



James Whitcomb Riley

by John Purcell

When I was a boy, swinging from
Trees in the yard of my childhood
Stomping ground, I dreamed of glory.
Now an old man in Lockerbie Square,
I just want my whiskey in silence.
Damn poems about sunshine and boyhood
Have made me a rich old bastard, but
How can I get back to some time that
Isn't just a dream held inside a bottle?
My friends read my poetry and pat my
Backside like a dog—they love me
In public but kick me in private.
And I could tell you stories, just
As well as my good Mr. Twain, who's
Held me up at many banquet and
Speaking engagement, that would
Make you laugh just like you
Just had a few—God, if only a man's
Money could buy him his youth,
I'd be somewhere now where
I could have release from my
Prisons I built with poems
About something lost forever.