

LITERARY.

Poe says the true poem is the short poem, and that the poetic idea is best embodied in a few verses; maintaining that the sensation produced is from its very nature a transient one and cannot be sustained for long. A sort of ecstasy, as it were. He is consistent with his own idea, but we had been taught to believe that Homer and Dante and Milton and a few others knew how to write poetry. Perhaps we were laboring under an hallucination. Be that as it may, there are several American poets who can say some very beautiful things in a few lines, and James Whitcomb Riley is one of these. His poetry is certainly simple and perhaps that is why he reaches the hearts of so many.

We would recommend him to any one suffering from an over-indulgence in Byron. There is no cynicism in Riley's poetry, but peace and good will to all. He gave up sign-painting to write poetry, and although he probably did not regret the change he is just as much as ever in touch with the spirit of his old vocation. The man who does his duty patiently day by day, however humble it may be, has inspired more than one of his poems. And how he can express our own innermost, but perhaps inexpressible, thoughts about nature and some other things. It is very pleasant to have somebody say for you, as you would like to say it, what you always knew but could not put into words; what you had often observed, although perhaps half consciously. What are poets for if they cannot do this. A great mission is theirs, for shall they not instruct as well as please?

"If I knew what poets know,
I would find a theme
Sweeter than the placid flow
Of the fairest dream;
I would sing of love that lives
On the errors it forgives,
And the world would better grow
If I knew what poets know."

From a house so bleak, there came
a shriek,
The neighbors ran in hundreds there,
They saw, forsooth, a raving youth
With staring eyes and matted hair.

He gasped for breath, he fought with
death,
They crowded round to understand
But as he gasped, they saw he grasped
A college paper in his hand.

He pointed to, a head-line true
In letters black "Not to be Read,"
"Ye gods on high, if only I
Had read the heading first!" he said.

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