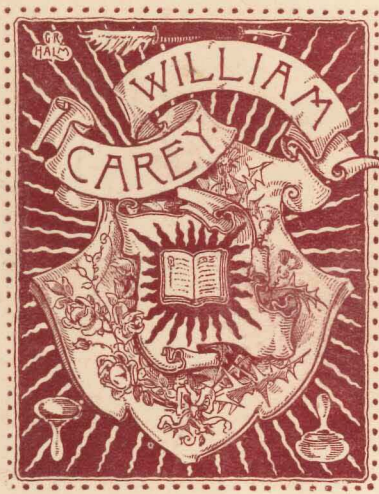




RUBÁIYÁT OF DOC SIFERS
BY JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

PUBLISHED BY THE CENTURY CO.



For —

William Carey, Esq.

with all hale greetings of his old Housier friend

— James Whitcomb Riley

New York, — Christmas of
1897

Doc, as I left him, said to me,
“If you’re a-goin’ to go
To New York certain-shore,” said he,
“Let William Carey know
That I have heard o’ him from you,
And — drat the grammar, Jim! —
Tell him I ’preciate him, too,
And much obliged to him.”



And, fore now, I've drapped in on him,
some Sunday mornin', say,
And found him—dressed and breched as trim
as fer some weddin'-day,—
And yit a-sittin' there, so wrapped
in readin', I declare,
I've turned away and never tappod—
jes left him sittin' there!

RUBÁIYÁT OF DOC SIFERS
BY JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

ILLUSTRATED
BY -
C. M. RELYEA



PUBLISHED BY THE CENTURY CO.
NEW YORK M DCCC XC VII



Chas. W. Rogers
Nashville, Ind.
July 15th
1897

*WE FOUND him in that Far-away that yet to us
seems near —
We vagrants of but yesterday when idlest youth
was here, —
When lightest song and laziest mirth possessed us
through and through,
And all the dreamy summer-earth seemed drugged
with morning dew :*

*When our ambition scarce had shot a stalk or
blade indeed :
Yours, — choked as in the garden-spot you still
deferred to "weed" :
Mine, — but a pipe half-cleared of pith — as now
it flats and whines .
In sympathetic cadence with a hiccough in the
lines.*

*Aye, even then — O timely hour ! — the High Gods
did confer
In our behalf : — And, clothed in power, lo, came
their Courier —
Not winged with flame nor shod with wind, —
but ambling down the pike,
Horseback, with saddlebags behind, and guise all
human-like.*

II

In radius o' fifteen mile'd, all p'int's o' compass round,
 No man er woman, chick er child, er team, on top o' ground,
 But knows *him*—yes, and got respects and likin' fer him, too,
 Fer all his so-to-speak dee-fects o' genius showin' through!

III

Some claims he 's absent-minded; some has said they wuz afeard
 To take his powders when he come and dosed 'em out, and 'peared
 To have his mind on somepin' else—like County Ditch, er some
 New way o' tannin' muskrat-pelts, er makin' butter come.—



Er maybe conjurin' up some plan
 to git the School Board all
 To meet, and 'pint some pore young man
 'At's 'plied to teach the Fall—
 And—Winter School; er leggin' fer
 some old man wants to take
 The census o' the County— er
 some job— fer the census—dat's!

Times *now*, at home, when Sifers' name comes
 up, I jes *let on*,
 You know, 'at I think Doc 's to *blame*, the
 way he 's bin and gone
 And disapp'inted folks—'Ll-*jee-mun-nee!* you 'd
 ort to then
 Jes hear my wife light into me—"ongratef-
 est o' men!"



And I tell you,— a man 'at's got
 the wife and mother too
 To fight for him, I've allus thought
 he's genuine, plum through!—
 Leastways I want no better sign
 o' what a man should be
 Than havin' women-folks o' mine
 a-praisin' him to me!

XVI

Dull times, Doc jes *mianders* round, in that old
rig o' his:
And hain't no tellin' where he 's bound ner
guessin' where he is;
He 'll drive, they tell, jes thataway fer maybe
six er eight
Days at a stretch; and neighbors say he 's
bin clean round the State.

XVII

He picked a' old tramp up, one trip, 'bout
eighty mile'd from here,
And fetched him home and k-yored his hip,
and kep' him 'bout a year;
And feller said—in all *his ja'nts* round this
terreschul ball
'At no man wuz a *circumstance* to Doc!—he
topped 'em all!—



Said, Doc jes owned all outo:doors
and walked the woods the same
As rich 'nd walk their poller=floors;
Knowned ever' shrub by name;
And, 'long the banks o' straight crick,
had straightest where you'd strike
A spring, hid under some old syc=
amore — instinctive links!

XLVII

Doc's Lib'ry — as he calls it, — well, they 's
 ha'f-a-dozen she'ves
 Jam-full o' books — I could n't tell *how* many
 — count yourse'ves!
One whole she'f's Works on Medicine! and
 most the rest 's about
 First Settlement, and Indians in here, — 'fore
 we driv 'em out. —

XLVIII

And Plutarch's Lives — and life also o' Dan'el
 Boone, and this-
 Here Mungo Park, and Adam Poe — jes all
 the *lives* they is!
 And Doc 's got all the *novels* out, — by Scott
 and Dickison
 And Cooper. — And, I make no doubt, he 's
 read 'em ever' one!



Doc'S Lib'ry
 And *Harry's Meditations* — 'tis
 another book Doc had —
 But *lost*. — He said "A curse forfits,
 when they was extra bad,
 Wuz jes to lean deprive yourself
 o' readin' that!" — Says he,
 "Wiz, that air book jes sagged the sh'ef
 with mortal misery!"

LXI

You ast Jake Dunn;—he 's worked it out in
figgers.— He kin show
Statistics how Doc 's airnt about *three* fortunes
 in a row,—
 Ever' ten-year' hand-runnin' straight—*three*
 of 'em—*thirty* year'
 'At Jake kin count and 'lucidate o' Sifers'
 practice here.

LXII

Yit—"Praise the Lord," says Doc, "we 've
 got our little home!" says he—
 "(It 's raily *Winniferd*'s, but what she owns,
 she sheers with me.)
 We' got our little gyarden-spot, and peach-
 and apple-trees,
 And stable, too, and chicken-lot, and eighteen
 hive' o' bees."



Path round that old back-porch o' Doc's—
 in shadder, like, and shine,—
 Them blazin', dazin' hollyhocks
 jes stuns these eyes o' mine—
 Tel, many of a time, I've went
 in there, as dazed and spozied
 And helpless with bewilderdment
 as I'd bin mesmerized!

He 's jes a *child*, 's what Sifers is! And-
sir, I 'd ruther see
That happy, childish face o' his, and puore
simplicity,
Than any shape er style er plan o' mortals
otherwise —
With perfect faith in God and man a-shinin'
in his eyes.



TAMÁM.

To set as
marked - down
I? as The Kind.
or

FINIS.

So Omar's Rubāiyāt ends,
and since I've stolen one
word only from him - for my
title - I want to steal just
this line one more for
tail-piece. Then I mean
to take "Doc's" advice. -

Doc says "Let Classic ages be - they're more for gods than men -
At least I've noticed you and me haint citizens o' them. -

"The Golden Age" 'at's dead and gone's a has-bin anyhow! . . .

"The Golden Age I'm bettin' on" 's The Golden Age o' NOW. "

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY, MS additional unpublished verses for *Rubáiyát of Doc Sifers* (New York: The Century Co., 1897).

[Through the generosity of the copyright holder, the poet's niece Miss Lesley Payne of Indianapolis, Indiana, Riley's MS additions to the Lewis copy of his *Rubáiyát*—further enriched by numerous additional pen-and-ink sketches provided by illustrator Charles M. Relyea—are printed here. All rights to further publication are reserved to Miss Payne and the Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., and it is understood that the copyright for Part One of *The Lewis Collection* does not extend to Riley's verses, which are being separately copyrighted by Miss Payne.]

Recto of second blank: For— | William Carey, Esq.— | With all
hale greetings of his old Hoosier friend | James Whitcomb Riley |
New York—Christmas of | 1897

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“Ef you're a-goin' to go
To New York certain-shore,” said he,
“Let William Carey know
That I have heerd o' *him* from *you*,
And—drat the *grammar*, Jim!—
Tell him I 'preciate him, too,
And much obleeged to him.”

Below frontispiece:

And, 'fore now, I've drapped in on him,
some Sund'y morning, say,

And found him—dressed and breshed as trim
as for some weddin'-day,—
And yit a-settin' there, so wrapped
in *readin'* I declare
I've turned away and never *tapped*—
jes left him settin' there!

Below page 3 illustration (to follow stanza 3):

Er maybe conjern' up some plan
to git the School Board all
To meet, and p'int some pore young man
'At's 'plied to teach the Fall-
And Winter School; er leggin' fer
some old man wants to take
The census o' the County—er
some job—fer heavens-sake!

Blank page [11] (to follow stanza 9):

And I tell *you*,—a man 'at's got
the wife and mother too
To fight fer him, I've allus thought
he's *gin u ine*, plum through!—
Leastways I want no better sign
o' what a man *should* be
Than havin' women-folks o' mine
a-praisin' him to me!

Below page 19 illustration (to follow stanza 18):

Said, Doc jes owned all out-o'-doors
and walked the woods the same
As rich 'ud walk their poller-floors;
knowed ever' shrub by name;
And, 'long the banks o' strangest crick,
led straightest where you'd strike
A *spring*, hid under some old syc-
amore—instinctive like!

Below page 51 illustration (to follow stanza 48):

And "Harvy's Meditations" it's
another book Doc *had*
But *lost*.—He said "A cuore fer fits,

when: they wuz extry bad,
Wuz jes to clean deprive yourse'f
o' readin' *that!*"—says he,
W'y, that-air book jes sagged the she'f
with mortal misery!"

Below page 65 illustration (to follow stanza 62):

Path round that old back-porch o' Doc's—
in shadder, like, and shine,—
Them blazin', dazin' hollyhocks
jes *stuns* these eyes o' mine—
Tel, many of a time, I've went
in there, as dazed and s'prised
And he'pless with bewilderment
as I'd bin mesmerized!

Tipped on to blank page [112] (the final stanza being number 105 on page 111) is a portion of a proofsheets on which Riley wrote in red ink in regard to TAMAM (page 111): To set as marked—same as *The End*, or *FINIS*. So *Omar's Rubáiyát* ends, and since I've stolen one word only from him—for my *title*—I want to steal just this lone one more for tail-piece. Then I mean to take "Doc's" advice.—

Doc says "Let Classic ages be—they're more fer *gods* than *men*—

At least I've noticed you and me hain't citizens o' *then*.—

'The Golden Age' 'ats dead and gone's a 'has bin' anyhow! . . .

The Golden Age I'm bettin' on's The Golden Age o' NOW."

Notes: 1. Except for the William Carey bookplate, provenance unknown.

2. Recto of half-title, in Relyea's hand: Illustrated by | Chas M. Relyea; verso of dedication has self-portrait signed Chas M. Relyea | Nashville, Ind. | July 15th | 1897.

3. For information on the publication of this volume see *Letters of James Whitcomb Riley*, ed. William Lyon Phelps (Indianapolis, 1930), pages 216–217. Other references to *Doc Sifers* are on 217–219.