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KNEE-DEEP
IN
JUNE
AND
OTHER POEMS

JAMES
WHITCOMB
RILEY



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✓ KNEE-DEEP IN JUNE

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY ✓

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KNEE-DEEP IN JUNE

I

TELL you what I like the best—
'Long about knee-deep in June,
'Bout the time strawberries melts
On the vine,—some afternoon
Like to jes' git out and rest,
And not work at nothin' else!

KNEE-DEEP IN JUNE

II

Orchard's where I'd ruther be—
Needn't fence it in fer me!—
 Jes' the whole sky overhead,
And the whole airth underneath—
Sorto' so's a man kin breathe
 Like he ort, and kindo' has
Elbow-room to keerlessly
 Sprawl out len'thways on the grass
 Where the shadders thick and soft
As the kivvers on the bed
 Mother fixes in the loft
'Allus, when they's company!

III

Jes' a-sorto' lazin' there—
 S'lazy, 'at you peek and peer
 Through the wavin' leaves above,
 Like a feller 'at's in love
And don't know it, ner don't keer!
Ever'thing you hear and see
 Got some sort o' interest—
 Maybe find a bluebird's nest

Tucked up there convenently
Fer the boy 'at's ap' to be
Up some other apple-tree!
Watch the swallers skootin' past
'Bout as peert as you could ast;
Er the Bob-white raise and whiz
Where some other's whistle is.

IV

Ketch a shadder down below,
And look up to find the crow—
Er a hawk,—away up there,
'Pearantly *frose* in the air!—
Hear the old hen squawk, and squat
Over ever' chick she's got,
Suddent-like!—and she knows where
That-air hawk is, well as you!—
You jes' bet yer life she do!—
Eyes a-glitterin' like glass,
Waitin' till he makes a pass!

V

Pee-wees' singin', to express
My opinion, 's second class,

Yit you'll hear 'em more er less;
Sapsucks gittin' down to biz,
Weedin' out the lonesomeness;
Mr. Bluejay, full o' sass,
In them base-ball clothes o' his,
Sportin' round the orchard jes'
Like he owned the premises!
Sun out in the fields kin sizz,
But flat on yer back, I guess,
In the shade's where glory is!
That's jes' what I'd like to do
Stiddy fer a year er two!

VI

Plague! ef they ain't somepin' in
Work 'at kindo' goes ag'in'
My convictions!—'long about
Here in June especially!—
Under some old apple-tree,
Jes' a-restin' through and through,
I could git along without
Nothin' else at all to do
Only jes' a-wishin' you



Wuz a-gittin' there like me,
And June was eternity!

VII

Lay out there and try to see
Jes' how lazy you kin be!—
 Tumble round and souse yer head
In the clover-bloom, er pull
 Yer straw hat acrost yer eyes
 And peek through it at the skies,
 Thinkin' of old chums 'at's dead,
 Maybe, smilin' back at you
In betwixt the beautiful
 Clouds o' gold and white and blue!—
Month a man kin raily love—
June, you know, I'm talkin' of!

VIII

March ain't never nothin' new!—
Aprile's altogether too
 Brash fer me! and May—I jes'
 'Bominate its promises,—
Little hints o' sunshine and
Green around the timber-land—

KNEE-DEEP IN JUNE

A few blossoms, and a few
Chip-birds, and a sprout er two,—
Drap asleep, and it turns in
'Fore daylight and *snoves* ag'in!—
But when *June* comes—Clear my th'out
With wild honey!—Rench my hair
In the dew! and hold my coat!
Whoop out loud! and th'ow my hat!—
June wants me, and I'm to spare!
Spread them shadders anywhere,
I'll git down and waller there,
And obleeged to you at that!





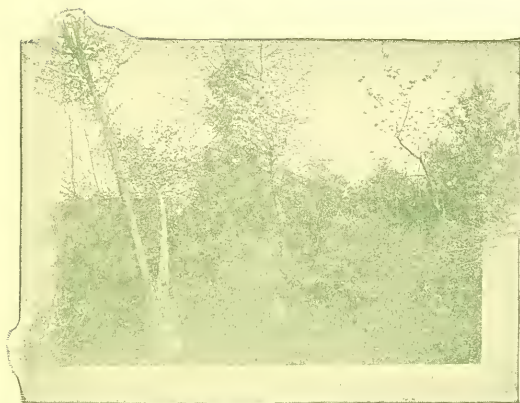
THE ORCHARD LANDS OF LONG AGO

THE orchard lands of Long Ago!
O drowsy winds, awake, and blow
The snowy blossoms back to me,
And all the buds that used to be!
Blow back along the grassy ways
Of truant feet, and lift the haze
Of happy summer from the trees
That trail their tresses in the seas
Of grain that float and overflow
The orchard lands of Long Ago!



Blow back the melody that slips
In lazy laughter from the lips
That marvel much if any kiss
Is sweeter than the apple's is.
Blow back the twitter of the birds—
The lisp, the titter, and the words
Of merriment that found the shine
Of summer-time a glorious wine
That drenched the leaves that loved **it so,**
In orchard lands of Long Ago!

O memory! alight and sing
Where rosy-bellied pippins cling,
And golden russets glint and gleam,
As, in the old Arabian dream,
The fruits of that enchanted tree
The glad Aladdin robbed for me!
And, drowsy winds, awake and fan
My blood as when it overran
A heart ripe as the apples grow
In orchard lands of Long Ago!



WHEN THE GREEN GITS BACK IN THE
TREES

I N Spring, when the green gits back in the trees,
 And the sun comes out and *stays*,
And yer boots pulls on with a good tight squeeze,
 And you think of yer bare-foot days ;
When you *ort* to work and you want to *not*,
 And you and yer wife agrees
It's time to spade up the garden-lot,
 When the green gits back in the trees
 Well! work is the least o' *my* idees
 When the green, you know, gits back in the trees!



WHEN THE GREEN GITS BACK IN THE TREES

When the green gits back in the trees, and bees
Is a-buzzin' aroun' ag'in
In that kind of a lazy go-as-you-please
Old gait they bum roun' in ;
When the groun's all bald whare the hay-rick stood,
And the crick's riz, and the breeze
Coaxes the bloom in the old dogwood,
And the green gits back in the trees,—
I like, as I say, in sich scenes as these,
The time when the green gits back in the trees!

When the whole tail-feathers o' Wintertime
Is all pulled out and gone!
And the sap it thaws and begins to climb,
And the swet it starts out on
A feller's forred, a-gittin' down
At the old spring on his knees—
I kindo' like jest a-loaferin' roun'
When the green gits back in the trees—
Jest a-potterin' roun' as I—durn—please—
When the green, you know, gits back in the trees!



OLD OCTOBER

OLD October's purt' nigh gone,
And the frosts is comin' on
Little *heavier* every day—
Like our hearts is thataway!
Leaves is changin' overhead
Back from green to gray and red,
Brown and yeller, with their stems
Loosenin' on the oaks and e'ms;
And the balance of the trees
Gittin' balder every breeze—
Like the heads we're scratchin' on!
Old October's purt' nigh gone.

OLD OCTOBER

I love Old October so,
I can't bear to see her go—
Seems to me like losin' some
Old-home relative er chum—
'Pears like sorto' settin' by
Some old friend 'at sigh by sigh
Was a-passin' out o' sight
Into everlastin' night!
Hickernuts a feller hears
Rattlin' down is more like tears
Drappin' on the leaves below—
I love Old October so!

Can't tell what it is about
Old October knocks me out!—
I sleep well enough at night—
And the blamedest appetite
Ever mortal man possessed,—
Last thing et, it tastes the best!—
Warnuts, butternuts, pawpaws,
'Tles and limbers up my jaws
Fer raal service, sich as new
Pork, spareribs, and sausage, too.—
Yit, fer all, they's somepin' 'bout
Old October knocks me out!

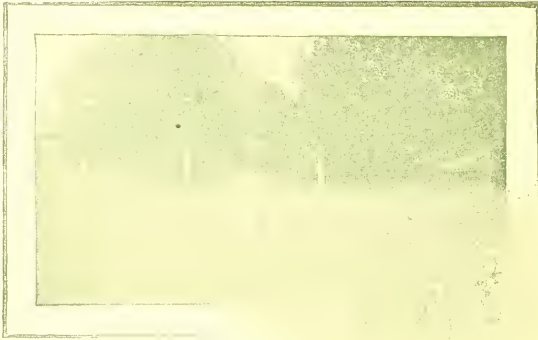
A CANARY AT THE FARM

FOLKS has be'n to town, and Sahry
 Fetched 'er home a pet canary,—
And of all the blame', contrary,
 Aggervatin' things alive!
I love music—that's I love it
When it's *free*—and plenty of it;—
But I kindo' git above it,
 At a dollar-eighty-five!

Reason's plain as I'm a-sayin',—
Jes' the idy, now, o' layin'
Out yer money, and a-payin'
 Fer a willer-cage and bird,
When the medder-larks is wingin'
Round you, and the woods is ringin'
With the beautifullest singin'
 That a mortal ever heard!

Sahry's sot, tho'.—So I tell her
He's a purty little feller,
With his wings o' creamy-yeller,
 And his eyes keen as a cat;
And the twitter o' the critter
'Pears to absolutely glitter!
Guess I'll haf to go and git her
 A high-priceter cage 'n that!





A SONG OF LONG AGO

A SONG of Long Ago:
Sing it lightly—sing it low—
Sing it softly—like the lisp of the lips we
used to know
When our baby-laughter spilled
From the glad hearts ever filled
With music blithe as robin ever trilled!

Let the fragrant summer breeze,
And the leaves of locust-trees,
And the apple-buds and blossoms, and the
 wings of honey-bees,
All palpitate with glee,
Till the happy harmony
Brings back each childish joy to you and me.

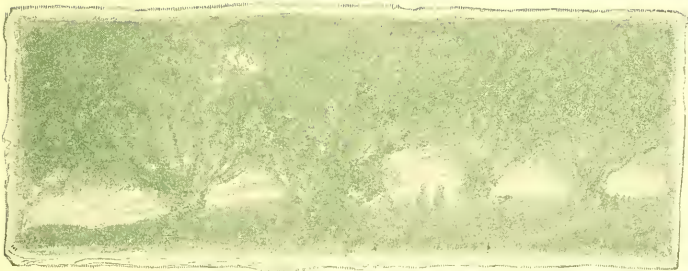
Let the eyes of fancy turn
Where the tumbled pippins burn
Like embers in the orchard's lap of tangled
 grass and fern,—
There let the old path wind
In and out and on behind
The cider-press that chuckles as we grind.

Blend in the song the moan
Of the dove that grieves alone,
And the wild whir of the locust, and the
 bumble's drowsy drone;
And the low of cows that call
Through the pasture-bars when all
The landscape fades away at evenfall.

A SONG OF LONG AGO

Then, far away and clear,
Through the dusky atmosphere,
Let the wailing of the killdee be the only
 sound we hear:
O sad and sweet and low
As the memory may know
Is the glad-pathetic song of Long Ago!





WHERE THE CHILDREN USED TO PLAY

THE old farm-home is Mother's yet and mine,
And filled it is with plenty and to spare,—
But we are lonely here in life's decline,
Though fortune smiles around us everywhere:
 We look across the gold
 Of the harvests, as of old —
The corn, the fragrant clover, and the hay;
 But most we turn our gaze,
 As with eyes of other days,
To the orchard where the children used to play.

*O from our life's full measure
And rich hoard of worldly treasure
We often turn our weary eyes away,
And hand in hand we wander
Down the old path winding yonder
To the orchard where the children used to play.*

Our sloping pasture-lands are filled with herds ;
The barn and granary-bins are bulging o'er :
The grove's a paradise of singing birds —
The woodland brook leaps laughing by the door ;
Yet lonely, lonely still,
Let us prosper as we will,
Our old hearts seem so empty everyway —
We can only through a mist
See the faces we have kissed
In the orchard where the children used to play.

*O from our life's full measure
And rich hoard of worldly treasure
We often turn our weary eyes away,
And hand in hand we wander
Down the old path winding yonder
To the orchard where the children used to play.*



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