459.

a fairy named Squiddjium, very small and very saucy, who is caught by the boy and made to reveal the home of the lady fairy, Miss Hoodjium, at whose house a fairy tea-party is to be held that afternoon. The fairy conducts the boy to a cabbage leaf, under which is "a awful great big clod." When this has been rolled away at the fairy's direction, both fairy and boy stand upon the wet spot found under it. The fairy commands the boy to close his eyes and they then rapidly descend. When they stop the boy looks about him.

"Nen when I looked - Oh! they'uz purtiest place
 Down there you ever saw in all the world! -
 They 'uz ist flowers and woses - yes and twees
 Wiv blossoms on an' big wibe apples boff!
 An' butterflies, they wuz - an' hummin' birds -
 An' yellerebirds and blue birds - yes an' wed! -
 An' ever 'wheres an' all awound 'uz vines
 Wiv wibe p'serve pears on 'em! Yes, an' all
 An' ever'thing 'at's ever growin in
 A garden - er canned up - all wibe at wunst:
 It wuz ist like a garden - only it
 'Uz ist a little bit o' garden -bout big wound
 As ist our twun'el bed is. An' all wound
 An' wound the little garden's a gold fence -
 An' little gold gate too - an' ash hopper
 'At's all gold, too - " 26

The little boy peeps in the window and sees
several fairies to whom Squidjicum says

" Haint ye got out 'em-air-dew-dumplin's yet? "

and when they " says no," he replies

" Better git at 'em nen! "

" Nen

They all set woun'd a little gold tub - an'
All 'menced a-peelin dewdrops. ist like they
'Uz peaches."

The boy laughs at this sight so that

" I - ist waked up. - No I ain't been asleep
An' dweam it all. like you think -

but it's shore

Fer certain fact an' c'woss my heart it ist! "

The spirit of adventure, of longing to
be big and do things which grown un people do
is the theme of another poem which I have in-
cluded in the " adventure poems." because it
shows the desire for adventure though not the
adventure itself. Her Poet Brother repre-
sents two children, a boy and a girl, the boy
explaining what they would have and do if they
" wuz big as parunts ist! " They would keep

a store, selling:

" Ist candy, pies an' oakes, an' not
 No drv goods - 'cept a hat -
 An' - plume fer you - an' 'plug' fer me.
 An' clothes like ma's an' his,
 'At on'y ist fer us - ef we
 Wuz big as parunts is." 27

The remaining poems in child dialect I have grouped under five heads, on the basis of the childish traits exhibited. These are: First, the pathos of childhood; second, the child's sense of morality; third, the child's intuitive feeling for heaven; fourth, the child's keen, observing mind; and fifth, the child's feeling toward the home and homelike things.

The first of the poems of pathos is not in the child's own words, but the phrase from which the poem takes its name, Want to Be Whurr Mother Is is the phrase of a child repeated by the speaker of the poem, whom one

supposes to be the father of the child, now dead, who constantly kept calling for his mother. The phrase. " Want to be whur mother is " repeated once, makes the first line of each of the four stanzas. It has a weird suggestiveness about it which is very impressive, suggesting to the reader's mind a sickly child whose attachment to its mother seems all the greater because of its sickness. The first three stanzas represent the father speaking rather impatiently at the child's unceasing cry; in the last stanza his impatience has given way to a sad recollection, for the child has gone, " whur mother is " leaving the father lonesome for the cry.

Mr. Riley has found in the Christmas season sentiments for some of his best poetry; three poems, wholly or partly in child dialect reveal his interest in the pathos of events out

of harmony with the spirit of the season.

Little John's's Chris'mus tells of some kindhearted simple country folk who prepare a Christmas tree for a little neighbor boy whose mother is very poor. They invite him to come at a certain time, planning a great surprise. When he arrives all dressed for the occasion the surprise appears to be too much for him and he bursts out crying.

"An' mother grabs him up an' says:

' It's more'n he can bear -

It's all too sudden fer the child,

An' too surprisin'! - There!

'Oh, no it ain't' - sobbed Little John's

I ain't suprised - but I's

A-cryin' 'cause I watched you all,

An' knowed it all the time! '" 28

This poem might have been included in the group revealing the child's sense of morality, but Little John's does not cry so much perhaps from a sense of having done wrong in watching, as from a sense of having missed a

28 Little John's's Chris'mus, III, 475.

great surprise.

Little Mandy's Christmas Tree is entirely in child dialect. The speaker is probably a girl, who tells the story of a little poor girl whom she and her mother visited and for whom the church prepared a little Christmas tree, which was to be revealed when the big tree should be stripped of its presents and removed. When the Sunday School teacher calls for little Mandy, -

"Nen nobody say a word, -
 Stillest place you ever heard! -
 Till a man tiptoe up where
 Teacher's still a-waitin' there. "

Nen the man whispers so
 Ist the teacher hears, you know.
 Nen he tiptoe back and go
 Out the big door - ist so slow!

Little Mandy, though, she don't
 Answer -- and Ma say 'she won't
 Never, though each year they'll be
 'Little Mandy's Chris'mus tree.' 29

Fer pore childern ' - my Ma says -
 And committee say they guess
 ' Little Mandy's Tree' 'ull be
 Bigger than thenother tree! "

As almost all of Riley's poems in dialect show, this one reveals his bent toward dramatic presentation. The best example of this is not found in the child poems in dialect, however, though there are many places in them which are highly dramatic. In *Nothin' to Say*, the old widower, whose daughter is to be married, hides his tears by pretending to pick a straw from the girl's dress. In *Little Mandy's Christmas Tree* the child with scarcely a full recognition of the pathetic situation, tells the story in its simple plainness, emphasizing all the very saddest things. This suggests an interesting fact of childhood. children are very sensitive in the literal meaning of the word - their senses are alert and eye and ear take in everything to be seen or heard. But children only half recognize what older people call the pathetic.

But this half recognition has in it

something mysterious, portentous, which is even sadder than the sadness of the grown up man or woman. He who reads Blake and Wordsworth can not fail to be struck with this. The beauty of the Ode on Immortality is beauty made brighter by the hint of the mysterious something which is gone; and every man whose childhood has felt those strange intimations, knows that they brought an " exquisite pain." Blake's child who asked for a tune about a lamb, " went to hear."

Let the reader turn from the two poems just mentioned to A Christmas Memory and he will see this sadness of a child, which being not wholly understood by the child, is thereby or therewith (as you choose to view it) made many fold more intense. If emotion to be most effective in poetry should be repressed then Riley is a genuine poet insofar as this makes a poet.

A Christmas Memory is a boy's story of his being taken to his aunt's house by his father. The father will come again for him on Christmas Day to take him back to his mother who is ill. The child's innocent talk of things which recall the mother to himself and his aunt, intensifies the sadness of the death of the mother which the reader is not told of, but which he cannot help inferring. The last stanza of only four lines gives powerfully the child's feelings, not fully, but in manner suggestive of the unexplainable pain which he is suffering; for the child feels the pain perhaps even more than the aunt does:

"Don't want Santy Claus - ner things
 Any kind he ever brings! -
 Don't want A'nty! Don't want Pa! -
 I ist only want my Ma! " 30

A Little Lane Boy's Views is a child's revelation of the world's better side, the side of sympathy and kindness. Here, again, the

whole poem is in child dialect, the child revealing his views of the kindness of the world toward him because he is a cripple. It is a pathetic poem, yet one which makes the reader glad because it reveals the fact that below the roughness and sordidness in men's natures there is kindness and sympathy though it may require a cripple to bring them out.

There are nine poems in child dialect, which reveal the child's sense of morality. In keeping with his sense of poetic truth Riley does not have the children in these poems propounding any profound system of ethics or any original moral ideas. Simple honesty, truth and justice, however, he does represent these children as recognizing and recognizing intuitively. I have said that Riley's children are neither very good nor very bad, but are normal, healthy children, quick to respond to kindness and to recognize the right. As Riley pre-

sents the case of the child he often does it at the expense of the adults who are involved in the poem. Thus the comic element enters into most of these poems. The little boy in Uncle Sidney is delighted to hear his uncle say, after the father corrects the boy:

" The goodest mens they is aint good
As baddest little childa! " 31

In The Fishing Party a father, a mother and a son go a-fishing. The boy tells of their experiences, how they do not catch any fish, how the father is cross because the mother and boy make a noise and scare the fish, and how the mother buys a fish at the market.

" Nen at supper, Pa he won't
Eat no fish, an' says he don't
Like 'em - An' he pounded me
When I choked! . . . Ma, didn't he? " 32

In The Spoiled Child the child is shown as quick to imitate what he hears regard-

31 Uncle Sidney, IV, 47.

32 The Fishing Party, IV, 100.

ing the goodness or badness of other children. One little fellow is objecting to another little fellow whom his parents have "spoiled." The former's only objection to the latter is that he asks questions, especially one which seems very objectionable. Whenever his mother is talking and mentions being somewhere her little "spoiled" son says

"Wuz I there, Ma?" 33

Riley objects to false standards of conduct demanded of children. The very finest thing about the children of Riley's poems is that they are natural. In *The Youthful Patriot*, adults have objected to the boy's fun on the Fourth of July. But the boy says he didn't do anything that wasn't right and can not understand the objections, saying:

" Didn't do nothin' but romp and run,
 An' whoop an' holler an' bang his gun
 An' bu'at fire-crackers, an' ist have fun -
 An' 'ats all the little boy done! " 34

33) *The Spoiled Child*, IV, 246.

34) *The Youthful Patriot*, IV, 289.

Little Girl Two Little Girls is representative of a little girl's instinctive recognition of the goodness and badness of her own acts. So true is it to the charm and beauty of the genuinely feminine in the little girl that one can scarcely believe that a man could have written it. The little girl is highly sensitive to her mother's wise guidance; for the mother merely acts as though she were hurt by the misdeeds of the little girl, but says little. But the little girl feels the meaning of her mother's actions. She goes off by herself and cries softly, learning thus in her child's way the suffering consequent on wrong and then comes back in to the house and says:

"Morning to you, Mommy dear!
 Where's that Bad little girl wuz here?
 Bad little girl's goned clean away,
 An' Good little girl's comed back to stay. " 35

I have referred to Riley's mention in

35 Little-Girl-Two-Little Girls, V, 132.

the Beautiful City. of the child's instinctive recognition of the element of the Divine in life and in eternity. I think no one characteristic of the man so marks him as distinctively a poet by the exclusive test of inspiration as does this feeling after the Divine. His is no Browning-like search for a first cause, nor Tennysonian faith founded on doubt. Mr. Riley feels God in life and is affected by this feeling as Keats was affected by the sense of beauty. Each bows before that which stirs in him the highest emotions. Perhaps neither is desirous of explaining the cause of the emotions; both are conscious of being painfully overjoyed in and by their presence.

In two poems Riley makes the child express this sense of heaven and the divine, in both poems somewhat abstractly, as he expresses the same ideas himself in The Beautiful City and elsewhere. In When Our Baby Died the

little girl cries, apparently because every one else did. But she feels that somehow weeping is a trait of people of the earth and that in heaven there is no weeping for she says:

" All but ist the angels oried
When our baby died." 36

In the second poem this element of the child's recognition of the Divine is overshadowed by the pathos of the theme. The Happy Little Cripple recounts in his own words, the story of a child with " Curv'ture of the Spine." His pathetic but happy life with a good woman, his aunt, is just the theme for Riley and the poet does full justice to it. He makes the little fellow turn his thoughts upward to where "some boy's angel-mother" is and say

" . . . all the little childrens there's so
Straight an' strong an' fine,
There's nary angel 'bout the place with
'Curv'ture of the spine.' " 37

36 When Our Baby DiedII, 82.

37 The Happy Little Cripple, III, 345.

Three poems, *The Squirt-Gun* Uncle Maked Me, *Guiney Pigs* and *The Pet Coon* show the child alert to observe closely the details in those things which interest him. In the first poem the boy tells just where the "elder-bushes" grew from which Uncle Sidney cut the branch to use in making the squirt-gun. Then when they have gone to the woodhouse he observes all the tools in their proper places and tells exactly how Uncle Sidney made the squirt-gun.

Guiney-Pigs and *The Pet Coon* show this alertness of mind to observe details though in a less marked degree than *The Squirt-Gun* Uncle Maked Me, for the boy's interest is divided between their pleasure in watching the actions of the animals and the mere pleasure of having them.

The last group of child dialect poems I have not grouped so much on the basis of any

specific emotion displayed as on the child's revelation of simple home life and "homely" people. These are The Raggedy Man, Lizabuth Ann and Little Orphant Annie, poems.

The dedication of Little Orphant Annie might well be a dedication to all of Riley's child poems for it no doubt expresses the poet's attitude toward childhood, an attitude which inclines toward the theory that, even in childhood (or perhaps Mr. Riley would say especially in childhood)

" I believe it adds a charm
To spice the good a trifle with a little dust
of harm." 38

And so he rather hesitatingly includes "the good ones" in the list of children to whom he dedicates the poem:

"To all the little children: -The happy ones; and sad ones;
The sober; and the silent ones; the boisterous and glad ones;
The good ones - Yes, the good ones, too; and all the lovely bad ones." 39

38 An Old Sweetheart of Mine. I. 70.

39 Little Orphant Annie. III, 313.

These poems are all told by a small boy, but in spite of our efforts to keep the boy in mind, we find ourselves forgetting him to become interested in the things which interest him - the Raggedy Man and 'Lizabuth Ann and Little Orphant Annie and all of their doings and savings. For Riley so puts himself in the place of the child and so makes the child's interests his own, that the reader is caught by the charm of genuine childhood. Though I might retell the themes of these poems it would fail utterly to give the reader a comprehension of them; and therefore I give only a general idea of what one may find in the poems and leave the reader to the delight of reading them himself.

All of the poems represent homely scenes and persons. Cups and saucers and crumbs and chickens, the back porch, the pigs and calves, the kitchen with its wood fire

and its odors of all good things and especially of custard pies; and all of these made charming by the presence of the Raggedy Man and 'Lizabuth Ann and Little Orphant Annie - the blending of all these things into a home in a country town makes the ever delightful poems of Little Orphant Annie, The Raggedy Man, Our Hired Girl and Lizabuth Ann on Bakin' Day.

Part II.

The Child as Seen in Riley's Memory.

Riley is a versatile poet. He is a romantic poet in that his poetry is highly lyrical, melodious and emotional. Compare him with Burns and we find them both sinking of the out-of-doors, of nature's influence upon them, of the common people, and often, very often, singing in the dialects of the people among whom they lived. While Burns, however, is at his best in the dialect poems, Riley's finest poems of universal truth and beauty are not in dialect.

Compare Riley with William Blake and we find them both sinking of childhood, its beauty, innocence, and mysticism. Blake indulges his fancy for the mystical much further than does Riley, but is less joyful in it, allows it to depress him more. If Blake can be said, therefore, for this reason to

be more of the idealist, it may be said of Riley that his attitude toward the mystery of life is more satisfying to most readers.

We might compare Riley with the other "Romanticists" of English literature. Their likeness and differences are varied and often striking and one who reads Riley will know him best, only when he hears him singing with others of his kind who have found life worth while in a sympathetic love for nature, man, and God. Milton's dictum that poetry must be "simple, sensuous, passionate" would give these romanticists a secure place in our literature. They probably would not care for our comparisons of their merits. We set Riley securely among them and say he is the latest comer. Like them all he loves the shadows that linger behind him and in half a hundred poems turns to muse on the days of childhood, many of them being days in his own

childhood.

It is not without its suggestion as to what we shall find through the six large volumes in which his poems have recently been published, that the first poem in Volume I is entitled A Backward Look. The following excerpt gives the reader the viewpoint of the poet:

"My fancies
Left ajar the gates of my mind -
And Memory, seeing the situation,
Slipped out in the street of
 'Auld Lang Syne.' "

Wandering ever with tireless feet
Through scenes of silence and jubilee
Of long hushed voices; and faces sweet
Were thronging the shadowy side of the street
As far as the eye could see;
Dreaming again, in anticipation,
The same old dreams of our boyhood days
That never come true, from the vague sensation
Of walking asleep in the world's strange ways. " 40

It is the "faces" on "the shadowy side of the street" that Riley loves to look upon. But he is not pessimistic as he watches them for they are "sweet" faces and his joy is

found in the memory of the scenes of "jubilee" as well as of the "scenes of silence." And though the "dreams" . . . never come true" he loves to look back upon them. He continues:

"Away to the house where I was born!"

and calls up the many scenes and experiences of his boyhood days,

"When life went so like a dreamy rhyme
That it seems to me now that then
The world was having a jollier time
Than it ever will have again."

Riley's philosophy of life verifies Poe's statement that the perishableness of things gives man his delight in them and that his highest delight is always, therefore, shadowed more or less by melancholy. In *To a Boy Whistling*, Riley's "lost life" is suggested to him and he sees it as "a panorama sliding away" and recognizes that nothing "can buy one hour of the life" that the boy is living. "Or the trivial cause of" his "smiling face." But if nothing can buy

this life in reality, Riley is able to give to his readers many an hour of it in fancy in his recital of its joy and beauty. But Riley recurs again and again to the past and the joys that have gone with it. The Old Times Were the Best, he says, giving the thought as a title to one of his shorter lyrics.

Various are the things which set Riley's fancies musing on the past. In the poem, Honey Dripping from the Comb he says on this theme:

" I bit an apple but a moment since
 A wilted apple that the worm had spurned,
 Yet hidden in the taste were happy hints
 Of good old days returned."

and philosophizing upon it he continues:

" And so my heart, like some enraptured lute,
 Twinkles a tune so tender and complete.
 God's blessing must be resting on the fruit
 So bitter yet so sweet! " 41

An empty bird's nest with a dry leaf
 caught within it is a melancholy reminder to
 him of the days gone by; and

"Fancy, flitting through the gleams
 Of youth's sunshiny atmosphere,
 Has fallen in the past, and seems,
 Like this poor leaflet nestled here, -
 A phantom guest of empty dreams. " 42

To babyhood in the poem with that title Riley cries plaintively:

" Turn back the leaves of life, -
 Dont read the story, -
 Let's find the pictures, and fancy all the rest;
 We can fill the written pages withna brighter
 glory
 Than old Time, the story teller, at his very best." 43

In some of the very finest verses he goes
 drifting back among the childhood scenes of
 honeysuckle, humming birds and locust blossoms
 ending the poem thus:

"Heigh-ho! Babyhood! Tell me where you linger!
 Let's toddle home again, for we have gone astray
 Take this eager hand of mine and lead me by the finger
 Back to the lotus lands of the far away! " 44

In his backward look through his child
 poems, Riley's interest in elemental nature
 outweighs his interest in all other things.
 In the forty poems which have for their sub-

- 42 Biographical Edition, I, 139.
- 43 Biographical Edition, I, 247.
- 44 Biographical Edition, I, 245.

Jeot the memory of childhood exclusively. there
 are twenty references to water, nearly all of
 which are references to streams. For Riley
 as a boy knew nothing of great bodies of water
 and rarely mentions such bodies. In The
 Used-to-be he uses the word "seas" to sig-
 nify a vast, distant unknown, but the poetry
 of the sea does not move him. It is the rippling
 and the gurgling and the eddies of running water
 only that he recalls. He speaks of the laugh-
 ter of the ripples, and shows what an in-
 fluence these streams had upon his boyhood,
 when in his In Swimmin' Time ⁴⁵ he calls the
 creek, "the crooning creek." Fishing and swim-
 ming and all of the other delights to be found
 along these rippling streams are the things
 which Riley recalls with yearning that in many
 places amounts to melancholy.

The old path through the woods and
 along the creeks play a prominent part in

calling back to Riley his childhood days"

One of the earliest of his poems, dated 1875,
is entitled A Country Pathway. It begins,

"I came upon it suddenly, alone -
A little pathway Winding in the weeds
That fringe the roadside; and with dreams my own,
I wander as it leads."

And it leads him in memory through woods and
out to the highway, whence it

" drifts
Still onward, beckoning me."

As with the streams, so the old paths
sound a note of melancholy as they beckon him,
and so he closes the poem,

"O darling Pathway! Lead me bravely on
Adown your valley-way, and run before
Among the roses crowding up the lawn
And thronging at the door, -

"And carry up the echo there that shall
Arouse the drowsy dog, that he may bay
The household out to greet the prodigal
That wanders home today. " 46

Not alone these wood paths, but the
long highways and dusty turnpikes are constant-
ly calling to Riley from his boyhood days. In

Out To Old Aunt Mary's he mentions the path of their journey six times, in such phrases as "the roadway lone", "in the dust of the road," "the long highway," "the road's next bend." In Up and Down Old Brandywine, as he recalls the teams coming to town on a Saturday, he speaks of

" the smokin' chokin' dust
O' the turnpike at its wuast." 47

The boy Riley seems to have loved these paths and turnpikes with the yearning love of a boy who felt their alluring call "leading on and on and on." Yet they lead him to delightful places in which he found genuine satisfaction. Not least of these places were the woods. In A Country Pathway he turns from the brook,

"To where the pathway enters in a realm
of lordly woodland, under sovereign reign
Of towering oak and elm.

"A puritanic quiet here reviles
The almost whispered warbles from the hedge.

And takes a locust's rasping voice and files
The silence to an edge.

"In such a solitude my somber way
Strays like a misanthrope within the gloom
Of his own shadows till the perfect day
Bursts into sudden bloom." 48

Riley feels the awe of the forest and
the quiet calm if its stillness is reflected in
his references to it. Musing on the "dead sea
of the past" in Honey Dripping from the
Comb, he says

"And suddenly we find ourselves astray
In some woods-pasture of the Long Ago." 49

and again in In Swimming-Time, he recalls
his boyhood delight in

" Groves of maple, elm and beech,
With the sunshine sifted thru
Branches, mingling each with each,
Dim with shade and bright with dew;
Stripling trees and poplars hoar,
Hickory and sycamore." 50

As the two boys wandered "Out to Old
Aunt Mary's," the poet recalls going

- 48 Biographical Edition, I, 88.
- 49 Biographical Edition, I, 143.
- 50 Biographical Edition, III, 99.

" through the wood
 Where the old gray snag of the poplar stood, "
 and hearing "the woodland echoes, which stirred
 the primitive instincts of these civilized
 children, so that the poet asks,
 "Where such heroes of war as we?
 With bows and arrows of fantasy
 Chasing each other from tree to tree." 51

While the streams and the paths and the
 forests bespeak the genuine boy in Riley, the
 flowers which he mentions so often reveal the
 poet. If we are to believe his rehearsal of
 his boyhood dreams in *An Old Sweetheart of
 Mine* we know this love of flowers was present
 in him very early. The reader will recall that
 in this poem the future poet looked forward
 to the time when he should live with his sweet-
 heart "in a cozy little cot, hid in a nest of
 'roses.'" And in *Babyhood* he dreams of that
 long ago when he was wont to
 "Turn to the brook where the honeysuckle tipping
 O'er its vase of perfumes spills it on the breeze,

And the bee and the hummingbird in ecstasy are sipping
From the fairy flagons of the blooming locust trees."

and elsewhere in this same poem he speaks of
the water

"Where the ripples dimple round the butter cups of gold."

and still again of the dragon-fly pausing

"To rest like a blossom where the water-lily died." 52

The lily is a favorite flower with Riley. In these memory poems he recalls the lily over and over again. The old man who looks back to his childhood in The Old Swimmin Hole remembers the sunshine falling on the water and how

" It mottled the water with amber and gold
Till the glad lilies rocked in the ripples that rolled." 53

In the poem As I Sit in the Silence the poet
in the poem
says

"My heart is a blossom of joy over run
With a shower of tears as a lily with rain." 54

Again in The Old Trundle-Bed he mentions
the lily in connection with his memory of his
mother who lulled him to sleep

52 Biographical Edition, I, 247.

53 Biographical Edition, II, 415.

54- Biographical Edition, III, 24.

"With the old fairy stories my memories keep
Still fresh as the lilies that bloom o'er the head
Once bowed o'er my own in the old trundle-bed." 55

Still other flowers are dear to the
poet in his memory of the days gone by. The
locust and the lotus blossom he mentions over
and over again. In *The Days Gone By* he
speaks of

" . . . the honey suckle blossom where the water-
lilies dipped."

The last stanza of *The Used to be*
shows the delight which Riley feels in the
flowers and their influence over him:

"O land of love and dreamy thoughts
And shining fields, and shady spots
Of coolest, greenest, grassy plots,
Embossed with wild forget-me-nots!
And all ye blooms that longingly
Lift your faces up to me
Out of the past, I kiss in ye
The lips of Used-to-be." 56

Although Riley has written several
poems on the subjects of the rain and the
storm, he has written none upon these subjects
that are strictly poems of childhood or of

55 Biographical Edition, III, 73'

56 Biographical Edition, II, 200.

memory. The wind, however, he does mention in a few places but it is always a summer wind and never suggestive of cold or storm. In Tommy Smith Riley remembers the little fellow, as "the glad hand of the wind" smoothed back his hair. In Little Girly-Girl, recalling her pet name he says

"That was long and long ago
But in memory the tender
Winds of summer weather blow."

And in The Old Trundle Bed he recalls how he lay awake and

" wondering saw
The stars thru the window, and listened with awe
To the sign of the winds, as they tremblingly crept
Thru the trees " 57

Amid these memories of boyhood haunts, the man Riley reserves the memory of the boy's mother as the most sacred of all. In The Old Home Folks and in one or two more poems the father is mentioned; but the qualities which Riley saw in the father were not the

qualities of gentleness, tender-heartedness and fragile beauty - qualities with which Riley's nature could deal in making a poem. With pride and awe he recalls the father as an heroic man - " a being so exalted." It is " the gentle mother," with "her mild, plaintive face," who brings the warmth and the fine lyric beauty into the poems of the home.

Riley idealizes the mother in many of these poems. He remembers how his mother combed his hair (probably an imaginary conception, however) and in A Mother-Song he gives voice to a passionate longing for the mother who has gone. He idealizes her treatment of him in childhood, saying:

" of old I had never
One wish denied me, nor trouble to fret." 58

So deeply does he long for his mother that his passion makes him almost despair as he cries:

58 Biographical Edition, II, 25.

"Mother, O Mother! Must longing and sorrow
 Leave me in darkness, with eyes ever wet
 And never the hope of a meeting tomorrow?

Answer me, mother.

And sing, 'Little brother.

Sleep, for thy mother bends over thee yet." 59

As the poet muses on the past in

As I Sit in the Silence, he exalts the mother to the very highest place, seeing her at the throne of God pleading for her child. The dearest of all his memories of The Old Trundle Bed are the memories of his mother as she bent over him to lull him to sleep with the old fairy stories. Mr. Riley has written no poetry with a more intense passion than that of A Mother-Song and the fourth stanza of As I Sit in the Silence. Calmer but no less intense or sincere is the single stanza of To the Mother!

"The mother-hands no longer toil may know;
 The mother-eyes smile not on you and me;
 The mother-heart is stilled, alas! - But O
 The mother-love abides eternally."

The House and the immediate surroundings do not play a large part in these memory poems. But when Riley does mention these things it is with such a note of genuine feeling that we must conclude that the home meant a great deal to him as a boy. The atmosphere of home does pervade many of the poems which do not come in the group of memory poems under discussion. In these memory poems, however, Riley gives but few details of the house and its surroundings.

In A Backward Look his musings take him "Away to the house where I was born!" where he sees the old clock and the " ' chany-dog ' on the mantel-shelf." A Country Pathway leads him to " an old farm home-stead " but he gives no details of it. In Out to Old Aunt Mary's, however, as the boys come in sight of the house, they see all of the details of the picture

" the gable-end
 Of the fine old Huston homestead not
 Half a mile from the sacred spot
 Where dwelt our saint in her simple cot
 Out to old Aunt Mary's.

Why I see her now in the open door
 Where the little gourds grew up the sides and o'er
 The plankboard roof! 60

Much of the remaining part of the poem is
 given to a detailed description of the house
 and its surroundings. Such things are mention-
 ed as the lawn, the swing, the haymow, the
 fields near and far, the tail-race; and near-
 er the house the garden, the bee hives, the
 apple-house, the old spring house with its
 rows of swinging shelves with their crocks of
 milk.

Although he never gives a detailed de-
 scription of it, Riley recalls the orchard as
 one of the most delightful parts of these old
 home scenes. He mentions it again and again

60 Biographical Edition, III, 150.

but does not describe it, - as though he loved its quiet atmosphere but was not interested so much in its fruits.

Before this chapter closes two other things ought to be noted regarding Riley's memory of childhood. It will be seen, of course, that not all these memory poems are real memories of Riley's own childhood. Many of them are purely imaginary conceptions and are highly idealized. The other notable thing about some of these poems is their note of melancholy. It would seem, too, that this melancholy comes with the very dearest of the poet's memories as in *A Mother-Song*, which we have noted.

The note of melancholy is all gone, however, in the idealized picture of the care-free boy Tommy Smith. The very simplicity of the name is attractive to Riley

though he finds

" Scarce a name to rhyme it with."

The pure delight that the poet feels in the contemplation of the little fellow outweighs any possible feeling of regret that he is gone, and we feel the quiet joy as we meditate on the picture and are glad.

" On the verge of some far land
Still forever does he stand,
With his cap-rim rakishly
Tilted; so he smiled on me -
Little Tommy Smith. "

There is a touch of the idyllic in this poem which reminds one of Blake's Songs of Innocence. The picture is true - true in the highest poetic sense that the boy is a real boy, though typifying the ideal of boyhood - but the poet's memory illumines the picture with an ever finer and finer light until the boy is not of earth but dwells in heaven in his earthly likeness!

" But with crown tipped back behind,
And the glad hand of the wind

Smoothing back your hair, I see
 Heaven's best angel smile on me, -
 Little Tommy Smith. " 61

The reader must turn to the poem,
 The Used-to-be if he would see Riley's
 memory working at its best. It would be un-
 fair to select quotations for every line is in-
 extricably bound to every other to complete the
 picture of

" The Land of Used-to-be! " 62

Two things mark the poem as exhibiting Ri-
 ley's memory at its best. First it shows the
 true poet's emotion or passion working with-
 out conscious effort, resulting in a rhythm
 smooth and natural and in a diction highly
 suggestive. This passion, working thus, re-
 sults also in giving to the poem its second
 mark of superiority - the presence of a fine
 poetic imagination. The Land of Used-to-be
 is made very real to the reader and brings
 only pleasure of a deep abiding nature, free

61 Biographical Edition, II, 91.

62 Biographical Edition, II, 200.

from the note of sadness (or at least of morbidness) which characterizes A Mother-Song. This is not to say that the "note of sadness" in many of Riley's poems as in Burns' and Poe's and many another of our most popular poets' songs, is a mark of second rate poetry. It is merely to repeat what poets and their readers have so often expressed in their choice of "favorite " poems, namely that the emotion which is calm because it is so deep - what Mr. Stedman has called "repressed emotion" - is the highest form of all emotion, however high a more stirring emotion may be.

Another poem exhibiting similar characteristics is Little Girly-Girl. Riley writes less of girlhood than of boyhood but always idealizes his girls. Of Little Girly-Girl he says her name came to him "Down the brink of brooks that brought it Out of Paradise -

.

That was long and long ago,
 But in memory the tender,
 Winds of summer weather blow,
 And the roses burst in splendor;
 And the meadow's grassy billows
 Break in blossoms round the willows
 where the currents curve and curl,
 Calling, " Little Girly-Girl! " 63

Though I have called the two poems just mentioned the highest examples of Riley's memory poems, the reader, whether critic or not, turns with no less delight to such a poem as The Old Swimmin' Hole, in which, though there is a note of sadness, there is no highly wrought passion, which generally is the result of fine idealization. Riley has adapted his versification admirably to the halting old man who, as speaker in the poem, lets his memory of the happy boyhood days wander where it will, recalling now this, now that in a very natural but illogical way; as thus:

"And the gurgle of the water round the drift jest below
 Sounded like the laugh of something we onc't ust to know,

Before we could remember anything but the eyes
 Of the angels looking out as we left Paradise;
 But the merry days of youth is beyond our control
 And it's hard to part ferever with the Old Swimmin'-hole." 64

We return again to an idealized picture in
 The Days Gone By in which Riley gives us the
 characteristics of childhood which make that
 time of life so dear (by contrast, no doubt,
 with the adult period when we have strayed so
 far "inland" as Wordsworth puts it). He closes
 the poem with these words:

"O the days gone by! O the days gone by!
 The music of the laughing lip, the luster of the eye;
 The childish faith in fairies, and Aladdin's magic ring -
 The simple soul-reposing, glad belief in every thing, -
 When life was like a story holding neither sob nor sigh,
 In the golden olden glory of the days gone by. " 65

These memory poems are so numerous that
 it would seem impossible for Riley to make each
 one different from the others. But the theme
 is one on which all men love to dwell, recalling
 the same scenes over and over again. Thinkin'
 Back, Riley has called one of his poems. The

64 Biographical Edition, II, 414.

65 Biographical Edition, II, 469.

simplicity of the title is characteristic.

"Thinkin' back" he sees in imagination what all men see who have been reared in rural surroundings. The old mill and the creek keep coming back in memories of swimming times and fishing times - coming back as the places to which the boys resorted on days when they "played truant." As a boy Riley attended school only until he was sixteen, but the little rural school seems to have impressed on his memory some beautiful pictures.

"Of the wealth of facts and fancies
That our memories may recall
The old school-day romances
Are the dearest after all." 66

But the reader reads this questioningly, allowing for the poet's particular mood, and finds it is "after all" the Friday afternoon exercises that "are the dearest." As we turn from one thing to another which the poet's memory recalls we find him idealizing them all

in Our Boyhood Haunts. I quote the poem entire:

" Ho! I'm going back where
 We were youngsters. - Meet me there,
 Dear old barefoot ohm, and we
 Will be as we used to be, -
 Lawless rangers up and down
 The old creek beyond the town -
 Little sunburnt gods at play,
 Just as in that far-away; -
 Water nymphs, all unafraid,
 Shall smile at us from the brink
 Of the old mill-race and wade
 Tow'rd us as we kneeling drink
 At the spring our boyhood knew,
 Pure and clear as morning-dew;
 And, as we are rising there,
 Doubly dow'rd to hear and see,
 We shall thus be made aware
 Of an eery piping, heard
 High above the happy bird
 In the hazel; And then we,
 Just across the creek, shall see
 (Hah! the goatv rascal!) Pan
 Hoof it o'er the sloping green,
 Mad with his own melody,
 Av, and (bless the beastv man!)
 Stamping from the grassv soil
 Bruised scents of fleuer-de-lis,
 Boneset, mint, and pennvroval. "

Though this is not the best of the
 memory poems of childhood it reveals a new phase
 of Riley as a child poet. No one can doubt his
 interest in children and his sincere reverence

for all things belonging to childhood. But Riley is a poet. His interest, however sincere, in all things is the interest of the poet. Beauty, warmed by a truly romantic passion, and stimulated in its conception and expression by a poetic imagination, is Riley's delight and his highest delight. The "faculty divine" is his and I venture to say that he writes (as I believe all poets always have written) at his best as he can and not merely as he will. His "boyhood haunts" are therefore now inhabited by a creation of a poet's adult imagination. - Pan.

This poem may seem to the reader a disappointment at first. It may seem that Riley is untrue to his own chosen field. Our boyhood haunts harboring Pan of classical association in a world of middle-western children? Yet the poem expresses no incongruity. Riley is a poet. We call him a children's poet, as we call Wordsworth and Bryant nature poets, Watts a religious

poet, and other poets, poets of love or patriotism. Yet is it that particular emotion, or thought or subject upon which each writes and which predominates in each, - is it that upon which we shall judge the poet at last? Rather we must judge him as a poet first, even though his emotion can not be labeled, as with Blake in many poems, or his thoughts clearly understood as with Browning in some of his lighter poems. As each poet sings his song we listen to the melody, pronouncing upon that, though the words may be secondary. If that something which makes the poem a poem pleases us we need not linger over lesser things.

Thus Riley sings of childhood and we are delighted and if Pan at first seems a stranger in *Our Boyhood Haunts*, it is only for a little while. for he comes with the poet whose beauty we know and love.

Part III. 67

The Diction.

I have said that Riley is a versatile poet in his choice of subject matter. The verse form of his child poetry is also quite varied. He writes almost exclusively in rhymed stanzas, there being only three unrhymed poems in all of the two hundred child poems. There are twenty-two poems not in verse form, some of them being "paragraphed." There are five poems containing verses of varying lengths, and there is one one-act "drama" (so entitled).

Riley's favorite verse form is the eight-line stanza, the stanza in fifty-eight of these child poems being of this length. The four-line stanza comes next, with forty-one poems. The rest of the poems are divided as to verse form as follows: The couplet, one introductory couplet to one poem; the five-line stanza, twelve poems; the six-line

67/ See Appendix for a grouping of the poems according to their verse form.

stanza, sixteen poems; the seven-line stanza, two poems; the nine-line stanza, four poems; the ten-line stanza, five poems; the eleven-line stanza, two poems; the twelve-line stanza, four poems; the thirteen-line stanza, two poems; the fourteen-line stanza, four poems; the fifteen-line stanza, two poems; the sixteen-line stanza, one poem; the seventeen line stanza, one poem.

The unusual length of some of these stanzas at once excites curiosity as to whether Riley has invented new stanzaic forms. There is nothing however, to mark them as distinctly new types. One poem only of the four containing stanzas of fourteen lines, is a sonnet. This is A Bare-foot Boy. While in thought it does not contain the conventional division into the octave and sextette, the entire fourteen lines being given to a description with only a

a slight suggestion of reflection upon the picture in the twelfth and thirteenth lines.

The one "drama", if such it may be called, *The Rivals*, is merely a one-scene dialogue, although the exceedingly slight "plot" is suggestive of a very realistic scene.

Riley is very fond of the couplet rhyme, although he has not divided any of these poems into couplets. There is couplet rhyme, however, in sixty-five of them.

Riley's diction is that of the common people. His words are aptly fitted to the ideas and the emotions which he expresses; and these ideas and emotions are such as are in the minds and hearts of the great majority of the population of the middle western United States - ideas and emotions arising out of a love of home and homely things, out of a delight in nature and an out-of-door life

out of a social order in which the "neighborhood" is a distinct division of the population. Yet when this has been said there remains to be accounted for in Riley's verse a large body of words, figures and images, suggestive and imaginative in the highest poetic sense, which are not in the language of the people about whom Riley has written. No other fact so conclusively proves Mr. Riley to be simply a genre poet. But the poems best illustrating this are not among his child poems, and therefore I merely refer the reader to some of them. Although they are numerous, the best examples are Afterwhiles, The Beautiful City, Herr Weiser, The Dead Lover, Away and Her Hair.

Among the child poems not in dialect the diction is not dissimilar to that of most of Riley's other non-dialectic poetry. The two noteworthy things about it are the suggest-

ive, imaginative words and the striking, beautiful figures. These two elements are so closely related to each other that I shall treat them together, for in most cases the beautiful figures are made with the choice of suggestive words. It is in the lyric poems with an idyllic touch that we find the most beautiful figures and the finest choice of words.

In Little Girly-Girl⁶⁸ the poet is "dreaming" of a little girl with
 " Laughing eyes of limpid blue -
 Tresses glimmering and gleaming
 Like glad waters, running over
 Shelving shallows, rimmed with clover."

He speaks of her name as having come to him

" Down the brink of brooks that brought it
 Out of Paradise - and we -
 Love and I - we leaning, caught it
 From the ripples romping nigh us
 And the bubbles bumping by us. "

In the Proem to A Child-World⁶⁹
 the poet speaks of such "enchantments tangible"
 as

"The under-brink
 Of dawns that launched the sight
 Up seas of gold. "

68 Biographical Edition, II, 329.

69 Biographical Edition, IV, 354.

" The liquid, dripping songs of orchard-birds

 With lucent deeps of silence afterwards. "

In The Book of Jovous Children he
 describes the scenes and haunts of childhood
 in such suggestive lines as

" the viny
 Bowery groves of shady, shiny
 Haunts of childish days."

Of the children, themselves, he speaks of

" The young brows, wreathed, all unsought,
 With apple-blossom garlands
 Of the poets of those far lands
 Whence all dreams are drawn. "

and of them with

" The hot honey on your lip
 Of the sun-smit wild strawberry
 Or the chill tart of the cherry. "

Taken out of their context all of these
 figures seem overdrawn, affected and some of
 them come near being meaningless. This is due
 to the fact that these lyric poems appeal
 largely to the imagination through the sense

of hearing. The poems are designed to create an "atmosphere" rather than to present an idea or to appeal to any specific emotion. This creation of an atmosphere is a difficult accomplishment and where poets have succeeded in it we find some of their best poetry. A noted example is seen in Tennyson's Lady of Shalott.

This use of striking figures is so prominent in many of the child poems that I give the following examples, which speak for themselves.

From A Country Pathway: 71

" A puritanic quiet here reviles
The almost whispered warble from the hedge
And takes a locust's rasping voice and files
The silence to an edge. " ;

from Friday Afternoon,⁷² where the poet speaks
of the quiet of the closing hour of school,

" As though the day were kneeling
With the twilight for the prayer. " ;

from Babyhood.

71 Biographical Edition, I, 85.

72 Ibid., I, 92.

" Turn to the brook where the honeysuckle tipping
O'er its vase of perfume spills it on the breeze. "

A crude figure, yet one which seems fitted to the unconventional picture of the poem is found in A Barefoot Boy, where after giving a realistic picture of the boy the poet humorously ends it all with mention of

" His toe stubbed - ay, his big toe-nail knocked back
Like unto the clasp of an old pocket book."

Riley being a native of Indiana, he has first-hand knowledge of the Hoosier dialect. As⁷⁴ a child he himself must have used this dialect with its idiomatic expressions, its mispronounced words, and its elision of all difficult syllables. In his poems he does not exaggerate this dialect but speaks in the language which may be heard to-day in the rural districts of central and southern Indiana.

The dialect of the child poems however is not distinctly or solely a Hoosier dialect. Chil-

74 For Mr. Riley's own statement regarding child dialect in poetry see above

dren everywhere use a language which is ungrammatical and their pronunciation is of course imperfect. Yet even in the child dialect of the Hoosier State there are characteristics peculiar to it alone. These are for the most part peculiarities of pronunciation and may be seen in any of the child poems in dialect. The poet is master of this child language in practically every poem in which he uses it.⁷⁵ He is invariably true to both the inner nature of the child and the expression of this nature in acts and speech. He seems to have possessed a native facility in the use of this dialect, for as early as 1877, when he wrote the second poem in child dialect which has been preserved in his collected works, there are no false notes in the presentation of the child.

In this poem - Prior to Miss Belle's
 76
 Appearance - we find such mispronunciations

75 For the only exception to this which I have found see above quotation from Johnson's Boy.

76 Biographical Edition, I, 175.

and incorrect forms as these: "fer" for for;
 "'at" for that; "ketched" for caught;
 "th'uther" for the other; "didn' you"? for
 didn't you?; "gived" for gave; "chawk'lut"
 for chocolate; "b'uther" for brother; "a-
 mostest" for the most; we "whips" for we
 whip; "bime-by" for by and by; "nen" for
 and then; "don't" she for doesn't she;
 "ag'in" for again; "n'omise" for promise;
 "I'm got the nurtiest name" for I have the
 prettiest name; "N'our" for and then our;
 "Nain't" for and there isn't; "is they" for
 is there; "ef" for if; "wuz" for was;
 "childern" for children; "yer" for your;
 "good-un" for good one; "puddun" for pud-
 ding; "pollar" for parlor; "pianer" for
 piano; "gits" for gets; "'leven" for eleven;
 "'at's mucher 'an I" for that is more than I
 am; "nere's" for and there is; "you has" for
 you have; "ever'thing" for everything.

An added list of such expressions without reference to the poems from which they are taken will serve to illustrate still further the Hoosier child dialect. This list includes practically all of the most noteworthy peculiarities of this dialect as used by Riley in his child poems: "goed" for went; "fetch" for bring; "giggle-un" for giggling; "ist" for just; "ao'" for act; "ruther" for rather; "iat's" for that is; "that-un" for that one; "ketched" for caught; "buyed" for bought; "turnt" for turned; "skeered" for scared used passively in the sense of "afraid;" "afeard" for afraid; "spunky" for angry; "skooted" for scurried; "he's go to be" for he is going to be; "a-slingin" for throwing; "they's ist" for there is only; "churries" for cherries; "ituz" for it was; "vittuls" for victuals; "keerful" for careful; "et" for ate.

Part IV.

The Sociology of the Child Poems.

The children of Riley's poetry are individual children, not types. They are real children, not made artificial by the imposition of conventionalities upon them. Hence they reveal their instinctive traits and are moved by their natural emotions. This same simple naturalness marks also the man Riley, as he speaks of the child, either directly from his own memory or when he impersonates some other adult.

The first thing to be noted about the children of these poems is that they are home-keeping children. Their "child-world" is the neighborhood. Take them away from this neighborhood and their spirits would droop and their charm would be gone. Though it is not a child poem, Griggsby's Station represents the "home-keeping hearts" of Ri-

ley's children as well of all his other characters. The speaker in the poem longs to return from the city, where the family has gone to live after "Pap's got his patent right," to the little town of Griggsby's Station. - 77

"Back where we ust to be so happy and so pore!" It is the homelike simplicity of the life of a rural neighborhood that holds Riley as a man and that gives the setting which is the charm of so much of his poetry. The speaker in Griggsby's Station continues:

"What's in all this grand life and high situation
And nary pink nor hollyhawk a-bloomin at the door? -
Le's go a-visitin' back to Griggsby's Station -
Baak where we ust to be so happy and so pore!"

In the neighborhood, then, what place does the child have - what are his relations to the other persons in the neighborhood and to all of the institutions of the neighborhood, the home, the school, the church, the civil author-

ities, the industries and the whole community? In general we find the child a free agent, subject to parental control, but not under much restraint. The simple conditions surrounding him do not demand any complex social laws as to his rights or obligations. He is a member of a simple social order, in which right and wrong are easily distinguishable and he falls naturally, therefore, into his place; in general easily following the path of right and avoiding the path of wrong.

With regard to the child's relation to the parents, Riley deals for the most part, with the fundamental relationship of the instinctive love of each for the other. The relationship between the father and the child Riley touches upon very little, but the relation of the mother and the child is a favorite subject with him. In ⁷⁸ A Boy's Mother Riley

78 Biographical Edition, IV, 97.

makes the child say

" And when my Pa comes home to tea.
She loves him most as much as me.

She laughs and tells him all I said,
And grabs me up and pats my head;
An' I hug her, an' hug my Pa
An' love him purt' nigh as much as Ma."

But some of Riley's very finest poetic touches are found in the poems dealing with the child's relation to the mother. In When Mother Combed My Hair⁷⁹ the poet expresses some of the tenderest sentiments in their relationship. The speaker, a man, says,

" I long to be
Again the boy on bended knee,
With head a-bow, and drowsy smile
Hid in a mother's lap the while,
With tender touch and kindly care,
She bends above and combs my hair."

The child's trust in the mother is a prominent⁸⁰ note in these poems. In A Mother Song each stanza ends with a line expressive of this trust:

" Sleep, for thy mother bends over thee yet."

79 Biographical Edition, I, 178.

80 Biographical Edition, II, 28.

Even song is another poem expressing this same thing.

The older boys in these child poems when speaking in their dialect ordinarily use the terms "Pa" and "Ma" but when they are influenced by their tenderer feelings toward their mothers they drop the Ma and use Mother. The little girls in these poems, however, use the word⁸² mommy for mother. In The Twins the word "Dad" is used by the boy who is speaking. In the memory poems, Riley always uses the words, father and mother.

The simple home life of a little country town is a dear memory with Riley and his love for it is genuine. He, therefore, portrays the children in his poems as delighting in the home and all simple home scenes and homely things. The child in Little Orphant Annie relates in detail the household duties

81 Biographical Edition, V, 220.

82 See Little-Girl-Two-Little Girls, Biographical Edition, V, 102; Her Lonesomeness, V, 275; and The Katydid, V, 217.

83 Biographical Edition, V, 223.

84 Biographical Edition, III, 313.

of the "hired girl," but is especially interested in the scene about the kitchen fire after supper, when they have

"the mostest fun
A-list'inin' to the witch-tales 'at Annie tells about."

It is evident from this poem that the moral training of children was not neglected in their homes. Even the "hired girl" inculcates the principles of truthfulness, respect and obedience to parents by her "witch-tales."

The child's love of home is not due solely, however, to the simplicity of the home. Perhaps it would be more nearly the truth to say that Riley's greatest interest is not in the simplicity of the home, but in the atmosphere of the simple home which provided few artificial aids to the child's mental growth, but provided abundance of means to the free exercise of his imagination. In *The Happy Little Cripple*⁸⁵ after "Aunty" has made the little home cozy for the

night. she sits by the little cripple's bed and tells the boy stories about The Good Man, and elves and enchanters until he goes to sleep with high thoughts in his mind about his angel-mother, about whom this good aunt always reminds him.

86

In The Raggedy Man, while the boy seems to delight in the practical things which the Raggedy Man does about the house, his greatest interest is in the imaginative story-telling qualities of the hired man and in his pretending to be various personages such as a bear-hunter, an explorer of caves in the haymow and of the "Castul-halls" of the old barn.

Perhaps the most delightful and realistic of home-scenes in any of the poems, is that pictures by the little boy in A Defective Santa Claus.⁸⁷ It is the story of a Christmas eve when Uncle Sidney comes to stay with the wife and children while the father goes away

86 Biographical Edition, IV, 102.

87 Biographical Edition, V, 302.

for the night. His going away however is only a pretense, for he returns in the evening dressed as Santa Claus, to the delight of the children. The mere story gives no idea of the poem, the charm of which is in the scene portrayed of Uncle Sidney's entertainment of the children with cracking of nuts, popping of corn, baking of potatoes in the ashes, and the telling of tales of wonder and of humor.

There are no poems among these poems of childhood which reveal at first hand the relationship between the boy and the neighborhood. In all of them however, Riley places the boy in the midst of the life of the town and countryside, where he wanders at will or almost at will, free from much social restraint. In Kingry's Mill⁸⁸ the boys are represented as breaking some natural social laws, knowing they are breaking them but not showing much fear.

88 Biographical Edition, III, 354.

of doing so. The boys take the shortest route to the river, going through and tramping down the wheat. Arrived at the river, they steal the skiff, an offense which their own imagination made much greater than it really was. (They probably desired it to be greater). After this offense the boys go to the mill, where the old miller,

"That old chap, with all his cheer, -

.
Swappin' lies, and pokin' fun,

lets them run about the mill and play in the bins of wheat.

The boys of the these poems are acquainted with the entire neighborhood, but Riley puts the emphasis upon their acquaintance with the physical aspects of the neighborhood rather than with the persons of the neighborhood. The boys know all the barns, orchards, streams, trees, birds and flowers. The charm of many of the poems comes from the poet's skillful harmonizing of the boy with his

natural surroundings.

In several poems, however, there are references to visits of the boys to the neighboring homes and the boys seem to take a great delight in these visits. Yet it is the journey that delights them rather than the visit itself. The School Boy's Favorite⁸⁹ shows this characteristic. Here the chorus, from a poem in an old school reader, shows the boy's greatest interest divided between the journey and the visit:

" Over the river and through the wood
Now Grandmother's oap I spy:
Hurrah for the fun! Is the pudding done?
Hurrah for the pumpkin-pie! "

In Little Cousin Jasper⁹⁰ is the recorded visit by a little boy to another little boy. Here the boy who is visited is the speaker. His interest in the visit arises from the wonderful stories which the little

89 Biographical Edition, IV, 310.

90 Biographical Edition, IV, 254.

visitor tells of his home town. The wanderlust and the romance in the speaker are aroused and he says:

" Wisht our town ain't like it is! -
 Wisht it's ist as big as his!
 Wisht 'at his folks they'd move here,
 And we'd move to Rennselaer! "

This same love of new scenes and "romantic" interests is shown by the little boy in *Goin' to the Fair*.⁹¹ The roads full of vehicles, the fair with its flags and tents, and merry-go-round and balloon, satisfy to the full the boy's romantic nature.

School life plays only a small part in Riley's poems. The poet was only an irregular attendant upon school and his school life closed before he was sixteen years of age. In the only poem entirely upon the subject of school, *Friday Afternoon*,⁹² Riley picks upon the "Exercises" of "Friday Afternoon"

91 Biographical Edition, IV, 161.

92 Biographical Edition, I, 92.

as (evidently) the most interesting thing about school from the standpoint of the boy. In another poem ⁹³ Hik-tee Dick, Riley tells of two boys, Billy and Buddy, who make so much trouble for the teacher that she finally, after one of their pranks, locks them in her desk and thus

"Closed the incident so - yes and locked it she did."

Another poem worthy of mention in this brief account of the sociology of Riley's child poem is ⁹⁴ A Little Lame Boy's Views. It shows the kindness of the world (however thoughtless the world may be in other ways) toward a little crippled child. The poem is full of pathos, but cheering withal and it helps one to realize the native kindness of the majority of people.

The little speaker in the poem says:

"On 'Scursion-days-an' Shows - an' Fairs -
They ain't no bad folks anywheres! - "

93 Biographical Edition, V, 231.

94 Biographical Edition, V, 393.

He then goes on to show how the people on the street cars give him a seat, how the careless mob is careful not to "crowd" him, how the ticket-seller gives him too much change, how the country folks give him something to eat from their lunches at the fair and how all the world is kind, so kind that the little fellow says,

"Folks all's so good to me that I -
Sometimes - I nearly purt' near' cry. "

A P P E N D I X .

A Grouping of the Child Poems on the Basis
of Stanza Form.

Verse Form of the Poems.

I Rhymed Poems
Couplet

Impromptu Fairy Tale, An. Introductory couplet.

4-line stanza - 41 poems.

Babyhood,
Ballad, A
Bee-Bag, The
Best Times, The single stanza,
Boy's Mother, A couplet rhyme,
Bub Says

Christmas Afterthought, couplet rhyme, single stanza,
Chimaotic Seroery, couplet rhyme,
Company Manners, couplet rhyme, single stanza,
Country Pathway, A

Dolly's Mother, The
Dubious "Old Kriss" a couplet rhyme,

Exceeding All, single stanza,
Extremes, couplet rhyme,

Find the Favorite
Fishing Party, The couplet rhyme,

God Bless Us Every One

Fool Youngens

King of OO Ringtum-Jing, The

Lisper, The

Mother-Song, A

Phantom, A

Proem to a Child-World

Tommy Smith, couplet rhyme,

"She Displains It"

Squirt-Gun Uncle Maked Me, The

6-line Stanza

Billy and His Drum

Boys' Candidate, The

Bub Says partly couplet rhyme,

Days Gone By, The couplet rhyme,

Dream of the Little Princess, The

Go Read Your Book

Katydid, The

Lugubrious Whing-Whang, The

Nine Little Goblins

Out to Old Aunt Mary's partly couplet rhyme,

Penalty of Genius, The

Red Riding Hood

"Squirrel and the Funy Littel Girl, The" (See "Lisp-
Stepmother, The" ing in numbers)

Through Sleepy-Land

Want to Be Whure Mother Is

7 -line Stanza

Life Lesson, A
Old Granny Dusk

8 - line Stanza

Almost Beyond Endurance
As I Sit in the Silence

Baby, The
Billy Miller's Circus Show
Book of Joyous Children, The
Boy Lives on Our Farm, The
Boy Patriot, The

Down Around the River couplet rhyme
Dream of Long Ago, A

Folks at Lonesomeville
"Friday Afternoon"
Funniest Thing in the World, The

Goin to the Fair couplet rhyme,
Goldie Goodwin couplet rhyme single stanza,
Granny
Guinev Pigs couplet rhyme,

Happy Little Cripple, The
Her Poet-Brother
"Hit-tee Dik"
Hunter Boy, The

Impetuous Resolve, An
Impromptu Fairy-Tale, An
In the Night
Iry and Billy and Jo

Jaybird, The
Johnson's Boy

Kingry's Mill couplet rhyme,

Lincoln, The Boy
 Little Girly-Girl
 Little Lame Boy's Views, A
 Little Marjorie couplet rhyme,
 Little Orphant Annie
 Lost Kiss, The

Mulberry Tree, The

Naughty Claude
 Noble Old Elm, The
 No Boy Knows couplet rhyme,

Old Man's Memory, An
 Old Man Whiskery-Whee-Kum Wheeze couplet rhyme,
 Old Swimm'n'-Hole, The
 Old Times Were the Best, The
 Old Trundle-Bed, The

Parental Christmas Presents single stanza,
 Pet Coon, The

School-Boys' Favorite, The
 Song (Some Songs After Master Singers)
 Song of Singing
 Strength of the Weak, The

Thomas the Pretender
 Toy-Balloon, The

Uncle Sidney's Logic single stanza,
 Up and Down Old Brandywine
 Used-to-be, The

When Mother Combed My Hair couplet rhyme,
 When our Baby Died,
 When the World Busts Through
 When Uncle Doc Was Young
 When We First Played Show

1 3- line Stanza

"Little Man in the Tin Shop, The
Spoiled Child, The

1 4-line Stanza

All Golden, the couplet rhyme,
Barefoot Boy, sonnet,
Mongst the Hills of Somerset couplet rhyme,
Young Old Man, The couplet rhyme,

15-line Stanza

Little Coat, The couplet rhyme,
Our Hired Girl

16-line Stanza

Hoosier Folk Child, The couplet rhyme,

1 7-line Stanza

Little Mook Man, The

- - Strophe - -

Bear Family, The couplet rhyme,
Born to the Purple couplet rhyme,
Bumble Bee, The couplet rhyme

Child's Home Long Ago, A couplet rhyme,
Child-World, A couplet rhyme,

Defective Santa Claus, A couplet rhyme,

His Pa's Romance
Home-Folks

In Swimming Time

Jack the Giant-Killer couplet rhyme,
Little Dick and the Clock
Little Jack Janitor couplet rhyme,

Out Boyhood Haunts couplet rhyme,

Rabbits

Song O' Cheer, A

That-air Young-un

Thinkin' Back couplet rhyme,

To the Child Julia couplet rhyme,

Toy Penny-Dog, The

Drama

Rivals, The couplet rhyme,

Stanzas of various lengths

Bub Says couplet rhyme,

Christmas Memory, The

Gustatory Achievement, A

Little-Girl-Two-Little-Girls

My Conscience

III Unrhymed Poems (Blank Verse)

Bear Story, The

Bud's Fairy Tale

Maymie's Story of Red Riding Hood.

G E N E R A L I N D E X .

Adventure in Riley's Child Poems	31, 44
Afterwhiles	93
"Alex"	39
Angel, The	10
As I Sit in the Silence	77
At Aunty's House	19
At Noey's House	32
Away	93
Babyhood	67, 72, 96
Backward Look, A	64, 78
Barefoot Boy, A	91, 97
Bear Story, The	16, 37, 40
Beautiful City, The	11, 56, 93
Blake, William	10, 50, 62, 81 89
Book of Joyous Children, The	95
Boyhood	1
Boys and Girls of Riley's Poems	1
Boy's Mother, A	103
Browning, Robert	56, 88
Bryant, William Cullen	88
"Bud"	40
Bud's Fairy Tale	37, 42
Burns, Robert	83
Charley	16
Child Heart, The	27
Child World, A	94
Child World, The	23, 36
Christmas Memory, A	50
Christmas Poems	46
Classification of Dialect Poems	45
Country Pathway, A	67, 70, 78, 96
Cousin Rufus	29
Days Gone By, The	74, 85
Dead Lover, The	93
Defective Santa Claus, A	107
Dialect	3, 97

Dialect, Riley On	3
Diction	18
Don Quixote	31
Dramatic Element in Riley	49
 Evensong	 105
Faculty Divine, The	88
Fairy Paradise, A	23
Father	75
Feminine Element in Riley's Child Poems	39, 55
Fishing Party, The	53
Flowers	72
Forests	70
Friday Afternoon	96, 111
 Give Me the Baby	 11
Goin' to the Fair	111
Greenfield, Indiana	1, 23
Griggsby's Station	101
Guiney Pigs	58
 Happy Little Cripple, The	 57, 106
Heaven, A child's feeling for	56
Her Hair	93
Her Poet Brother	44
Herr Weiser	93
Highways	68, 69, 70
Hic-tee-Dik	112
Hired Man and Floretty, The	36
Home, The child's feeling for	34, 35, 36
Honey Dripping from the Comb	66, 71
Hoodjicum, Miss	43
Hoosier Children	8
House, The in Riley's poetry	24, 78
Howells, W. D.	22
 Idealized Child, The	 9
Impetuous Resolve, An	19
Indianapolis	23

In Swimming Time	71, 72
Jack, The Giant Killer	17
Johnson's Boy	15
"Johnnty"	26
Keats, John	56
Kingry's Mill	108
Lady of Shalott, The	96
Lincoln, Abraham	7
Little Cousin Jasper	110
Little Girly-Girl	75, 83, 94
Little-Girl-Two-Little Girls	54
Little John't's Chris'mus	47
Little Lame Boy's Views, A	51, 112
Little Mandy's Christmas Tree	48, 49
Little Orphant Annie	16, 59, 105
'Lizabuth Ann on Bakin Day	59, 61
Lizzie	31
Loehrs and the Hammonds, The	33
Maymie	26
Maymie's Story of Red Riding Hood	37
Melancholy in Riley's Poems	1, 69, 80
Milton, John	63
Mind of the Child, The Keen	45
Morality in Riley's Poetry	30, 52
Mother	76
Mother Goose	4
Mother, Riley's tribute to his	26, 27
Mother Song, A	76, 77, 80, 83, 104
National Road, The	23
Nature, Riley's interest in elemental	67
Noey	31
Noted Traveler, The	32
Nothin' to Say	49
Number of Child Poems	12, 13

Ode on Immortality, Wordsworth	50
Old Home Folks, The	26, 29, 75
Old Swimmin' Hole, The	73, 84
Old Times Were the Best, The	66
Old Trundle Bed, The	73, 75, 77
"Ole Bumblebore"	18
Orchard, The	79
Our Boyhood Haunts	87, 89
Our Hired Girl	61
Out to Old Aunt Mary's	2, 3, 70, 71, 78
Pan	88
Parents	5, 103
Pathos	16, 17, 34, 45
Paths	68, 69, 70
Pet Coon, The	58
Philosophy of Riley	10, 65
Poe, Edgar Allen	65, 83
Prelude, The Wordsworth	26
Prior to Miss Belle's Appearance	16, 98
Raggedy Man, The	3, 59, 107
Rain	74
Real Child in Literature, The	4
Riley, J. W.	1
Riley, John A.	21
Riley on Dialect	3
Roads	68, 69, 70
Robin Hood	31
Romanticists	62
Runaway Boy	20
Schoolboy's Favorite, The	110
Sense Perception in Riley	28
Sensitiveness of the Child	9, 49
Sociology	101
Spoiled Child, The	53
Squidjicun	43
Squirt Gun Uncle Maked Me, The	58
Stedman, E. C.	83

Tennyson	56
Thinkin' Back	85
To a Boy Whistling	65
Tommy Smith	75, 80
To the Mother	77
Town Boy, Interests of	2, 3
Twins, The	105
Uncle Mart	29
Uncle Sidney	3, 53, 58, 108
Up and Down Old Brandywine	70
Used-to-be, The	68, 74, 82
Verse Form of Riley's Child Poems	90
Want to Be Whur Mother Is	45
Watts, Isaac	88
Way the Baby Slept, The	11
We are Seven	15
When Mother Combed My Hair	104
When Our Baby Died	56
Whittier, John G.	14
Willie	16
Wind	75
Wordsworth,	10, 14, 15, 27, 50, 85, 88
Youthful Patriot, The	54