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Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo  
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm  
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Maupassant Schiller  
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka  
Cotton Dostoyevsky Dostoyevsky Smith Willis  
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Henry Willis  
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Stockton Vatsyayana Crane  
Burroughs Verne  
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Vinci  
Homer Tolstoy Whitman Gogol Busch  
Darwin Thoreau Twain Plato Scott  
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott  
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Dickens Plato Scott  
Andersen London Descartes Cervantes Burton Hesse Harte  
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# **Green Fields and Running Brooks, and Other Poems**

James Whitcomb Riley

# Imprint

This book is part of TREDITION CLASSICS

Author: James Whitcomb Riley

Cover design: Buchgut, Berlin - Germany

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg - Germany

ISBN: 978-3-8424-7742-1

[www.tredition.com](http://www.tredition.com)

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**GREEN FIELDS AND RUNNING BROOKS**

**JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY**

**INDIANAPOLIS**

**THE BOBBS-MERRILL COMPANY**

**PUBLISHERS**

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## TO MY SISTERS

ELVA AND MARY

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## GREEN FIELDS AND RUNNING BROOKS

### GREEN FIELDS AND RUNNING BROOKS

𪛗 Ho! green fields and running brooks!  
𪛗 Knotted strings and fishing-hooks  
𪛗 Of the truant, stealing down  
𪛗 Weedy backways of the town.

𪛗 Where the sunshine overlooks,  
𪛗 By green fields and running brooks,  
𪛗 All intruding guests of chance  
𪛗 With a golden tolerance,

𪛗 Cooing doves, or pensive pair  
𪛗 Of picnickers, straying there –  
𪛗 By green fields and running brooks,  
𪛗 Sylvan shades and mossy nooks!

𪛗 And – O Dreamer of the Days,  
𪛗 Murmurer of roundelays  
𪛗 All unsung of words or books,  
𪛗 Sing green fields and running brooks!

## A COUNTRY PATHWAY.

賤 I come upon it suddenly, alone—  
賤賤 A little pathway winding in the weeds  
賤 That fringe the roadside; and with dreams my own,  
賤賤 I wander as it leads.

賤 Full wistfully along the slender way,  
賤賤 Through summer tan of freckled shade and shine,  
賤 I take the path that leads me as it may—  
賤賤 Its every choice is mine.

賤 A chipmunk, or a sudden-whirring quail,  
賤賤 Is startled by my step as on I fare—  
賤 A garter-snake across the dusty trail  
賤賤 Glances and—is not there.

賤 Above the arching jimson-weeds flare twos  
賤賤 And twos of sallow-yellow butterflies,  
賤 Like blooms of lorn primroses blowing loose  
賤賤 When autumn winds arise.

賤 The trail dips—dwindles—broadens then, and lifts  
賤賤 Itself astride a cross-road dubiously,  
賤 And, from the fennel marge beyond it, drifts  
賤賤 Still onward, beckoning me.

賤 And though it needs must lure me mile on mile  
賤賤 Out of the public highway, still I go,  
賤 My thoughts, far in advance in Indian-file,  
賤賤 Allure me even so.

賤 Why, I am as a long-lost boy that went  
賤賤 At dusk to bring the cattle to the bars,  
賤 And was not found again, though Heaven lent

賤 賤 His mother ail the stars

賤 With which to seek him through that awful night.  
賤 賤 O years of nights as vain! — Stars never rise  
賤 But well might miss their glitter in the light  
賤 賤 Of tears in mother-eyes!

賤 So — on, with quickened breaths, I follow still —  
賤 賤 My *avant-courier* must be obeyed!  
賤 Thus am I led, and thus the path, at will,  
賤 賤 Invites me to invade

賤 A meadow's precincts, where my daring guide  
賤 賤 Clambers the steps of an old-fashioned stile,  
賤 And stumbles down again, the other side,  
賤 賤 To gambol there awhile

賤 In pranks of hide-and-seek, as on ahead  
賤 賤 I see it running, while the clover-stalks  
賤 Shake rosy fists at me, as though they said —  
賤 賤 "You dog our country-walks

賤 And mutilate us with your walking-stick! —  
賤 賤 We will not suffer tamely what you do  
賤 And warn you at your peril, — for we'll sic  
賤 賤 Our bumble-bees on you!"

賤 But I smile back, in airy nonchalance, —  
賤 賤 The more determined on my wayward quest,  
賤 As some bright memory a moment dawns  
賤 賤 A morning in my breast —

賤 Sending a thrill that hurries me along  
賤 賤 In faulty similes of childish skips,

賸 Enthused with lithe contortions of a song  
賸 Performing on my lips.

賸 In wild meanderings o'er pasture wealth—  
賸 Erratic wanderings through dead'ning-lands,  
賸 Where sly old brambles, plucking me by stealth,  
賸 Put berries in my hands:

賸 Or, the path climbs a boulder—wades a slough—  
賸 Or, rollicking through buttercups and flags,  
賸 Goes gaily dancing o'er a deep bayou  
賸 On old tree-trunks and snags:

賸 Or, at the creek, leads o'er a limpid pool  
賸 Upon a bridge the stream itself has made,  
賸 With some Spring-freshet for the mighty tool  
賸 That its foundation laid.

賸 I pause a moment here to bend and muse,  
賸 With dreamy eyes, on my reflection, where  
賸 A boat-backed bug drifts on a helpless cruise,  
賸 Or wildly oars the air,

賸 As, dimly seen, the pirate of the brook—  
賸 The pike, whose jaunty hulk denotes his speed—  
賸 Swings pivoting about, with wary look  
賸 Of low and cunning greed.

賸 Till, filled with other thought, I turn again  
賸 To where the pathway enters in a realm  
賸 Of lordly woodland, under sovereign reign  
賸 Of towering oak and elm.

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.

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

    And crowns a long, declining stretch of space,  
    Where King Corn's armies lie with flags unfurled,  
    And where the valley's dint in Nature's face  
    Dimples a smiling world.

    And lo! through mists that may not be dispelled,  
    I see an old farm homestead, as in dreams,  
    Where, like a gem in costly setting held,  
    The old log cabin gleams.

\*\*\*\*\*

    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 to-day.

## ON THE BANKS O' DEER CRICK.

賸 On the banks o' Deer Crick! There's the place fer me! —  
賸 Worter slidin' past ye jes as clair as it kin be: —  
賸 See yer shadder in it, and the shadder o' the sky,  
賸 And the shadder o' the buzzard as he goes a-lazein' by;  
賸 Shadder o' the pizen-vines, and shadder o' the trees —  
賸 And I purt'-nigh said the shadder o' the sunshine and the breeze!  
賸 Well — I never seen the ocean ner I never seen the sea:  
賸 On the banks o' Deer Crick's grand enough fer me!

賸 On the banks o' Deer Crick — mild er two from town —  
賸 Long up where the mill-race comes a-loafin' down, —  
賸 Like to git up in there — 'mongst the sycamores —  
賸 And watch the worter at the dam, a-frothin' as she pours:  
賸 Crawl out on some old log, with my hook and line,  
賸 Where the fish is jes so thick you kin see 'em shine  
賸 As they flicker round yer bait, *coaxin'* you to jerk,  
賸 Tel yer tired ketchin' of 'em, mighty nigh, as *work!*

賸 On the banks o' Deer Crick! — Allus my delight  
賸 Jes to be around there — take it day er night! —  
賸 Watch the snipes and killdees foolin' half the day —  
賸 Er these-'ere little worter-bugs skootin' ever'way! —  
賸 Snakefeeders glancin' round, er dartin' out o' sight;  
賸 And dew-fall, and bullfrogs, and lightnin'-bugs at night —  
賸 Stars up through the tree-tops — er in the crick below, —  
賸 And smell o' mussrat through the dark clean from the old b'y-o!

賸 Er take a tromp, some Sund'y, say, 'way up to "Johnson's Hole,"  
賸 And find where he's had a fire, and hid his fishin' pole;  
賸 Have yer "dog-leg," with ye and yer pipe and "cut-and-dry" —  
賸 Pocketful o' corn-bred, and slug er two o' rye, —  
賸 Soak yer hide in sunshine and waller in the shade —  
賸 Like the Good Book tells us — "where there're none to make af-  
raid!"

賤 Well!—I never seen the ocean ner I never seen the sea—  
賤 On the banks o' Deer Crick's grand enough fer me!

## A DITTY OF NO TONE.

*Piped to the Spirit of John Keats.*

### I.

賤 Would that my lips might pour out in thy praise  
賤賤 A fitting melody—an air sublime,—  
賤 A song sun-washed and draped in dreamy haze—  
賤賤 The floss and velvet of luxurious rhyme:  
賤 A lay wrought of warm languors, and o'er-brimmed  
賤賤 With balminess, and fragrance of wild flowers  
賤賤賤 Such as the droning bee ne'er wearies of—  
賤賤賤 Such thoughts as might be hymned  
賤賤 To thee from this midsummer land of ours  
賤賤賤 Through shower and sunshine blent for very love.

### II.

賤 Deep silences in woody aisles wherethrough  
賤賤 Cool paths go loitering, and where the trill  
賤 Of best-remembered birds hath something new  
賤賤 In cadence for the hearing—lingering still  
賤 Through all the open day that lies beyond;  
賤賤 Reaches of pasture-lands, vine-wreathen oaks,  
賤賤賤 Majestic still in pathos of decay,—  
賤賤賤 The road—the wayside pond  
賤賤 Wherein the dragonfly an instant soaks  
賤賤賤 His filmy wing-tips ere he flits away.

### III.

    And I would pluck from out the dank, rich mould,  
    Thick-shaded from the sun of noon, the long  
    Lithe stalks of barley, topped with ruddy gold,  
    And braid them in the meshes of my song;  
    And with them I would tangle wheat and rye,  
    And wisps of greenest grass the katydid  
    Ere crept beneath the blades of, sulkily,  
    As harvest-hands went by;  
    And weave of all, as wildest fancy bid,  
    A crown of mingled song and bloom for thee.

### A WATER-COLOR.

    Low hidden in among the forest trees  
    An artist's tilted easel, ankle-deep  
    In tousled ferns and mosses, and in these  
    A fluffy water-spaniel, half asleep  
    Beside a sketch-book and a fallen hat —  
    A little wicker flask tossed into that.

    A sense of utter carelessness and grace  
    Of pure abandon in the slumb'rous scene, —  
    As if the June, all hoydenish of face,  
    Had romped herself to sleep there on the green,  
    And brink and sagging bridge and sliding stream  
    Were just romantic parcels of her dream.