

IN THE LIMELIGHT

JUDGE CLAYTON KNEW



Sometimes it comes in handy for a United States Judge to have been a member of congress. Judge Henry D. Clayton, who is on the circuit bench of Alabama, not long ago was trying a case in which the question of a man's handwriting was involved. Under the Alabama law it was always necessary to prove a person's handwriting, and the admission of one's writing by comparison could not be taken in evidence to prove the authenticity of a document introduced in evidence. The defendant sought to gain a point in his case by introducing a letter in the handwriting of one of the parties involved. Judge Clayton ruled that the writing was admissible.

Immediately the lawyer on the other side rose and suggested to the court that his long service in congress had probably made him rusty in the law; that handwriting could not be proved by comparison with writing admitted as authentic. Whereupon Judge Clayton calmly remarked that while he was in congress as chairman of the judiciary committee he had passed a law permitting proof of handwriting by just such a method, and he referred the contending lawyer to the paragraph and page of the Revised Statutes where the law could be found.

"Sometimes even a practicing lawyer gets rusty," observed the abashed attorney, as he sat down.

KENYON MADE THEM HUNGRY

Senator Kenyon stirred the senate to a high pitch of hunger the other day. He was talking about child labor. In the course of his talk he drew a picture of a farmer's boy sitting down to an old-fashioned country dinner.

The senator was contrasting the life of the factory boy and the farm boy. He said that while the farm boy worked in the fields, rested at noon by turning the grindstone, milked the cows and so on, still he went swimming and fishing, saw the circus, and had a pretty good time.

"I have a very distinct recollection that as a boy on a farm I had to pitch the bundles to the threshing machine," said he. "I used to think that was about the hardest work that could possibly be done in the world."

"But when you remember the farmer's dinner—the fried chicken and mashed potatoes, and gravy, and corn on the cob, and tomatoes, and the bread and the butter that melted in your mouth, and the apple pie with a piece of cheese—and then you could go out and lie under a tree—it was not so bad."

At this point there was a general rush to the luncheon and a chorus of orders for fried chicken.



MAYOR MITCHEL STUNG



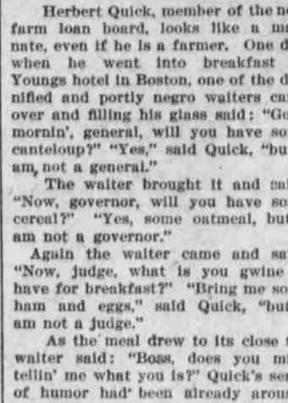
Mayor Mitchel, Police Commissioner Woods and a galaxy of other luminaries that sparkle in the New York city administration's firmament embarked on the police patrol boat at the Battery the other day and disembarked at Fort Wadsworth, on Staten Island. Their object was to inspect and review the 400 New York city policemen undergoing military training at that point, but the mayor was badly stung.

It fell out in this manner. The policemen, to do them nothing more than justice, drilled in a very able and very soldierly manner.

Hovering over the mayor's head was a yellow-jacket, who took in all these proceedings with a knowing eye.

The last notes of the police band had died away, the last straining policeman had recovered his equilibrium; it was at that moment the bee struck. A shock passed through the frame of the mayor, his face contorted into a horrified grimace, and he made a frantic pass at the back of his leg. He was too late. The khaki-clads were already leaving the field, and the yellow-jacket was gallantly covering their retreat. And even while he groaned inwardly, the police band suddenly broke into the rollicking notes of "Never Let the Same Bee Sting You Twice." And the mayor took the hint and left, too.

ADMIRAL HERBERT QUICK



Herbert Quick, member of the new farm loan board, looks like a magnum, even if he is a farmer. One day when he went into breakfast in Youngs hotel in Boston, one of the dignified and portly negro waiters came over and filling his glass said: "Good mornin', general, will you have some canteloup?" "Yes," said Quick, "but I am not a general."

The waiter brought it and said: "Now, governor, will you have some cereal?" "Yes, some oatmeal, but I am not a governor."

Again the waiter came and said: "Now, judge, what is you gwine to have for breakfast?" "Bring me some ham and eggs," said Quick, "but I am not a judge."

As the meal drew to its close the waiter said: "Boss, does you mind tellin' me what you is?" Quick's sense of humor had been already aroused and he said: "Why, no, I don't mind telling you I am the admiral of the Swiss navy." "For de Lord," said the negro. "I did not know Jes what you was, but I done know dat whatever you was you was de top of the heap."

His tip was scarcely less generous than the compliment.

Mr. Quick has been many things besides admiral of the Swiss navy. Having been born and reared on a farm in Iowa and having attended country schools, it was not unnatural that in later life he should become the editor of a farm journal; but he also has been a teacher, a practicing lawyer, manager of telephone companies, associate editor of a political weekly and mayor of Sioux City. In his spare time he has written a number of novels and numerous magazine articles, and he has been at times quite active in politics as a member of the Democratic party.

What a Real Poet is Really Like

Men who knew James Whitcomb Riley and his work intimately tell something about the great Hoosier who played upon the heartstrings of a nation with his songs of common folk and manners



RILEY'S LAST PUBLIC APPEARANCE

NOWADAYS a poetic genius doesn't look like one. On the street, you might guess him to be a business man or a lawyer or a preacher or a photographer. Not since the time of Edgar Allan Poe have real poets worn their hair long—as in the comic pictures—or affected the soulful expression. Nowadays when a man wears his hair like Spanish moss on a Florida oak he is suspected of being hard up. And if he exhibits what is supposed to be his soul by certain shifting and staring of his eyes he is pitied as one whose mental gearing has sand in it.

Bliss Carman, former editor of the Independent and a poet of note, was one of James Whitcomb Riley's closest friends. After the Indiana songster's death on July 23, Carman told about Riley to Mr. Joyce Kilmer of the New York Times Magazine and Mr. Kilmer in turn told it to the public.

Some 30 years ago Carman was introduced to the already famous Hoosier. Riley's keen bird-like eyes surveyed the tall frame of the new and young acquaintance: "Gosh, you're a staid, ain't ye?" he remarked, grinning. "I guess your parents must have trained you on a trellis."

Then, as reported by Mr. Kilmer, Carman went on to say:

"The next time I saw Riley was in Philadelphia. I went to read before the Browning society, and I don't mind telling you that I was scared to death. When I got out all alone on the stage and saw a thousand people staring up at me I felt more like running away than doing anything else. But when I saw Riley down in the audience, looking at me in his quaint, friendly way, then I felt all right. I wasn't afraid to read my poetry to Riley."

"After the reading was over Riley tucked me under his arm and said: 'Now, let's get around to the hotel and we'll take off our shoes and get a chew of tobacco and be comfortable.'

"You know, such remarks as this were all the more piquant because Riley was so very punctilious and scrupulous in all his personal habits. He always was immaculately dressed. I never knew him even to make so much of a concession to comfort as to put on a smoking jacket or a lounge coat. But he liked to go to his room and stretch himself on his bed and talk. And he never talked about anything but literature, chiefly poetry."

"Riley had a great fund of knowledge of poetry and knew lots of out-of-the-way homely verse. He delighted particularly in ridiculously bad newspaper verse."

"Riley liked to read poetry aloud. When I went to his house on an evening, he generally was waiting for me with some favorite book, ready to read aloud."

"What sort of poetry did he prefer?"

"His tastes covered a wide range. Two poets to whom he was especially devoted were Longfellow and Swinburne."

"Riley liked Longfellow's directness and simplicity. The things that pleased him in Swinburne's work were the music and the deft craftsmanship."

"After Riley had received his degrees from some of the colleges, he seemed to feel that he ought to be known as a poet, rather than as a humorist and writer of dialect verse. He tried hard to live up to the name of poet, and wanted his nonsense rhymes of his vagabondage forgotten. Yet his vernacular verse, or, as he called it, his dialect verse, was his chief contribution to literature."

"Riley was just a poet. That was all he ever cared to be. He was not interested in anything but poetry. He knew nothing of politics—he had not voted for 30 years. And as for philosophy, he had nothing but contempt for the modern thinkers."

"There was something very pathetic and charming about Riley's tenacity in holding the serious poet pose. His nonsense was just one of his ways of writing which happened to prove popular; when he got a chance to write in another way how eagerly he seized it, and how persistently he clung to it!

"His last years were the happiest of his life, I think. He had his own car and rode around Indianapolis and its suburbs every day, generally taking with him some friend. He was honored and loved, and I think he felt that life had been good to him."

"Riley's father was a lawyer. His grandfather came to Indiana from Pennsylvania. His grandmother on his mother's side was Pennsylvania Dutch. His father was Irish."

"Riley had many prejudices. He disliked Poe very much. He disliked Poe's character so much that he could hardly read his poetry. Of course, he must have liked Poe's music and splendid metrical effects."

"Of course, you know the story of Riley's famous imitation of Poe? He had taken a position on the staff of an Anderson, Ind., paper, and the editor of a rival paper kept ridiculing him. Riley

wanted to get even with him, so he wrote his imitation of Poe, and had it published in a paper in another part of the state with an elaborate story about the discovery of the manuscript.

"At once it made a great sensation all over the country. It made so great a sensation that Riley was terrified, and feared that he would be accused of literary forgery. Meanwhile the editor of the rival paper wrote: 'No doubt our young friend Riley will belittle this poem and say it is not the work of Poe. But it is Poe, and Poe's best manner.' The sensation grew to such proportions that Riley had to confess that he had written the poem. And then the editor of the paper discharged Riley because he had not published it in his paper."

"Then the Indianapolis Journal gave him a job, which he held for years. He wrote reams of nonsense verse, and wrote up in verse the shops of the merchants who advertised in the Journal."

"Riley's first book was called 'The Old Swamin' Hole and 'Leven More Poems.' He published it himself. It sold so well that it was soon taken over by a publisher, and passed through many editions."

"Riley's exquisite penmanship showed the care with which he wrote. Originally he wrote a careless and rather illegible script, but he had so much difficulty in getting the printers to read his writing, and printing his dialect verse correctly, that he took up the study of penmanship. He was careful always to get the dialect of one part of Indiana as distinct from the dialect of any other part."

"Any man's character," he said, "is best remembered, I suppose, by some of his habitual gestures and expressions. I remember Riley as very deliberate in his motions, especially in his last years. Smooth shaven, ruddy, well groomed, he looked like a benign old English bishop more than anything else."

Mr. Don Marquis of the New York Sun aptly considers Riley and his poetry from an entirely different angle.

"James Whitcomb Riley," says he, "was the companion of fairies in Arcady; for the Hoosier belongs to a race apart. And while some are captured and broken to trade, the gentle poet escaped and kept always the vision of hidden things."

With these prefatory remarks the writer goes on with his essay:

"There are two sorts of Indianan—the ordinary Indianan, who is not so very different from the Ohlean or the Illinoian, and the Hoosier."

"The Hoosier belong not merely to a race apart, but to a separate species. He is human, but with a difference; he is aware of the kinship between humanity and the so-called lower animals (and even the plants and streams) on the one side, and on the other side of the kinship of humanity with the elves."

"When the moon turns the mists to silver and the owls wail and the frogs wake up along the creeks and lakes and the fairies saddle and bridle the freckles and mount them and go whirling and flashing off in search of airy adventures the Hoosiers steal out of the farmhouses and hamlets and creep down to the bottom lands and dance and sin, and enwail under the summer stars. They do so secretly, dodging the mere humans, for secrecy is the essence of their midnight, whimsical revels."

"In the daytime they pretend they are just ordinary Indianans; their own brothers and mothers may not realize that they are Hoosiers. But in Indianan, as elsewhere, there is business and the need to attend to it. There must have been even in Arcady—somebody owned the flocks and herds of Arcady and turned them into butcher's meat and leather, and the shepherds only piped on the sufferance of their commercial-

minded masters. These Hoosiers, these wild bards and prancing, long-legged lovers of the moon, are often captured and broken and tamed to trade and industry by the more sordid citizenry. They are yoked to the handle end of the plow, chained to the desk; by the hundreds and thousands they become clerks and salesmen and railroad presidents and novelists and business men of all sorts."

"James Whitcomb Riley was a Hoosier who happily escaped; he was never captured, never enslaved; the things hidden from the rest of us, or revealed only in flashes, remembered but vaguely from the days of our own happy Hoosierdom, he continued to see steadily; he lived among them familiarly to the end, and until the end was their interpreter to us."

"Bud come here to your uncle a spell," says Riley in effect, and I'll show you not only a fairy, but a fairy who has for the moment chosen to be just as much of a Hoosier as the Raggedy Man, or Orphan Annie, or Old Kingy, or the folks at Griggsby Station."

"The critics and the learned doctors of literature are already debating as to whether Riley had imagination or only fancy. (It would be a terrible calamity to some of them if they said it was imagination and it was officially declared later to be merely fancy; that is the sort of mistake that damns a critic and makes the sons and grandsons of critics meek, harked, apologetic young men.) And doubtless the point is exceedingly important. For if a poet has imagination they say his work is significant. And if he has only fancy his work is not significant."

"The chief merit of Riley's dialect verse—which is the most popular part of his production and the part with which the critics chiefly concern themselves—is its effectiveness as a medium for character portrayal. Whimsical, lovable, homely, racy, quaint, salty, pathetic, humorous, tender are his dialect poems; essentially, he has shown us life as a superior writer of prose sketches might do, adding the charm of his lyricism."

"But, personally, we never like him so well as when he is writing sheer moonlight and music. Probably no poet who ever wrote English—certainly no American poet—got more luscious language than Riley. A sweetness that is not so sugary that it cloy, having always a winy tang. For instance, from 'The Flying Islands of the Night':

... in lost hours of lute and song,
When he was but a prince—I but a mouth
For him to lift up sippingly and drain
To his most ultimate of stammering sobs
And maudlin wanderings of blinded breath. . . ."

"There is no better evidence of the genuineness of Riley's sentiment, particularly in the dialect poems, than the discretion with which he touches the pathetic chord when he touches it at all. One of the most popular poems he ever wrote was 'Old-Fashioned Roses,' and one word too much, one pressure the least bit too insistent would have made the thing as offensive as a vaudeville ballad. The taste which told him to be simple and the sincerity which begat the taste save the verses from the reproach."

"His verses for children and about children could only have been written by a man whose love and understanding of children was real, for children are quick to detect and repudiate anything of the sort that is 'pumped up' for effect, and they contributed enormously to the general feeling of affection for him. The regard of the children was in a way a testimonial to his persisting youthfulness of spirit; he was still their playmate; perhaps it is an earnest of immortality, if immortality can be. Certainly love endures longer than anything else, and this man with the childlike sweetness in his soul goes from us loved as few men have been."