

**Classic Poetry Series**

**John Clare**  
**- poems -**

**Publication Date:**

2012

**Publisher:**

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

# John Clare(13 July 1793 – 20 May 1864)

John Clare was an English poet, the son of a farm labourer, who came to be known for his celebratory representations of the English countryside and his lamentation of its disruption. His poetry underwent a major re-evaluation in the late 20th century and he is often now considered to be among the most important 19th-century poets. His biographer Jonathan Bate states that Clare was "the greatest labouring-class poet that England has ever produced. No one has ever written more powerfully of nature, of a rural childhood, and of the alienated and unstable self".

## <b>Life</b>

### <b>Early Life</b>

Clare was born in Helpston, six miles to the north of the city of Peterborough. In his life time, the village was in the Soke of Peterborough in Northamptonshire and his memorial calls him "The Northamptonshire Peasant Poet". Helpston now lies in the Peterborough unitary authority of Cambridgeshire.

He became an agricultural labourer while still a child; however, he attended school in Glinton church until he was twelve. In his early adult years, Clare became a pot-boy in the Blue Bell public house and fell in love with Mary Joyce; but her father, a prosperous farmer, forbade her to meet him. Subsequently he was a gardener at Burghley House. He enlisted in the militia, tried camp life with Gypsies, and worked in Pickworth as a lime burner in 1817. In the following year he was obliged to accept parish relief. Malnutrition stemming from childhood may be the main culprit behind his 5-foot stature and may have contributed to his poor physical health in later life.

### <b>Early poems</b>

Clare had bought a copy of Thomson's Seasons and began to write poems and sonnets. In an attempt to hold off his parents' eviction from their home, Clare offered his poems to a local bookseller named Edward Drury. Drury sent Clare's poetry to his cousin John Taylor of the publishing firm of Taylor & Hessey, who had published the work of John Keats. Taylor published Clare's Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery in 1820. This book was highly praised, and in the next year his Village Minstrel and other Poems were published.

### <b>Midlife</b>

He had married Martha ("Patty") Turner in 1820. An annuity of 15 guineas from the Marquess of Exeter, in whose service he had been, was supplemented by subscription, so that Clare became possessed of £45 annually, a sum far beyond what he had ever earned. Soon, however, his income became insufficient, and in 1823 he was nearly penniless. The Shepherd's Calendar (1827) met with little success, which was not increased by his hawking it himself. As he worked again in the fields his health temporarily improved; but he soon became seriously ill. Earl FitzWilliam presented him with a new cottage and a piece of ground, but Clare could not settle in his new home.

Clare was constantly torn between the two worlds of literary London and his often illiterate neighbours; between the need to write poetry and the need for money to feed and clothe his children. His health began to suffer, and he had bouts of severe depression, which became worse after his sixth child was born in 1830 and as his poetry sold less well. In 1832, his friends and his London patrons clubbed together to move the family to a larger cottage with a smallholding in the village of Northborough, not far from Helpston. However, he felt only more alienated.

His last work, the Rural Muse (1835), was noticed favourably by Christopher North and other reviewers, but this was not enough to support his wife and seven children. Clare's mental health began to worsen. As his alcohol consumption steadily increased along with his dissatisfaction with his own identity, Clare's behaviour became more erratic. A notable instance of this behaviour was demonstrated in his interruption of a performance of The Merchant of Venice, in which Clare verbally assaulted Shylock. He was becoming a burden to Patty and his family, and in July 1837, on the recommendation of his publishing friend, John Taylor, Clare went of his own volition (accompanied by a friend of Taylor's) to Dr Matthew Allen's private asylum High Beach near Loughton, in Epping Forest. Taylor had assured Clare that he would receive the best medical care.

### <b>Later life and death</b>

During his first few asylum years in Essex (1837–1841), Clare re-wrote famous poems and sonnets by <a href="http://www.poemhunter.com/george-gordon-lord-byron/">Lord Byron</a>. His own version of Child Harold became a lament for past lost love, and Don Juan, A Poem became an acerbic, misogynistic, sexualised rant redolent of an aging Regency dandy. Clare also took credit for Shakespeare's plays, claiming to be the Renaissance genius himself. "I'm John Clare now," the poet claimed to a newspaper editor, "I was Byron and

Shakespeare formerly."

In 1841, Clare left the asylum in Essex, to walk home, believing that he was to meet his first love Mary Joyce; Clare was convinced that he was married with children to her and Martha as well. He did not believe her family when they told him she had died accidentally three years earlier in a house fire. He remained free, mostly at home in Northborough, for the five months following, but eventually Patty called the doctors in. Between Christmas and New Year in 1841, Clare was committed to the Northampton General Lunatic Asylum (now St Andrew's Hospital). Upon Clare's arrival at the asylum, the accompanying doctor, Fenwick Skrimshire, who had treated Clare since 1820, completed the admission papers. To the enquiry "Was the insanity preceded by any severe or long-continued mental emotion or exertion?", Dr Skrimshire entered: "After years of poetical prosing." He remained here for the rest of his life under the humane regime of Dr Thomas Octavius Prichard, encouraged and helped to write. Here he wrote possibly his most famous poem, I Am.

He died on 20 May 1864, in his 71st year. His remains were returned to Helpston for burial in St Botolph's churchyard. Today, children at the John Clare School, Helpston's primary, parade through the village and place their 'midsummer cushions' around Clare's gravestone (which has the inscriptions "To the Memory of John Clare The Northamptonshire Peasant Poet" and "A Poet is Born not Made") on his birthday, in honour of their most famous resident. The thatched cottage where he was born was bought by the John Clare Education & Environment Trust in 2005 and is restoring the cottage to its 18th century state.

<b>Poetry</b>

In his time, Clare was commonly known as "the Northamptonshire Peasant Poet". Since his formal education was brief, Clare resisted the use of the increasingly standardised English grammar and orthography in his poetry and prose. Many of his poems would come to incorporate terms used locally in his Northamptonshire dialect, such as 'pooty' (snail), 'lady-cow' (ladybird), 'crizzle' (to crisp) and 'throstle' (song thrush).

In his early life he struggled to find a place for his poetry in the changing literary fashions of the day. He also felt that he did not belong with other peasants. Clare once wrote;

"I live here among the ignorant like a lost man in fact like one whom the rest seemes careless of having anything to do with—they hardly dare talk in my company for fear I should mention them in my writings and I find more pleasure

in wandering the fields than in musing among my silent neighbours who are insensible to everything but toiling and talking of it and that to no purpose."

It is common to see an absence of punctuation in many of Clare's original writings, although many publishers felt the need to remedy this practice in the majority of his work. Clare argued with his editors about how it should be presented to the public.

Clare grew up during a period of massive changes in both town and countryside as the Industrial Revolution swept Europe. Many former agricultural workers, including children, moved away from the countryside to over-crowded cities, following factory work. The Agricultural Revolution saw pastures ploughed up, trees and hedges uprooted, the fens drained and the common land enclosed. This destruction of a centuries-old way of life distressed Clare deeply. His political and social views were predominantly conservative ("I am as far as my politics reaches 'King and Country'—no Innovations in Religion and Government say I."). He refused even to complain about the subordinate position to which English society relegated him, swearing that "with the old dish that was served to my forefathers I am content."

His early work delights both in nature and the cycle of the rural year. Poems such as Winter Evening, Haymaking and Wood Pictures in Summer celebrate the beauty of the world and the certainties of rural life, where animals must be fed and crops harvested. Poems such as Little Trotty Wagtail show his sharp observation of wildlife, though The Badger shows his lack of sentiment about the place of animals in the countryside. At this time, he often used poetic forms such as the sonnet and the rhyming couplet. His later poetry tends to be more meditative and use forms similar to the folks songs and ballads of his youth. An example of this is Evening.

His knowledge of the natural world went far beyond that of the major Romantic poets. However, poems such as I Am show a metaphysical depth on a par with his contemporary poets and many of his pre-asylum poems deal with intricate play on the nature of linguistics. His 'bird's nest poems', it can be argued, illustrate the self-awareness, and obsession with the creative process that captivated the romantics. Clare was the most influential poet, aside from [William Wordsworth](http://www.poemhunter.com/william-wordsworth/) to practice in an older style.

**Revival of interest in the twentieth century**

Clare was relatively forgotten during the later nineteenth century, but interest in

his work was revived by [Arthur Symons](http://www.poemhunter.com/arthur-symons/) in 1908, Edmund Blunden in 1920 and John and Anne Tibble in their ground-breaking 1935 2-volume edition. Benjamin Britten set some of 'May' from A Shepherd's Calendar in his Spring Symphony of 1948, and included a setting of The Evening Primrose in his Five Flower Songs

Copyright to much of his work has been claimed since 1965 by the editor of the Complete Poetry (OUP, 9 vols., 1984–2003), Professor Eric Robinson though these claims were contested. Recent publishers have refused to acknowledge the claim (especially in recent editions from Faber and Carcanet) and it seems the copyright is now defunct.

The John Clare Trust purchased Clare Cottage in Helpston in 2005, preserving it for future generations. In May 2007 the Trust gained £1.27m of funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and commissioned Jefferson Sheard Architects to create the new landscape design and Visitor Centre, including a cafe, shop and exhibition space. The Cottage has been restored using traditional building methods and opened to the public. The largest collection of original Clare manuscripts are housed at Peterborough Museum, where they are available to view by appointment.

Since 1993, the John Clare Society of North America has organised an annual session of scholarly papers concerning John Clare at the annual Convention of the Modern Language Association of America.

## A Vision

I lost the love of heaven above,  
I spurned the lust of earth below,  
I felt the sweets of fancied love  
And hell itself my only foe.

I lost earth's joys but felt the glow  
Of heaven's flame abound in me  
Till loveliness and I did grow  
The bard of immortality.

I loved but woman fell away  
I hid me from her faded fame,  
I snatched the sun's eternal ray  
And wrote till earth was but a name

In every language upon earth,  
On every shore, o'er every sea,  
I give my name immortal birth  
And kept my spirit with the free.

John Clare

# A World For Love

Oh, the world is all too rude for thee, with much ado and care;  
Oh, this world is but a rude world, and hurts a thing so fair;  
Was there a nook in which the world had never been to sear,  
That place would prove a paradise when thou and Love were near.

And there to pluck the blackberry, and there to reach the sloe,  
How joyously and happily would Love thy partner go;  
Then rest when weary on a bank, where not a grassy blade  
Had eer been bent by Trouble's feet, and Love thy pillow made.

For Summer would be ever green, though sloes were in their prime,  
And Winter smile his frowns to Spring, in beauty's happy clime;  
And months would come, and months would go, and all in sunny mood,  
And everything inspired by thee grow beautifully good.

And there to make a cot unknown to any care and pain,  
And there to shut the door alone on singing wind and rain--  
Far, far away from all the world, more rude than rain or wind,  
Oh, who could wish a sweeter home, or better place to find?

Than thus to love and live with thee, thou beautiful delight!  
Than thus to live and love with thee the summer day and night!  
The Earth itself, where thou hadst rest, would surely smile to see  
Herself grow Eden once again, possest of Love and thee

John Clare



# All Nature Has A Feeling

All nature has a feeling: woods, fields, brooks  
Are life eternal: and in silence they  
Speak happiness beyond the reach of books;  
There's nothing mortal in them; their decay  
Is the green life of change; to pass away  
And come again in blooms revived.  
Its birth was heaven, eternal its stay,  
And with the sun and moon shall still abide  
Beneath their day and night and heaven wide.

John Clare

# An Invite, To Eternity

Wilt thou go with me, sweet maid,  
Say, maiden, wilt thou go with me  
Through the valley-depths of shade,  
Of night and dark obscurity;  
Where the path has lost its way,  
Where the sun forgets the day,  
Where there's nor life nor light to see,  
Sweet maiden, wilt thou go with me!

Where stones will turn to flooding streams,  
Where plains will rise like ocean waves,  
Where life will fade like visioned dreams  
And mountains darken into caves,  
Say, maiden, wilt thou go with me  
Through this sad non-identity,  
Where parents live and are forgot,  
And sisters live and know us not!

Say, maiden; wilt thou go with me  
In this strange death of life to be,  
To live in death and be the same,  
Without this life or home or name,  
At once to be and not to be -  
That was and is not -yet to see  
Things pass like shadows, and the sky  
Above, below, around us lie?

John Clare

# Approaching Night

O take this world away from me;  
Its strife I cannot bear to see,  
Its very praises hurt me more  
Than e'en its coldness did before,  
Its hollow ways torment me now  
And start a cold sweat on my brow,  
Its noise I cannot bear to hear,  
Its joy is trouble to my ear,  
Its ways I cannot bear to see,  
Its crowds are solitudes to me.  
O, how I long to be agen  
That poor and independent man,  
With labour's lot from morn to night  
And books to read at candle light;  
That followed labour in the field  
From light to dark when toil could yield  
Real happiness with little gain,  
Rich thoughtless health unknown to pain:  
Though, leaning on my spade to rest,  
I've thought how richer folks were blest  
And knew not quiet was the best.

Go with your tauntings, go;  
Neer think to hurt me so;  
I'll scoff at your disdain.  
Cold though the winter blow,  
When hills are free from snow  
It will be spring again.

So go, and fare thee well,  
Nor think ye'll have to tell  
Of wounded hearts from me,  
Locked up in your hearts cell.  
Mine still at home doth dwell  
In its first liberty.

Bees sip not at one flower,  
Spring comes not with one shower,  
Nor shines the sun alone

Upon one favoured hour,  
But with unstinted power  
Makes every day his own.

And for my freedom's sake  
With such I'll pattern take,  
And rove and revel on.  
Your gall shall never make  
Me honied paths forsake;  
So prythee get thee gone.

And when my toil is blest  
And I find a maid possest  
Of truth that's not in thee,  
Like bird that finds its nest  
I'll stop and take my rest;  
And love as she loves me.

John Clare

# Autumn

The thistledown's flying, though the winds are all still,  
On the green grass now lying, now mounting the hill,  
The spring from the fountain now boils like a pot;  
Through stones past the counting it bubbles red-hot.

The ground parched and cracked is like overbaked bread,  
The greensward all wracked is, bents dried up and dead.  
The fallow fields glitter like water indeed,  
And gossamers twitter, flung from weed unto weed.

Hill-tops like hot iron glitter bright in the sun,  
And the rivers we're eying burn to gold as they run;  
Burning hot is the ground, liquid gold is the air;  
Whoever looks round sees Eternity there.

John Clare

# Autumn Birds

The wild duck startles like a sudden thought,  
And heron slow as if it might be caught.  
The flopping crows on weary wings go by  
And grey beard jackdaws noising as they fly.  
The crowds of starnels whizz and hurry by,  
And darken like a clod the evening sky.  
The larks like thunder rise and suthy round,  
Then drop and nestle in the stubble ground.  
The wild swan hurries hight and noises loud  
With white neck peering to the evening cloud.  
The weary rooks to distant woods are gone.  
With lengths of tail the magpie winnows on  
To neighbouring tree, and leaves the distant crow  
While small birds nestle in the edge below.

John Clare

# Badger

The badger grunting on his woodland track  
With shaggy hide and sharp nose scrowed with black  
Roots in the bushes and the woods, and makes  
A great high burrow in the ferns and brakes.  
With nose on ground he runs an awkward pace,  
And anything will beat him in the race.  
The shepherd's dog will run him to his den  
Followed and hooted by the dogs and men.  
The woodman when the hunting comes about  
Goes round at night to stop the foxes out  
And hurrying through the bushes to the chin  
Breaks the old holes, and tumbles headlong in.  
When midnight comes a host of dogs and men  
Go out and track the badger to his den,  
And put a sack within the hole, and lie  
Till the old grunting badger passes bye.  
He comes and hears—they let the strongest loose.  
The old fox hears the noise and drops the goose.  
The poacher shoots and hurries from the cry,  
And the old hare half wounded buzzes bye.  
They get a forked stick to bear him down  
And clap the dogs and take him to the town,  
And bait him all the day with many dogs,  
And laugh and shout and fright the scampering hogs.  
He runs along and bites at all he meets:  
They shout and hollo down the noisy streets.  
He turns about to face the loud uproar  
And drives the rebels to their very door.  
The frequent stone is hurled where e'er they go;  
When badgers fight, then every one's a foe.  
The dogs are clapt and urged to join the fray;  
The badger turns and drives them all away.  
Though scarcely half as big, demure and small,  
He fights with dogs for bones and beats them all.  
The heavy mastiff, savage in the fray,  
Lies down and licks his feet and turns away.  
The bulldog knows his match and waxes cold,  
The badger grins and never leaves his hold.  
He drives the crowd and follows at their heels

And bites them through—the drunkard swears and reels.  
The frightened women take the boys away,  
The blackguard laughs and hurries on the fray.  
He tries to reach the woods, an awkward race,  
But sticks and cudgels quickly stop the chase.  
He turns again and drives the noisy crowd  
And beats the many dogs in noises loud.  
He drives away and beats them every one,  
And then they loose them all and set them on.  
He falls as dead and kicked by boys and men,  
Then starts and grins and drives the crowd again;  
Till kicked and torn and beaten out he lies  
And leaves his hold and cackles, groans, and dies.  
Some keep a baited badger tame as hog  
And tame him till he follows like the dog.  
They urge him on like dogs and show fair play.  
He beats and scarcely wounded goes away.  
Lapt up as if asleep, he scorns to fly  
And seizes any dog that ventures nigh.  
Clapt like a dog, he never bites the men  
But worries dogs and hurries to his den.  
They let him out and turn a harrow down  
And there he fights the host of all the town.  
He licks the patting hand, and tries to play  
And never tries to bite or run away,  
And runs away from the noise in hollow trees  
Burnt by the boys to get a swarm of bees.

John Clare



# Ballad

A faithless shepherd courted me,  
He stole away my liberty.  
When my poor heart was strange to men,  
He came and smiled and stole it then.

When my apron would hang low,  
Me he sought through frost and snow.  
When it puckered up with shame,  
And I sought him, he never came.

When summer brought no fears to fright,  
He came to guard me every night.  
When winter nights did darkly prove,  
None came to guard me or to love.

I wish, I wish, but all in vain,  
I wish I was a maid again.  
A maid again I cannot be,  
O when will green grass cover me?

John Clare

# Bantry Bay

On the eighteenth of October we lay in Bantry Bay,  
All ready to set sail, with a fresh and steady gale:  
A fortnight and nine days we in the harbour lay,  
And no breeze ever reached us or strained a single sail.  
Three ships of war had we, and the great guns loaded all;  
But our ships were dead and beaten that had never feared a foe.  
The winds becalmed around us cared for no cannon ball;  
They locked us in the harbour and would not let us go.

On the nineteenth of October, by eleven of the clock,  
The sky turned black as midnight and a sudden storm came on--  
Awful and sudden--and the cables felt the shock;  
Our anchors they all broke away and every sheet was gone.  
The guns fired off amid the strife, but little hope had we;  
The billows broke above the ship and left us all below.  
The crew with one consent cried 'Bear further out to sea,'  
But the waves obeyed no sailor's call, and we knew not where to go.

She foundered on a rock, while we clambered up the shrouds,  
And staggered like a mountain drunk, wedged in the waves almost.  
The red hot boiling billows foamed in the stooping clouds,  
And in that fatal tempest the whole ship's crew were lost.  
Have pity for poor mariners, ye landsmen, in a storm.  
O think what they endure at sea while safe at home you stay.  
All ye that sleep on beds at night in houses dry and warm,  
O think upon the whole ship's crew, all lost at Bantry Bay.

John Clare

## Birds In Alarm

The firetail tells the boys when nests are nigh  
And tweets and flies from every passer-bye.  
The yellowhammer never makes a noise  
But flies in silence from the noisy boys;  
The boys will come and take them every day,  
And still she lays as none were ta'en away.

The nightingale keeps tweeting-churring round  
But leaves in silence when the nest is found.  
The pewit hollos 'chewrit' as she flies  
And flops about the shepherd where he lies;  
But when her nest is found she stops her song  
And cocks [her] coppled crown and runs along.  
Wrens cock their tails and chitter loud and play,  
And robins hollo 'tut' and fly away.

John Clare

# Bonny Lassie O!

O the evening's for the fair, bonny lassie O!  
To meet the cooler air and walk an angel there,  
With the dark dishevelled hair,  
Bonny lassie O!

The bloom's on the brere, bonny lassie O!  
Oak apples on the tree; and wilt thou gang to see  
The shed I've made for thee,  
Bonny lassie O!

Tis agen the running brook, bonny lassie O!  
In a grassy nook hard by, with a little patch of sky,  
And a bush to keep us dry,  
Bonny lassie O!

There's the daisy all the year, bonny lassie O!  
There's the king-cup bright as gold, and the speedwell never cold,  
And the arum leaves unrolled,  
Bonny lassie O!

O meet me at the shed, bonny lassie O!  
With a woodbine peeping in, and the roses like thy skin  
Blushing, thy praise to win,  
Bonny lassie O!

I will meet thee there at e'en, bonny lassie O!  
When the bee sips in the bean, and grey willow branches lean,  
And the moonbeam looks between,  
Bonny lassie O!

John Clare

# Bonny Mary O!

The morning opens fine, bonny Mary O!  
The robin sings his song by the dairy O!  
Where the little Jenny wrens cock their tails among the hens,  
Singing morning's happy songs with Mary O!

The swallow's on the wing, bonny Mary O!  
Where the rushes fringe the spring, bonny Mary O!  
Where the cowslips do unfold, shaking tassels all of gold,  
Which make the milk so sweet, bonny Mary O!

There's the yellowhammer's nest, bonny Mary O!  
Where she hides her golden breast, bonny Mary O!  
On her mystic eggs she dwells, with strange writing on their shells,  
Hid in the mossy grass, bonny Mary O!

There the spotted cow gets food, bonny Mary O!  
And chews her peaceful cud, bonny Mary O!  
In the mole-hills and the bushes, and the clear brook fringed with rushes  
To fill the evening pail, bonny Mary O!

The cowpond once agen, bonny Mary O!  
Lies dimpled like thy sen, bonny Mary O!  
Where the gnat swarms fall and rise under evening's mellow skies,  
And on flags sleep dragon flies, bonny Mary O!

And I will meet thee there, bonny Mary O!  
When a-milking you repair, bonny Mary O!  
And I'll kiss thee on the grass, my buxom, bonny lass,  
And be thine own for aye, bonny Mary O!

John Clare

# Braggart

With careful step to keep his balance up  
He reels on warily along the street,  
Slabbering at mouth and with a staggering stoop  
Mutters an angry look at all he meets.  
Bumptious and vain and proud he shoulders up  
And would be something if he knew but how;  
To any man on earth he will not stoop  
But cracks of work, of horses and of plough.  
Proud of the foolish talk, the ale he quaffs,  
He never heeds the insult loud that laughs:  
With rosy maid he tries to joke and play,--  
Who shrugs and nettles deep his pomp and pride.  
And calls him 'drunken beast' and runs away--  
King to himself and fool to all beside.

John Clare

# Christmas

Christmas is come and every hearth  
Makes room to give him welcome now  
E'en want will dry its tears in mirth  
And crown him wi' a holly bough  
Tho tramping 'neath a winters sky  
O'er snow track paths and rhymey stiles  
The huswife sets her spinning bye  
And bids him welcome wi' her smiles  
Each house is swept the day before  
And windows stuck wi' evergreens  
The snow is beesom'd from the door  
And comfort crowns the cottage scenes  
Gilt holly wi' its thorny pricks  
And yew and box wi' berrys small  
These deck the unus'd candlesticks  
And pictures hanging by the wall

Neighbours resume their anual cheer  
Wishing wi smiles and spirits high  
Clad christmass and a happy year  
To every morning passer bye  
Milk maids their christmass journeys go  
Accompanyd wi favourd swain  
And childern pace the crumping snow  
To taste their grannys cake again

Hung wi the ivys veining bough  
The ash trees round the cottage farm  
Are often stript of branches now  
The cotters christmass hearth to warm  
He swings and twists his hazel band  
And lops them off wi sharpend hook  
And oft brings ivy in his hand  
To decorate the chimney nook

Old winter whipes his ides bye  
And warms his fingers till he smiles  
Where cottage hearths are blazing high  
And labour resteth from his toils

Wi merry mirth beguiling care  
Old customs keeping wi the day  
Friends meet their christmass cheer to share  
And pass it in a harmless way

Old customs O I love the sound  
However simple they may be  
What ere wi time has sanction found  
Is welcome and is dear to me  
Pride grows above simplicity  
And spurns it from her haughty mind  
And soon the poets song will be  
The only refuge they can find

The shepherd now no more afraid  
Since custom doth the chance bestow  
Starts up to kiss the giggling maid  
Beneath the branch of mizzletoe  
That neath each cottage beam is seen  
Wi pearl-like-berrys shining gay  
The shadow still of what hath been  
Which fashion yearly fades away

And singers too a merry throng  
At early morn wi simple skill  
Yet imitate the angels song  
And chant their christmass ditty still  
And mid the storm that dies and swells  
By fits-in humings softly steals  
The music of the village bells  
Ringing round their merry peals

And when its past a merry crew  
Bedeckt in masks and ribbons gay  
The 'Morrice danse' their sports renew  
And act their winter evening play  
The clown-turnd-kings for penny praise  
Storm wi the actors strut and swell  
And harlequin a laugh to raise  
Wears his hump back and tinkling bell

And oft for pence and spicy ale



Wi winter nosgays pind before  
The wassail singer tells her tale  
And drawls her christmass carols oer  
The prentice boy wi ruddy face  
And ryhme bepowderd dancing locks  
From door to door wi happy pace  
Runs round to claim his 'christmass box'

The block behind the fire is put  
To sanction customs old desires  
And many a faggots bands are cut  
For the old farmers christmass fires  
Where loud tongd gladness joins the throng  
And winter meets the warmth of may  
Feeling by times the heat too strong  
And rubs his shins and draws away

While snows the window panes bedim  
The fire curls up a sunny charm  
Where creaming oer the pitchers rim  
The flowering ale is set to warm  
Mirth full of joy as summer bees  
Sits there its pleasures to impart  
While childern tween their parents knees  
Sing scraps of carrols oer by heart

And some to view the winter weathers  
Climb up the window seat wi glee  
Likening the snow to falling feathers  
In fancys infant extacy  
Laughing wi superstitious love  
Oer visions wild that youth supplyes  
Of people pulling geese above  
And keeping christmass in the skyes

As tho the homstead trees were drest  
In lieu of snow wi dancing leaves  
As. tho the sundryd martins nest  
Instead of ides hung the eaves  
The childern hail the happy day  
As if the snow was april grass  
And pleasd as neath the warmth of may

Sport oer the water froze to glass

Thou day of happy sound and mirth  
That long wi childish memory stays  
How blest around the cottage hearth  
I met thee in my boyish days  
Harping wi raptures dreaming joys  
On presents that thy coming found  
The welcome sight of little toys  
The christmass gifts of comers round

'The wooden horse wi arching head  
Drawn upon wheels around the room  
The gilded coach of ginger bread  
And many colord sugar plumb  
Gilt coverd books for pictures sought  
Or storys childhood loves to tell  
Wi many a urgent promise bought  
To get tomorrows lesson well

And many a thing a minutes sport  
Left broken on the sanded floor  
When we woud leave our play and court  
Our parents promises for more  
Tho manhood bids such raptures dye  
And throws such toys away as vain  
Yet memory loves to turn her eye  
And talk such pleasures oer again

Around the glowing hearth at night  
The harmless laugh and winter tale  
Goes round-while parting friends delight  
To toast each other oer their ale  
The cotter oft wi quiet zeal  
Will musing oer his bible lean  
While in the dark the lovers steal  
To kiss and toy behind the screen

The yule cake dotted thick wi plumbs  
Is on each supper table found  
And cats look up for falling crumbs  
Which greedy childern litter round

And huswifes sage stuffd seasond chine  
Long hung in chimney nook to drye  
And boiling eldern berry wine  
To drink the christmas eves 'good bye'

John Clare

# Christmass

Christmass is come and every hearth  
Makes room to give him welcome now  
Een want will dry its tears in mirth  
And crown him wi a holly bough  
Tho tramping neath a winters sky  
Oer snow track paths and ryhmey stiles  
The huswife sets her spinning bye  
And bids him welcome wi her smiles  
Each house is swept the day before  
And windows stuck wi evergreens  
The snow is beesomd from the door  
And comfort crowns the cottage scenes  
Gilt holly wi its thorny pricks  
And yew and box wi berrys small  
These deck the unusd candlesticks  
And pictures hanging by the wall

Neighbours resume their anual cheer  
Wishing wi smiles and spirits high  
Clad christmass and a happy year  
To every morning passer bye  
Milk maids their christmass journeys go  
Accompanyd wi favourd swain  
And childern pace the crumping snow  
To taste their grannys cake again

Hung wi the ivys veining bough  
The ash trees round the cottage farm  
Are often stript of branches now  
The cotters christmass hearth to warm  
He swings and twists his hazel band  
And lops them off wi sharpend hook  
And oft brings ivy in his hand  
To decorate the chimney nook

Old winter whipes his ides bye  
And warms his fingers till he smiles  
Where cottage hearths are blazing high  
And labour resteth from his toils

Wi merry mirth beguiling care  
Old customs keeping wi the day  
Friends meet their christmass cheer to share  
And pass it in a harmless way

Old customs O I love the sound  
However simple they may be  
What ere wi time has sanction found  
Is welcome and is dear to me  
Pride grows above simplicity  
And spurns it from her haughty mind  
And soon the poets song will be  
The only refuge they can find

The shepherd now no more afraid  
Since custom doth the chance bestow  
Starts up to kiss the giggling maid  
Beneath the branch of mizzletoe  
That neath each cottage beam is seen  
Wi pearl-like-berrys shining gay  
The shadow still of what hath been  
Which fashion yearly fades away

And singers too a merry throng  
At early morn wi simple skill  
Yet imitate the angels song  
And chant their christmass ditty still  
And mid the storm that dies and swells  
By fits-in humings softly steals  
The music of the village bells  
Ringing round their merry peals

And when its past a merry crew  
Bedeckt in masks and ribbons gay  
The 'Morrice danse' their sports renew  
And act their winter evening play  
The clown-turnd-kings for penny praise  
Storm wi the actors strut and swell  
And harlequin a laugh to raise  
Wears his hump back and tinkling bell

And oft for pence and spicy ale

Wi winter nosgays pind before  
The wassail singer tells her tale  
And drawls her christmass carols oer  
The prentice boy wi ruddy face  
And ryhme bepowderd dancing locks  
From door to door wi happy pace  
Runs round to claim his 'christmass box'

The block behind the fire is put  
To sanction customs old desires  
And many a faggots bands are cut  
For the old farmers christmass fires  
Where loud tongd gladness joins the throng  
And winter meets the warmth of may  
Feeling by times the heat too strong  
And rubs his shins and draws away

While snows the window panes bedim  
The fire curls up a sunny charm  
Where creaming oer the pitchers rim  
The flowering ale is set to warm  
Mirth full of joy as summer bees  
Sits there its pleasures to impart  
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John Clare



# Clock-O'-Clay

In the cowslip pips I lie,  
Hidden from the buzzing fly,  
While green grass beneath me lies,  
Pearled with dew like fishes' eyes,  
Here I lie, a clock-o'-clay,  
Waiting for the time o' day.

While the forest quakes surprise,  
And the wild wind sobs and sighs,  
My home rocks as like to fall,  
On its pillar green and tall;  
When the pattering rain drives by  
Clock-o'-clay keeps warm and dry.

Day by day and night by night,  
All the week I hide from sight;  
In the cowslip pips I lie,  
In the rain still warm and dry;  
Day and night and night and day,  
Red, black-spotted clock-o'-clay.

My home shakes in wind and showers,  
Pale green pillar topped with flowers,  
Bending at the wild wind's breath,  
Till I touch the grass beneath;  
Here I live, lone clock-o'-clay,  
Watching for the time of day.

John Clare

# Country Letter

Dear brother robin this comes from us all  
With our kind love and could Gip write and all  
Though but a dog he'd have his love to spare  
For still he knows and by your corner chair  
The moment he comes in he lyes him down  
and seems to fancy you are in the town.  
This leaves us well in health thank God for that  
For old acquaintance Sue has kept your hat  
Which mother brushes ere she lays it bye  
and every sunday goes upstairs to cry  
Jane still is yours till you come back agen  
and neer so much as dances with the men  
and ned the woodman every week comes in  
and asks about you kindly as our kin  
and he with this and goody Thompson sends  
Remembrances with those of all our friends  
Father with us sends love untill he hears  
and mother she has nothing but her tears  
Yet wishes you like us in health the same  
and longs to see a letter with your name  
So loving brother don't forget to write  
Old Gip lies on the hearth stone every night  
Mother can't bear to turn him out of doors  
and never noises now of dirty floors  
Father will laugh but lets her have her way  
and Gip for kindness get a double pay  
So Robin write and let us quickly see  
You don't forget old friends no more than we  
Nor let my mother have so much to blame  
To go three journeys ere your letter came.

John Clare

# Death

Why should man's high aspiring mind  
Burn in him with so proud a breath,  
When all his haughty views can find  
In this world yields to death?  
The fair, the brave, the vain, the wise,  
The rich, the poor, the great, and small,  
Are each but worm's anatomies  
To strew his quiet hall.

Power may make many earthly gods,  
Where gold and bribery's guilt prevails,  
But death's unwelcome, honest odds  
Kick o'er the unequal scales.  
The flattered great may clamours raise  
Of power, and their own weakness hide,  
But death shall find unlooked-for ways  
To end the farce of pride,

An arrow hurtled eer so high,  
From een a giant's sinewy strength,  
In Time's untraced eternity  
Goes but a pigmy length;  
Nay, whirring from the tortured string,  
With all its pomp of hurried flight,  
Tis by the skylark's little wing  
Outmeasured in its height.

Just so man's boasted strength and power  
Shall fade before death's lightest stroke,  
Laid lower than the meanest flower,  
Whose pride oer-topt the oak;  
And he who, like a blighting blast,  
Dispeopled worlds with war's alarms  
Shall be himself destroyed at last  
By poor despised worms.

Tyrants in vain their powers secure,  
And awe slaves' murmurs with a frown,  
For unawed death at last is sure

To sap the babels down.  
A stone thrown upward to the sky  
Will quickly meet the ground agen;  
So men-gods of earth's vanity  
Shall drop at last to men;

And Power and Pomp their all resign,  
Blood-purchased thrones and banquet halls.  
Fate waits to sack Ambition's shrine  
As bare as prison walls,  
Where the poor suffering wretch bows down  
To laws a lawless power hath passed;  
And pride, and power, and king, and clown  
Shall be Death's slaves at last.

Time, the prime minister of Death!  
There's nought can bribe his honest will.  
He stops the richest tyrant's breath  
And lays his mischief still.  
Each wicked scheme for power all stops,  
With grandeurs false and mock display,  
As eve's shades from high mountain tops  
Fade with the rest away.

Death levels all things in his march;  
Nought can resist his mighty strength;  
The palace proud, triumphal arch,  
Shall mete its shadow's length.  
The rich, the poor, one common bed  
Shall find in the unhonoured grave,  
Where weeds shall crown alike the head  
Of tyrant and of slave.

John Clare

# Decay

O Poesy is on the wane,  
For Fancy's visions all unfitting;  
I hardly know her face again,  
Nature herself seems on the flitting.  
The fields grow old and common things,  
The grass, the sky, the winds a-blowing;  
And spots, where still a beauty clings,  
Are sighing 'going! all a-going!'  
O Poesy is on the wane,  
I hardly know her face again.

The bank with brambles overspread,  
And little molehills round about it,  
Was more to me than laurel shades,  
With paths of gravel finely clouted;  
And streaking here and streaking there,  
Through shaven grass and many a border,  
With rutty lanes had no compare,  
And heaths were in a richer order.  
But Poesy is on the wane,  
I hardly know her face again.

I sat beside the pasture stream,  
When Beauty's self was sitting by,  
The fields did more than Eden seem  
Nor could I tell the reason why.  
I often drank when not adry  
To pledge her health in draughts divine;  
Smiles made it nectar from the sky,  
Love turned een water into wine.  
O Poesy is on the wane,  
I cannot find her face again.

The sun those mornings used to find,  
Its clouds were other-country mountains,  
And heaven looked downward on the mind,  
Like groves, and rocks, and mottled fountains.  
Those heavens are gone, the mountains grey  
Turned mist--the sun, a homeless ranger,

Pursues alone his naked way,  
Unnoticed like a very stranger.  
O Poesy is on the wane,  
Nor love nor joy is mine again.

Love's sun went down without a frown,  
For very joy it used to grieve us;  
I often think the West is gone,  
Ah, cruel Time, to undeceive us.  
The stream it is a common stream,  
Where we on Sundays used to ramble,  
The sky hangs oer a broken dream,  
The bramble's dwindled to a bramble!  
O Poesy is on the wane,  
I cannot find her haunts again.

Mere withered stalks and fading trees,  
And pastures spread with hills and rushes,  
Are all my fading vision sees;  
Gone, gone are rapture's flooding gushes!  
When mushrooms they were fairy bowers,  
Their marble pillars overswelling,  
And Danger paused to pluck the flowers  
That in their swarthy rings were dwelling.  
Yes, Poesy is on the wane,  
Nor joy nor fear is mine again.

Aye, Poesy hath passed away,  
And Fancy's visions undeceive us;  
The night hath ta'en the place of day,  
And why should passing shadows grieve us?  
I thought the flowers upon the hills  
Were flowers from Adam's open gardens;  
But I have had my summer thrills,  
And I have had my heart's rewardings.  
So Poesy is on the wane,  
I hardly know her face again.

And Friendship it hath burned away,  
Like to a very ember cooling,  
A make-believe on April day  
That sent the simple heart a-fooling;

Mere jesting in an earnest way,  
Deceiving on and still deceiving;  
And Hope is but a fancy-play,  
And Joy the art of true believing;  
For Poesy is on the wane,  
O could I feel her faith again!

John Clare

# Dewdrops

The dewdrops on every blade of grass are so much like silver drops that I am obliged to stoop down as I walk to see if they are pearls, and those sprinkled on the ivy-woven beds of primroses underneath the hazels, whitethorns and maples are so like gold beads that I stooped down to feel if they were hard, but they melted from my finger. And where the dew lies on the primrose, the violet and whitethorn leaves they are emerald and beryl, yet nothing more than the dews of the morning on the budding leaves; nay, the road grasses are covered with gold and silver beads, and the further we go the brighter they seem to shine, like solid gold and silver. It is nothing more than the sun's light and shade upon them in the dewy morning; every thorn-point and every bramble-spear has its trembling ornament: till the wind gets a little brisker, and then all is shaken off, and all the shining jewelry passes away into a common spring morning full of budding leaves, primroses, violets, vernal speedwell, bluebell and orchis, and commonplace objects.

John Clare



# Distant Hills

What is there in those distant hills  
My fancy longs to see,  
That many a mood of joy instils?  
Say what can fancy be?

Do old oaks thicken all the woods,  
With weeds and brakes as here?  
Does common water make the floods,  
That's common everywhere?

Is grass the green that clothes the ground?  
Are springs the common springs?  
Daisies and cowslips dropping round,  
Are such the flowers she brings?

\* \* \* \* \*

Are cottages of mud and stone,  
By valley wood and glen,  
And their calm dwellers little known  
Men, and but common men,

That drive afield with carts and ploughs?  
Such men are common here,  
And pastoral maidens milking cows  
Are dwelling everywhere.

If so my fancy idly clings  
To notions far away,  
And longs to roam for common things  
All round her every day,

Right idle would the journey be  
To leave one's home so far,  
And see the moon I now can see  
And every little star.

And have they there a night and day,  
And common counted hours?

And do they see so far away  
This very moon of ours?

\* \* \* \* \*

I mark him climb above the trees  
With one small [comrade] star,  
And think me in my reveries--  
He cannot shine so far.

\* \* \* \* \*

The poets in the tales they tell  
And with their happy powers  
Have made lands where their fancies dwell  
Seem better lands than ours.

Why need I sigh far hills to see  
If grass is their array,  
While here the little paths go through  
The greenest every day?

Such fancies fill the restless mind,  
At once to cheat and cheer  
With thought and semblance undefined,  
Nowhere and everywhere.

John Clare

## Dyke Side

The frog croaks loud, and maidens dare not pass  
But fear the noisome toad and shun the grass;  
And on the sunny banks they dare not go  
Where hissing snakes run to the flood below.  
The nuthatch noises loud in wood and wild,  
Like women turning skreeking to a child.  
The schoolboy hears and brushes through the trees  
And runs about till drabbled to the knees.  
The old hawk winnows round the old crow's nest;  
The schoolboy hears and wonder fills his breast.  
He throws his basket down to climb the tree  
And wonders what the red blotched eggs can be:  
The green woodpecker bounces from the view  
And hollos as he buzzes bye 'kew kew.'

John Clare

## Early Nightingale

When first we hear the shy-come nightingales,  
They seem to mutter o'er their songs in fear,  
And, climb we e'er so soft the spinney rails,  
All stops as if no bird was anywhere.

The kindled bushes with the young leaves thin  
Let curious eyes to search a long way in,  
Until impatience cannot see or hear  
The hidden music; gets but little way  
Upon the path - when up the songs begin,  
Full loud a moment and then low again.  
But when a day or two confirms her stay  
Boldly she sings and loud for half the day;  
And soon the village brings the woodman's tale  
Of having heard the new-come nightingale.

John Clare

## Early Spring

The Spring is come, and Spring flowers coming too,  
The crocus, patty kay, the rich hearts' ease;  
The polyanthus peeps with blebs of dew,  
And daisy flowers; the buds swell on the trees;  
While oer the odd flowers swim grandfather bees  
In the old homestead rests the cottage cow;  
The dogs sit on their haunches near the pail,  
The least one to the stranger growls 'bow wow,'  
Then hurries to the door and cocks his tail,  
To know the unfinished bone; the placid cow  
Looks oer the gate; the thresher's lumping flail  
Is all the noise the spring encounters now.

John Clare

# Earth's Eternity

Man, Earth's poor shadow! talks of Earth's decay:  
But hath it nothing of eternal kin?  
No majesty that shall not pass away?  
No soul of greatness springing up within?  
Thought marks without hoar shadows of sublime,  
Pictures of power, which if not doomed to win  
Eternity, stand laughing at old Time  
For ages: in the grand ancestral line  
Of things eternal, mounting to divine,  
I read Magnificence where ages pay  
Worship like conquered foes to the Apennine,  
Because they could not conquer. There sits Day  
Too high for Night to come at--mountains shine,  
Outpeering Time, too lofty for decay.

John Clare

## Emmonsail's Heath In Winter

I love to see the old heath's withered brake  
Mingle its crimped leaves with furze and ling,  
While the old heron from the lonely lake  
Starts slow and flaps its melancholy wing,  
An oddling crow in idle motion swing  
On the half-rotten ash-tree's topmost twig,  
Beside whose trunk the gypsy makes his bed.  
Up flies the bouncing woodcock from the brig  
Where a black quagmire quakes beneath the tread;  
The fieldfares chatter in the whistling thorn  
And for the haw round fields and closen rove,  
And coy bumbarrels, twenty in a drove,  
Flit down the hedgerows in the frozen plain  
And hang on little twigs and start again.

John Clare

# Evening

'Tis evening; the black snail has got on his track,  
And gone to its nest is the wren,  
And the packman snail, too, with his home on his back,  
Clings to the bowed bents like a wen.

The shepherd has made a rude mark with his foot  
Where his shadow reached when he first came,  
And it just touched the tree where his secret love cut  
Two letters that stand for love's name.

The evening comes in with the wishes of love,  
And the shepherd he looks on the flowers,  
And thinks who would praise the soft song of the dove,  
And meet joy in these dew-falling hours.

For Nature is love, and finds haunts for true love,  
Where nothing can hear or intrude;  
It hides from the eagle and joins with the dove,  
In beautiful green solitude.

John Clare



# Evening Primrose

When once the sun sinks in the west,  
And dewdrops pearl the evening's breast;  
Almost as pale as moonbeams are,  
Or its companionable star,  
The evening primrose opes anew  
Its delicate blossoms to the dew;  
And, hermit-like, shunning the light,  
Wastes its fair bloom upon the night,  
Who, blindfold to its fond caresses,  
Knows not the beauty it possesses;  
Thus it blooms on while night is by;  
When day looks out with open eye,  
Bashed at the gaze it cannot shun,  
It faints and withers and is gone.

John Clare

# Farewell

Farewell to the bushy clump close to the river  
And the flags where the butter-bump hides in forever;  
Farewell to the weedy nook, hemmed in by waters;  
Farewell to the miller's brook and his three bonny daughters;  
Farewell to them all while in prison I lie--  
In the prison a thrall sees naught but the sky.

Shut out are the green fields and birds in the bushes;  
In the prison yard nothing builds, blackbirds or thrushes.  
Farewell to the old mill and dash of waters,  
To the miller and, dearer still, to his three bonny daughters.

In the nook, the larger burdock grows near the green willow;  
In the flood, round the moor-cock dashes under the billow;  
To the old mill farewell, to the lock, pens, and waters,  
To the miller himsel', and his three bonny daughters.

John Clare

# Farewell And Defiance To Love

Love and thy vain employs, away  
From this too oft deluded breast!  
No longer will I court thy stay,  
To be my bosom's teasing guest.  
Thou treacherous medicine, reckoned pure,  
Thou quackery of the harassed heart,  
That kills what it pretends to cure,  
Life's mountebank thou art.

With nostrums vain of boasted powers,  
That, ta'en, a worse disorder leave;  
An asp hid in a group of flowers,  
That bites and stings when few perceive;  
Thou mock-truce to the troubled mind,  
Leading it more in sorrow's way,  
Freedom, that leaves us more confined,  
I bid thee hence away.

Dost taunt, and deem thy power beyond  
The resolution reason gave?  
Tut! Falsity hath snapt each bond,  
That kept me once thy quiet slave,  
And made thy snare a spider's thread,  
Which e'en my breath can break in twain;  
Nor will I be, like Sampson, led  
To trust thy wiles again.

I took thee as my staff to guide  
Me on the road I did pursue,  
And when my weakness most relied  
Upon its strength it broke in two.  
I took thee as my friendly host  
That counsel might in dangers show,  
But when I needed thee the most  
I found thou wert my foe.

Tempt me no more with rosy cheeks,  
Nor daze my reason with bright eyes;  
I'm wearied with thy painted freaks,

And sicken at such vanities:  
Be roses fine as eer they will,  
They, with the meanest, fade and die,  
And eyes, though thronged with darts to kill,  
Share like mortality.

Feed the young bard, that madly sips  
His nectar-draughts from folly's flowers,  
Bright eyes, fair cheeks, and ruby lips,  
Till muses melt to honey showers;  
Lure him to thrum thy empty lays,  
While flattery listens to the chimes,  
Till words themselves grow sick with praise  
And stop for want of rhymes.

Let such be still thy paramours,  
And chaunt love's old and idle tune,  
Robbing the spring of all its flowers,  
And heaven of all her stars and moon,  
To gild with dazzling similes  
Blind folly's vain and empty lay:  
I'm sobered from such phantasies,  
So get thee hence away.

Nor bid me sigh for mine own cost,  
Nor count its loss, for mine annoy,  
Nor say my stubbornness hath lost  
A paradise of dainty joy:  
I'll not believe thee, till I know  
That sober reason turns an ape,  
And acts the harlequin, to show  
That cares in every shape,

Heart-achings, sighs, and grief-wrung tears,  
Shame-blushes at betrayed distress,  
Dissembled smiles, and jealous fears,  
Are nought but real happiness:  
Then will I mourn what now I brave,  
And suffer Celia's quirks to be  
(Like a poor fate-bewilder'd slave,)  
The rulers of my destiny.

I'll weep and sigh whenever she wills

To frown, and when she deigns to smile  
It shall be cure for all my ills,  
And, foolish still, I'll laugh the while;  
But till that comes, I'll bless the rules  
Experience taught, and deem it wise  
To hold thee as the game of fools,  
And all thy tricks despise.

John Clare

# Farm Breakfast

Maid's shout to breakfast in a merry strife,  
And the cat runs to hear the whetted knife,  
And dogs are ever in the way to watch  
The mouldy crust and falling bone to catch.  
The wooden dishes round in haste are set,  
And round the table all the boys are met;  
All know their own save Hodge who would be first,  
But every one his master leaves the worst.  
On every wooden dish, a humble claim,  
Two rude cut letters mark the owner's name;  
From every nook the smile of plenty calls,  
And rusty fitches decorate the walls,  
Moore's Almanack where wonders never cease--  
All smeared with candle snuff and bacon grease.

John Clare

# Farmer's Boy

He waits all day beside his little flock  
And asks the passing stranger what's o'clock,  
But those who often pass his daily tasks  
Look at their watch and tell before he asks.  
He mutters stories to himself and lies  
Where the thick hedge the warmest house supplies,  
And when he hears the hunters far and wide  
He climbs the highest tree to see them ride--  
He climbs till all the fields are blea and bare  
And makes the old crow's nest an easy chair.  
And soon his sheep are got in other grounds--  
He hastens down and fears his master come,  
He stops the gap and keeps them all in bounds  
And tends them closely till it's time for home.

John Clare

## Field Path

The beams in blossom with their spots of jet  
Smelt sweet as gardens wheresoever met;  
The level meadow grass was in the swath;  
The hedge briar rose hung right across the path,  
White over with its flowers--the grass that lay  
Bleaching beneath the twittering heat to hay  
Smelt so deliciously, the puzzled bee  
Went wondering where the honey sweets could be;  
And passer-bye along the level rows  
Stoopt down and whipt a bit beneath his nose.

John Clare



# First Love

I ne'er was struck before that hour  
With love so sudden and so sweet,  
Her face it bloomed like a sweet flower  
And stole my heart away complete.  
My face turned pale as deadly pale.  
My legs refused to walk away,  
And when she looked, what could I ail?  
My life and all seemed turned to clay.

And then my blood rushed to my face  
And took my eyesight quite away,  
The trees and bushes round the place  
Seemed midnight at noonday.  
I could not see a single thing,  
Words from my eyes did start --  
They spoke as chords do from the string,  
And blood burnt round my heart.

Are flowers the winter's choice?  
Is love's bed always snow?  
She seemed to hear my silent voice,  
Not love's appeals to know.  
I never saw so sweet a face  
As that I stood before.  
My heart has left its dwelling-place  
And can return no more

John Clare

# Firwood

The fir trees taper into twigs and wear  
The rich blue green of summer all the year,  
Softening the roughest tempest almost calm  
And offering shelter ever still and warm  
To the small path that towels underneath,  
Where loudest winds--almost as summer's breath--  
Scarce fan the weed that lingers green below  
When others out of doors are lost in frost and snow.  
And sweet the music trembles on the ear  
As the wind suthers through each tiny spear,  
Makeshifts for leaves; and yet, so rich they show,  
Winter is almost summer where they grow.

John Clare

# Fragment

The cataract, whirling down the precipice,  
Elbows down rocks and, shouldering, thunders through.  
Roars, howls, and stifled murmurs never cease;  
Hell and its agonies seem hid below.  
Thick rolls the mist, that smokes and falls in dew;  
The trees and greenwood wear the deepest green.  
Horrible mysteries in the gulph stare through,  
Roars of a million tongues, and none knows what they mean.

John Clare

# From

Sweet solitude, what joy to be alone--  
In wild, wood-shady dell to stay for hours.  
T'would soften hearts if they were hard as stone  
To see glad butterflies and smiling flowers.  
Tis pleasant in these quiet lonely places,  
Where not the voice of man our pleasure mars,  
To see the little bees with coal black faces  
Gathering sweets from little flowers like stars.

The wind seems calling, though not understood.  
A voice is speaking; hark, it louder calls.  
It echoes in the far-outstretching wood.  
First twas a hum, but now it loudly squalls;  
And then the pattering rain begins to fall,  
And it is hushed--the fern leaves scarcely shake,  
The tottergrass it scarcely stirs at all.  
And then the rolling thunder gets awake,  
And from black clouds the lightning flashes break.

The sunshine's gone, and now an April evening  
Commences with a dim and mackerel sky.  
Gold light and woolpacks in the west are leaving,  
And leaden streaks their splendid place supply.  
Sheep ointment seems to daub the dead-hued sky,  
And night shuts up the lightsomeness of day,  
All dark and absent as a corpse's eye.  
Flower, tree, and bush, like all the shadows grey,  
In leaden hues of desolation fade away.

Tis May; and yet the March flower Dandelion  
Is still in bloom among the emerald grass,  
Shining like guineas with the sun's warm eye on--  
We almost think they are gold as we pass,  
Or fallen stars in a green sea of grass.  
They shine in fields, or waste grounds near the town.  
They closed like painter's brush when even was.  
At length they turn to nothing else but down,  
While the rude winds blow off each shadowy crown.

John Clare

# From The Parish: A Satire

## I

In politics and politicians' lies  
The modern farmer waxes wondrous wise;  
Opinionates with wisdom all compact,  
And een could tell a nation how to act;  
Throws light on darkness with excessive skill,  
Knows who acts well and whose designs are ill,  
Proves half the members nought but bribery's tools,  
And calls the past a dull dark age of fools.

As wise as Solomon they read the news,  
Not with their blind forefathers' simple views,  
Who read of wars, and wished that wars would cease,  
And blessed the King, and wished his country peace;  
Who marked the weight of each fat sheep and ox,  
The price of grain and rise and fall of stocks;  
Who thought it learning how to buy and sell,  
And him a wise man who could manage well.  
No, not with such old-fashioned, idle views  
Do these newsmongers traffic with the news.  
They read of politics and not of grain,  
And speechify and comment and explain,  
And know so much of Parliament and state  
You'd think they're members when you heard them prate;  
And know so little of their farms the while  
They can but urge a wiser man to smile.

## II

A thing all consequence here takes the lead,  
Reigning knight-errant oer this dirty breed--  
A bailiff he, and who so great to brag  
Of law and all its terrors as Bumtagg;  
Fawning a puppy at his master's side  
And frowning like a wolf on all beside;  
Who fattens best where sorrow worst appears  
And feeds on sad misfortune's bitterest tears?  
Such is Bumtagg the bailiff to a hair,

The worshipper and demon of despair,  
Who waits and hopes and wishes for success  
At every nod and signal of distress,  
Happy at heart, when storms begin to boil,  
To seek the shipwreck and to share the spoil.  
Brave is this Bumtagg, match him if you can;  
For there's none like him living--save his man.

As every animal assists his kind  
Just so are these in blood and business joined;  
Yet both in different colours hide their art,  
And each as suits his ends transacts his part.  
One keeps the heart-bred villain full in sight,  
The other cants and acts the hypocrite,  
Smoothing the deed where law sharks set their gin  
Like a coy dog to draw misfortune in.  
But both will chuckle oer their prisoners' sighs  
And are as blest as spiders over flies.  
Such is Bumtagg, whose history I resign,  
As other knaves wait room to stink and shine;  
And, as the meanest knave a dog can brag,  
Such is the lurcher that assists Bumtagg.

John Clare

# Gipsies

The snow falls deep; the forest lies alone;  
The boy goes hasty for his load of brakes,  
Then thinks upon the fire and hurries back;  
The gipsy knocks his hands and tucks them up,  
And seeks his squalid camp, half hid in snow,  
Beneath the oak which breaks away the wind,  
And bushes close in snow-like hovel warm;  
There tainted mutton wastes upon the coals,  
And the half-wasted dog squats close and rubs,  
Then feels the heat too strong, and goes aloof;  
He watches well, but none a bit can spare,  
And vainly waits the morsel thrown away.  
Tis thus they live--a picture to the place,  
A quiet, pilfering, unprotected race.

John Clare



# Grasshoppers

Grasshoppers go in many a thumming spring  
And now to stalks of tasseled sow-grass cling,  
That shakes and swees awhile, but still keeps straight;  
While arching oxeye doubles with his weight.  
Next on the cat-tail-grass with farther bound  
He springs, that bends until they touch the ground.

John Clare

# Graves Of Infants

Infant' graves are steps of angels, where  
Earth's brightest gems of innocence repose.  
God is their parent, and they need no tear;  
He takes them to His bosom from earth's woes,  
A bud their lifetime and a flower their close.  
Their spirits are an Iris of the skies,  
Needing no prayers; a sunset's happy close.  
Gone are the bright rays of their soft blue eyes;  
Flowers weep in dew-drops oer them, and the gale gently sighs

Their lives were nothing but a sunny shower,  
Melting on flowers as tears melt from the eye.  
Their deaths were dew-drops on Heaven's amaranth bower,  
And tolled on flowers as Summer gales went by.  
They bowed and trembled, and they left no sigh,  
And the sun smiled to show their end was well.  
Infants have nought to weep for ere they die;  
All prayers are needless, beads they need not tell,  
White flowers their mourners are, Nature their passing bell.

John Clare

## Hen's Nest

Among the orchard weeds, from every search,  
Snugly and sure, the old hen's nest is made,  
Who cackles every morning from her perch  
To tell the servant girl new eggs are laid;  
Who lays her washing by, and far and near  
Goes seeking all about from day to day,  
And stung with nettles tramples everywhere;  
But still the cackling pullet lays away.  
The boy on Sundays goes the stack to pull  
In hopes to find her there, but naught is seen,  
And takes his hat and thinks to find it full,  
She's laid so long so many might have been.  
But naught is found and all is given o'er  
Till the young brood come chirping to the door.

John Clare

# Hodge

He plays with other boys when work is done,  
But feels too clumsy and too stiff to run,  
Yet where there's mischief he can find a way  
The first to join and last [to run] away.  
What's said or done he never hears or minds  
But gets his pence for all the eggs he finds.  
He thinks his master's horses far the best,  
And always labours longer than the rest.  
In frost and cold though lame he's forced to go--  
The call's more urgent when he journeys slow.  
In surly speed he helps the maids by force  
And feeds the cows and hallos till he's hoarse;  
And when he's lame they only jest and play  
And bid him throw his kiby heels away.

John Clare

## House Or Window Flies

These little window dwellers, in cottages and halls, were always entertaining to me; after dancing in the window all day from sunrise to sunset they would sip of the tea, drink of the beer, and eat of the sugar, and be welcome all summer long. They look like things of mind or fairies, and seem pleased or dull as the weather permits. In many clean cottages and genteel houses, they are allowed every liberty to creep, fly, or do as they like; and seldom or ever do wrong. In fact they are the small or dwarfish portion of our own family, and so many fairy familiars that we know and treat as one of ourselves.

John Clare

# I Am

I am: yet what I am none cares or knows,  
My friends forsake me like a memory lost;  
I am the self-consumer of my woes,  
They rise and vanish in oblivious host,  
Like shades in love and death's oblivion lost;  
And yet I am! and live with shadows tost

Into the nothingness of scorn and noise,  
Into the living sea of waking dreams,  
Where there is neither sense of life nor joys,  
But the vast shipwreck of my life's esteems;  
And e'en the dearest- that I loved the best-  
Are strange- nay, rather stranger than the rest.

I long for scenes where man has never trod;  
A place where woman never smil'd or wept;  
There to abide with my creator, God,  
And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept:  
Untroubling and untroubled where I lie;  
The grass below- above the vaulted sky.

John Clare

# I Dreamt Of Robin

I opened the casement this morn at starlight,  
And, the moment I got out of bed,  
The daisies were quaking about in their white  
And the cowslip was nodding its head.  
The grass was all shivers, the stars were all bright,  
And Robin that should come at e'en--  
I thought that I saw him, a ghost by moonlight,  
Like a stalking horse stand on the green.

I went bed agen and did nothing but dream  
Of Robin and moonlight and flowers.  
He stood like a shadow transfixed by a stream,  
And I couldn't forget him for hours.  
I'd just dropt asleep when I dreamed Robin spoke,  
And the casement it gave such a shake,  
As if every pane in the window was broke;  
Such a patter the gravel did make.

So I up in the morning before the cock crew  
And to strike me a light I sat down.  
I saw from the door all his track in the dew  
And, I guess, called 'Come in and sit down.'  
And one, sure enough, tramples up to the door,  
And who but young Robin his sen?  
And ere the old folks were half willing to stir  
We met, kissed, and parted agen.

John Clare

# I Hid My Love

I hid my love when young till I  
Couldn't bear the buzzing of a fly;  
I hid my love to my despite  
Till I could not bear to look at light;  
I dare not gaze upon her face  
But left her memory in each place;  
Where'er I saw a wild flower lie  
I kissed and bade my love goodbye.

I met her in the greenest dells,  
Where dewdrops pearl the wood bluebells;  
The lost breeze kissed her bright blue eye,  
The bee kissed and went singing by,  
A sunbeam found a passage there,  
A gold chain round her neck so fair;  
As secret as the wild bee's song  
She lay there all the summer long.

I hid my love in field and town  
Till e'en the breeze would knock me down;  
The bees seemed singing ballads o'er,  
The fly's bass turned to lion's roar;  
And even the silence found a tongue,  
To haunt me all the summer long;  
The riddle nature could not prove  
Was nothing else but secret love.

John Clare



# Idle Fame

I would not wish the burning blaze  
Of fame around a restless world,  
The thunder and the storm of praise  
In crowded tumults heard and hurled.  
I would not be a flower to stand  
The stare of every passer-bye;  
But in some nook of fairyland,  
Seen in the praise of beauty's eye.

John Clare

# Impromptu

'Where art thou wandering, little child?'  
I said to one I met to-day.--  
She pushed her bonnet up and smiled,  
'I'm going upon the green to play:  
Folks tell me that the May's in flower,  
That cowslip-peeps are fit to pull,  
And I've got leave to spend an hour  
To get this little basket full.'

--And thou'st got leave to spend an hour!  
My heart repeated.--She was gone;  
--And thou hast heard the thorn's in flower,  
And childhood's bliss is urging on:  
Ah, happy child! thou mak'st me sigh,  
This once as happy heart of mine,  
Would nature with the boon comply,  
How gladly would I change for thine.

John Clare

## In Hilly-Wood

How sweet to be thus nestling deep in boughs,  
Upon an ashen stoven pillowing me;  
Faintly are heard the ploughmen at their ploughs,  
But not an eye can find its way to see.  
The sunbeams scarce molest me with a smile,  
So thick the leafy armies gather round;  
And where they do, the breeze blows cool the while,  
Their leafy shadows dancing on the ground.  
Full many a flower, too, wishing to be seen,  
Perks up its head the hiding grass between.-  
In mid-wood silence, thus, how sweet to be;  
Where all the noises, that on peace intrude,  
Come from the chittering cricket, bird, and bee,  
Whose songs have charms to sweeten solitude.

John Clare

## In Summer Showers A Skreeking Noise Is Heard

In summer showers a skreeking noise is heard  
Deep in the woods of some uncommon bird  
It makes a loud and long and loud continued noise  
And often stops the speed of men and boys  
They think somebody mocks and goes along  
And never thinks the nuthatch makes the song  
Who always comes along the summer guest  
The birdnest hunters never found the nest  
The schoolboy hears the noise from day to day  
And stoops among the thorns to find a way  
And starts the jay bird from the bushes green  
He looks and sees a nest he's never seen  
And takes the spotted eggs with many joys  
And thinks he found the bird that made the noise

John Clare

# Insects

These tiny loiterers on the barley's beard,  
And happy units of a numerous herd  
Of playfellows, the laughing Summer brings,  
Mocking the sunshine on their glittering wings,  
How merrily they creep, and run, and fly!  
No kin they bear to labour's drudgery,  
Smoothing the velvet of the pale hedge-rose;  
And where they fly for dinner no one knows -  
The dew-drops feed them not - they love the shine  
Of noon, whose suns may bring them golden wine  
All day they're playing in their Sunday dress -  
When night reposes, for they can do no less;  
Then, to the heath-bell's purple hood they fly,  
And like to princes in their slumbers lie,  
Secure from rain, and dropping dews, and all,  
In silken beds and roomy painted hall.  
So merrily they spend their summer-day,  
Now in the corn-fields, now in the new-mown hay.  
One almost fancies that such happy things,  
With coloured hoods and richly burnished wings,  
Are fairy folk, in splendid masquerade  
Disguised, as if of mortal folk afraid,  
Keeping their joyous pranks a mystery still,  
Lest glaring day should do their secrets ill.

John Clare

# Invitation To Eternity

Say, wilt thou go with me, sweet maid,  
Say, maiden, wilt thou go with me  
Through the valley-depths of shade,  
Of bright and dark obscurity;  
Where the path has lost its way,  
Where the sun forgets the day,  
Where there's nor light nor life to see,  
Sweet maiden, wilt thou go with me?

Where stones will turn to flooding streams,  
Where plains will rise like ocean's waves,  
Where life will fade like visioned dreams  
And darkness darken into caves,  
Say, maiden, wilt thou go with me  
Through this sad non-identity  
Where parents live and are forgot,  
And sisters live and know us not?

Say, maiden, wilt thou go with me  
In this strange death of life to be,  
To live in death and be the same,  
Without this life or home or name,  
At once to be and not to be--  
That was and is not--yet to see  
Things pass like shadows, and the sky  
Above, below, around us lie?

The land of shadows wilt thou trace,  
Nor look nor know each other's face;  
The present marred with reason gone,  
And past and present both as one?  
Say, maiden, can thy life be led  
To join the living and the dead?  
Then trace thy footsteps on with me:  
We are wed to one eternity.

John Clare

# June

'Now summer is in flower and natures hum  
Is never silent round her sultry bloom  
Insects as small as dust are never done  
Wi' glittering dance and reeling in the sun  
And green wood fly and blossom haunting bee  
Are never weary of their melody  
Round field hedge now flowers in full glory twine  
Large bindweed bells wild hop and streakd woodbine  
That lift athirst their slender throated flowers  
Agape for dew falls and for honey showers  
These round each bush in sweet disorder run  
And spread their wild hues to the sultry sun.'

John Clare

## Letter In Verse

Like boys that run behind the loaded wain  
For the mere joy of riding back again,  
When summer from the meadow carts the hay  
And school hours leave them half a day to play;  
So I with leisure on three sides a sheet  
Of foolscap dance with poesy's measured feet,  
Just to ride post upon the wings of time  
And kill a care, to friendship turned in rhyme.  
The muse's gallop hurries me in sport  
With much to read and little to divert,  
And I, amused, with less of wit than will,  
Run till I tire.--And so to cheat her still.  
Like children running races who shall be  
First in to touch the orchard wall or tree,  
The last half way behind, by distance vexed,  
Turns short, determined to be first the next;  
So now the muse has run me hard and long--  
I'll leave at once her races and her song;  
And, turning round, laugh at the letter's close  
And beat her out by ending it in prose.

John Clare



# Little Trotty Wagtail

Little trotty wagtail he went in the rain,  
And tittering, tottering sideways he neer got straight again,  
He stooped to get a worm, and looked up to get a fly,  
And then he flew away ere his feathers they were dry.

Little trotty wagtail, he waddled in the mud,  
And left his little footmarks, trample where he would.  
He waddled in the water-pudge, and waggle went his tail,  
And chirrupt up his wings to dry upon the garden rail.

Little trotty wagtail, you nimble all about,  
And in the dimpling water-pudge you waddle in and out;  
Your home is nigh at hand, and in the warm pig-stye,  
So, little Master Wagtail, I'll bid you a good-bye.

John Clare

# Love

Love, though it is not chill and cold,  
But burning like eternal fire,  
Is yet not of approaches bold,  
Which gay dramatic tastes admire.  
Oh timid love, more fond than free,  
In daring song is ill pourtrayed,  
Where, as in war, the devotee  
By valour wins each captive maid;--

Where hearts are prest to hearts in glee,  
As they could tell each other's mind;  
Where ruby lips are kissed as free,  
As flowers are by the summer wind.  
No! gentle love, that timid dream,  
With hopes and fears at foil and play,  
Works like a skiff against the stream,  
And thinking most finds least to say.

It lives in blushes and in sighs,  
In hopes for which no words are found;  
Thoughts dare not speak but in the eyes,  
The tongue is left without a sound.  
The pert and forward things that dare  
Their talk in every maiden's ear,  
Feel no more than their shadows there--  
Mere things of form, with nought of fear.

True passion, that so burns to plead,  
Is timid as the dove's disguise;  
Tis for the murder-aiming glee  
To dart at every thing that flies.  
True love, it is no daring bird,  
But like the little timid wren,  
That in the new-leaved thorns of spring  
Shrinks farther from the sight of men.

The idol of his musing mind,  
The worship of his lonely hour,  
Love woos her in the summer wind,

And tells her name to every flower;  
But in her sight, no open word  
Escapes, his fondness to declare;  
The sighs by beauty's magic stirred  
Are all that speak his passion there.

John Clare

# Love Cannot Die

In crime and enmity they lie  
Who sin and tell us love can die,  
Who say to us in slander's breath  
That love belongs to sin and death.  
From heaven it came on angel's wing  
To bloom on earth, eternal spring;  
In falsehood's enmity they lie  
Who sin and tell us love can die.

'Twas born upon an angel's breast.  
The softest dreams, the sweetest rest,  
The brightest sun, the bluest sky,  
Are love's own home and canopy.  
The thought that cheers this heart of mine  
Is that of love; love so divine  
They sin who say in slander's breath  
That love belongs to sin and death.

The sweetest voice that lips contain,  
The sweetest thought that leaves the brain,  
The sweetest feeling of the heart--  
There's pleasure in its very smart.  
The scent of rose and cinnamon  
Is not like love remembered on;  
In falsehood's enmity they lie  
Who sin and tell us love can die.

John Clare

# Love Lives Beyond The Tomb

Love lives beyond  
The tomb, the earth, which fades like dew-  
I love the fond,  
The faithful, and the true.  
Love lies in sleep,  
The happiness of healthy dreams,  
Eve's dews may weep,  
But love delightful seems.  
'Tis seen in flowers,  
And in the even's pearly dew  
On earth's green hours,  
And in the heaven's eternal blue.

'Tis heard in spring  
When light and sunbeams, warm and kind,  
On angels wing  
Bring love and music to the wind.  
And where is voice  
So young, so beautiful, so sweet  
As nature's choice,  
Where spring and lovers meet?  
Love lies beyond  
The tomb, the earth, the flowers, and dew.  
I love the fond,  
The faithful, young, and true.

John Clare

# Market Day

With arms and legs at work and gentle stroke  
That urges switching tail nor mends his pace,  
On an old ribbed and weather beaten horse,  
The farmer goes jogtrotting to the fair.  
Both keep their pace that nothing can provoke  
Followed by brindled dog that snuffs the ground  
With urging bark and hurries at his heels.  
His hat slouched down, and great coat buttoned close  
Bellied like hooped keg, and chuffy face  
Red as the morning sun, he takes his round  
And talks of stock: and when his jobs are done  
And Dobbin's hay is eaten from the rack,  
He drinks success to corn in language hoarse,  
And claps old Dobbin's hide, and potters back.

John Clare

# Mary Bateman

My love she wears a cotton plaid,  
A bonnet of the straw;  
Her cheeks are leaves of roses spread,  
Her lips are like the haw.  
In truth she is as sweet a maid  
As true love ever saw.

Her curls are ever in my eyes,  
As nets by Cupid flung;  
Her voice will oft my sleep surprise,  
More sweet than ballad sung.  
O Mary Bateman's curling hair!  
I wake, and there is nothing there.

I wake, and fall asleep again,  
The same delights in visions rise;  
There's nothing can appear more plain  
Than those rose cheeks and those bright eyes.  
I wake again, and all alone  
Sits Darkness on his ebon throne.

All silent runs the silver Trent,  
The cobweb veils are all wet through,  
A silver bead's on every bent,  
On every leaf a bleb of dew.  
I sighed, the moon it shone so clear;  
Was Mary Bateman walking here?

John Clare

# May

Come queen of months in company  
Wi all thy merry minstrelsy  
The restless cuckoo absent long  
And twittering swallows chimney song  
And hedge row crickets notes that run  
From every bank that fronts the sun  
And swathy bees about the grass  
That stops wi every bloom they pass  
And every minute every hour  
Keep teasing weeds that wear a flower  
And toil and childhoods humming joys  
For there is music in the noise  
The village childern mad for sport  
In school times leisure ever short  
That crick and catch the bouncing ball  
And run along the church yard wall  
Capt wi rude figured slabs whose claims  
In times bad memory hath no names  
Oft racing round the nookey church  
Or calling ecchos in the porch  
And jilting oer the weather cock  
Viewing wi jealous eyes the clock  
Oft leaping grave stones leaning hights  
Uncheckt wi mellancholy sights  
The green grass swelld in many a heap  
Where kin and friends and parents sleep  
Unthinking in their jovial cry  
That time shall come when they shall lye  
As lowly and as still as they  
While other boys above them play  
Heedless as they do now to know  
The unconcious dust that lies below  
The shepherd goes wi happy stride  
Wi moms long shadow by his side  
Down the dryd lanes neath blooming may  
That once was over shoes in clay  
While martins twitter neath his eves  
Which he at early morning leaves  
The driving boy beside his team



Will oer the may month beauty dream  
And cock his hat and turn his eye  
On flower and tree and deepning skye  
And oft bursts loud in fits of song  
And whistles as he reels along  
Crack[ing] his whip in starts of joy  
A happy dirty driving boy  
The youth who leaves his corner stool  
Betimes for neighbouring village school  
While as a mark to urge him right  
The church spires all the way in sight  
Wi cheerings from his parents given  
Starts neath the joyous smiles of heaven  
And sawns wi many an idle stand  
Wi bookbag swinging in his hand  
And gazes as he passes bye  
On every thing that meets his eye  
Young lambs seem tempting him to play  
Dancing and bleating in his way  
Wi trembling tails and pointed ears  
They follow him and loose their fears  
He smiles upon their sunny faces  
And feign woud join their happy races  
The birds that sing on bush and tree  
Seem chirping for his company  
And all in fancys idle whim  
Seem keeping holiday but him  
He lolls upon each resting stile  
To see the fields so sweetly smile  
To see the wheat grow green and long  
And list the weeders toiling song  
Or short not[e] of the changing thrush  
Above him in the white thorn bush  
That oer the leaning stile bends low  
Loaded wi mockery of snow  
Mozzld wi many a lushing thread  
Of crab tree blossoms delicate red  
He often bends wi many a wish  
Oer the brig rail to view the fish  
Go sturting by in sunny gleams  
And chucks in the eye dazld streams  
Crumbs from his pocket oft to watch

The swarming struttles come to catch  
Them where they go to the bottom side  
Sighing in fancys joy the while  
Hes cautiond not to stand so nigh  
By rosey milkmaid tripping bye  
Where he admires wi fond delight  
And longs to be there mute till night  
He often ventures thro the day  
At truant now and then to play  
Rambling about the field and plain  
Seeking larks nests in the grain  
And picking flowers and boughs of may  
To hurd awhile and throw away  
Lurking neath bushes from the sight  
Of tell tale eyes till schools noon night  
Listing each hour for church clocks hum  
To know the hour to wander home  
That parents may not think him long  
Nor dream of his rude doing wrong  
Dreading thro the night wi dreaming pain  
To meet his masters wand again  
Each hedge is loaded thick wi green  
And where the hedger late hath been  
Tender shoots begin to grow  
From the mossy stumps below  
While sheep and cow that teaze the grain  
will nip them to the root again  
They lay their bill and mittens bye  
And on to other labours hie  
While wood men still on spring intrudes  
And thins the shadow solitudes  
Wi sharp axes felling down  
The oak trees budding into brown  
Where as they crash upon the ground  
A crowd of labourers gather round  
And mix among the shadows dark  
To rip the crackling staining bark  
From off the tree and lay when done  
The rolls in lares to meet the sun  
Depriving yearly where they come  
The green wood pecker of its home  
That early in the spring began

Far from the sight of troubling man  
And bord their round holes in each tree  
In fancys sweet security  
Till startld wi the woodmans noise  
It wakes from all its dreaming joys  
The blue bells too that thickly bloom  
Where man was never feared to come  
And smell smocks that from view retires  
Mong rustling leaves and bowing briars  
And stooping lily of the valley  
That comes wi shades and dewes to dally  
White beady drops on slender threads  
Wi broad hood leaves above their heads  
Like white robd maids in summer hours  
Neath umberellas shunning showers  
These neath the barkmens crushing treads  
Oft perish in their blooming beds  
Thus stript of boughs and bark in white  
Their trunks shine in the mellow light  
Beneath the green surviving trees  
That wave above them in the breeze  
And wakin whispers slowly bends  
As if they mournd their fallen friends  
Each morning now the weeders meet  
To cut the thistle from the wheat  
And ruin in the sunny hours  
Full many wild weeds of their flowers  
Corn poppys that in crimson dwell  
Calld 'head achs' from their sickly smell  
And carlock yellow as the sun  
That oer the may fields thickly run  
And 'iron weed' content to share  
The meanest spot that spring can spare  
Een roads where danger hourly comes  
Is not wi out its purple blooms  
And leaves wi points like thistles round  
Thickset that have no strength to wound  
That shrink to childhoods eager hold  
Like hair-and with its eye of gold  
And scarlet starry points of flowers  
Pimpernel dreading nights and showers  
Oft calld 'the shepherds weather glass'

That sleep till suns have dyd the grass  
Then wakes and spreads its creeping bloom  
Till clouds or threatning shadows come  
Then close it shuts to sleep again  
Which weeders see and talk of rain  
And boys that mark them shut so soon  
will call them 'John go bed at noon  
And fumitory too a name  
That superstition holds to fame  
Whose red and purple mottled flowers  
Are cropt by maids in weeding hours  
To boil in water milk and way<sup>1</sup>  
For washes on an holiday  
To make their beauty fair and sleek  
And scour the tan from summers cheek  
And simple small forget me not  
Eyd wi a pinshead yellow spot  
I'th'<sup>2</sup> middle of its tender blue  
That gains from poets notice due  
These flowers the toil by crowds destroys  
And robs them of their lowly joys  
That met the may wi hopes as sweet  
As those her suns in gardens meet  
And oft the dame will feel inclind  
As childhoods memory comes to mind  
To turn her hook away and spare  
The blooms it lovd to gather there  
My wild field catalogue of flowers  
Grows in my ryhmes as thick as showers  
Tedious and long as they may be  
To some, they never weary me  
The wood and mead and field of grain  
I coud hunt oer and oer again  
And talk to every blossom wild  
Fond as a parent to a child  
And cull them in my childish joy  
By swarms and swarms and never cloy  
When their lank shades oer morning pearls  
Shrink from their lengths to little girls  
And like the clock hand pointing one  
Is turnd and tells the morning gone  
They leave their toils for dinners hour

Beneath some hedges bramble bower  
And season sweet their savory meals  
Wi joke and tale and merry peals  
Of ancient tunes from happy tongues  
While linnets join their fitful songs  
Perchd oer their heads in frolic play  
Among the tufts of motling may  
The young girls whisper things of love  
And from the old dames hearing move  
Oft making 'love knotts' in the shade  
Of blue green oat or wheaten blade  
And trying simple charms and spells  
That rural superstition tells  
They pull the little blossom threads  
From out the knapweeds button heads  
And put the husk wi many a smile  
In their white bosoms for awhile  
Who if they guess aright the swain  
That loves sweet fancys trys to gain  
Tis said that ere its lain an hour  
Twill blossom wi a second flower  
And from her white breasts hankerchief  
Bloom as they ne'er had lost a leaf  
When signs appear that token wet  
As they are neath the bushes met  
The girls are glad wi hopes of play  
And harping of the holiday  
A hugh blue bird will often swim  
Along the wheat when skys grow dim  
Wi clouds-slow as the gales of spring  
In motion wi dark shadowd wing  
Beneath the coming storm it sails  
And lonly chirps the wheat hid quails  
That came to live wi spring again  
And start when summer browns the grain  
They start the young girls joys afloat  
Wi 'wet my foot' its yearly note  
So fancy doth the sound explain  
And proves it oft a sign of rain  
About the moor 'mong sheep and cow  
The boy or old man wanders now  
Hunting all day wi hopful pace

Each thick sown rushy thistly place  
For plover eggs while oer them flye  
The fearful birds wi teasing cry  
Trying to lead their steps astray  
And coying him another way  
And be the weather chill or warm  
Wi brown hats truckd beneath his arm  
Holding each prize their search has won  
They plod bare headed to the sun  
Now dames oft bustle from their wheels  
Wi childern scampering at their heels  
To watch the bees that hang and swive  
In clumps about each thronging hive  
And flit and thicken in the light  
While the old dame enjoys the sight  
And raps the while their warming pans  
A spell that superstition plans  
To coax them in the garden bounds  
As if they lovd the tinkling sounds  
And oft one hears the dinning noise  
Which dames believe each swarm decoys  
Around each village day by day  
Mingling in the warmth of may  
Sweet scented herbs her skill contrives  
To rub the bramble platted hives  
Fennels thread leaves and crimpld balm  
To scent the new house of the swarm  
The thresher dull as winter days  
And lost to all that spring displays  
Still mid his barn dust forcd to stand  
Swings his frail round wi weary hand  
While oer his head shades thickly creep  
And hides the blinking owl asleep  
And bats in cobweb corners bred  
Sharing till night their murky bed  
The sunshine trickles on the floor  
Thro every crevice of the door  
And makes his barn where shadows dwell  
As irksome as a prisoners cell  
And as he seeks his daily meal  
As schoolboys from their tasks will steal  
ile often stands in fond delay

To see the daisy in his way  
And wild weeds flowering on the wall  
That will his childish sports recall  
Of all the joys that came wi spring  
The twirling top the marble ring  
The gingling halfpence hussld up  
At pitch and toss the eager stoop  
To pick up heads, the smuggeld plays  
Neath hovels upon sabbath days  
When parson he is safe from view  
And clerk sings amen in his pew  
The sitting down when school was oer  
Upon the threshold by his door  
Picking from mallows sport to please  
Each crumpld seed he calld a cheese  
And hunting from the stackyard sod  
The stinking hen banes belted pod  
By youths vain fancys sweetly fed  
Christning them his loaves of bread  
He sees while rocking down the street  
Wi weary hands and crimpling feet  
Young childern at the self same games  
And hears the self same simple names  
Still floating on each happy tongue  
Touchd wi the simple scene so strong  
Tears almost start and many a sigh  
Regrets the happiness gone bye  
And in sweet natures holiday  
His heart is sad while all is gay  
How lovly now are lanes and balks  
For toils and lovers sunday walks  
The daisey and the buttercup  
For which the laughing childern stoop  
A hundred times throughout the day  
In their rude ramping summer play  
So thickly now the pasture crowds  
In gold and silver sheeted clouds  
As if the drops in april showers  
Had woo'd the sun and swoond to flowers  
The brook resumes its summer dresses  
Purling neath grass and water cresses  
And mint and flag leaf swording high

Their blooms to the unheeding eye  
And taper bowbent hanging rushes  
And horse tail childerns bottle brushes  
And summer tracks about its brink  
Is fresh again where cattle drink  
And on its sunny bank the swain  
Stretches his idle length again  
Soon as the sun forgets the day  
The moon looks down on the lovely may  
And the little star his friend and guide  
Travelling together side by side  
And the seven stars and Charleses wain<sup>1</sup>  
Hangs smiling o'er green woods again  
The heaven rekindles all alive  
We light the may bees round the hive  
Swarm not so thick in mornings eye  
As stars do in the evening skye  
All all are nestling in their joys  
The flowers and birds and pasture boys  
The firetail, long a stranger, comes  
To his last summer haunts and homes  
To hollow tree and crevisd wall  
And in the grass the rails odd call  
That featherd spirit stops the swain  
To listen to his note again  
And school boy still in vain retraces  
The secrets of his hiding places  
In the black thorns crowded cops<sup>~e1</sup>  
Thro its varied turns and stops  
The nightingale its ditty weaves  
Hid in a multitude of leaves  
The boy stops short to hear the strain  
And 'sweet jug jug' he mocks again  
The yellow hammer builds its nest  
By banks where sun beams earliest rest  
That dries the dews from off the grass  
Shading it from all that pass  
Save the rude boy wi ferret gaze  
That hunts thro evry secret maze  
He finds its pencild eggs again  
All streakd wi lines as if a pen  
By natures freakish hand was took



To scrawl them over like a book  
And from these many mozzling marks  
The school boy names them 'writing larks'  
Bum barrels twit on bush and tree  
Scarse bigger then a bumble bee  
And in a white thorns leafy rest  
It builds its curious pudding-nest  
Wi hole beside as if a mouse  
Had built the little barrel house  
Toiling full many a lining feather  
And bits of grey tree moss together  
Amid the noisey rooky park  
Beneath the firdales branches dark  
The little golden crested wren  
Hangs up his glowing nest agen  
And sticks it to the furry leaves  
As martins theirs beneath the eaves  
The old hens leave the roost betimes  
And oer the garden pailing climbs  
To scrat the gardens fresh turnd soil  
And if unwatchd his crops to spoil  
Oft cackling from the prison yard  
To peck about the houseclose sward  
Catching at butterflys and things  
Ere they have time to try their wings  
The cattle feels the breath of may  
And kick and toss their heads in play  
The ass beneath his bags of sand  
Oft jerks the string from leaders hand  
And on the road will eager stoop  
To pick the sprouting thistle up  
Oft answering on his weary way  
Some distant neighbours sobbing bray  
Dining the ears of driving boy  
As if he felt a fit of joy  
Wi in its pinfold circle left  
Of all its company bereft  
Starvd stock no longer noising round  
Lone in the nooks of foddering ground  
Each skeleton of lingering stack  
By winters tempests beaten black  
Nodds upon props or bolt upright

Stands swarthy in the summer light  
And oer the green grass seems to lower  
Like stump of old time wasted tower  
All that in winter lookd for hay  
Spread from their batterd haunts away  
To pick the grass or lye at lare  
Beneath the mild hedge shadows there  
Sweet month that gives a welcome call  
To toil and nature and to all  
Yet one day mid thy many joys  
Is dead to all its sport and noise  
Old may day where's thy glorys gone  
All fled and left thee every one  
Thou comst to thy old haunts and homes  
Unnoticd as a stranger comes  
No flowers are pluckt to hail the now  
Nor cotter seeks a single bough  
The maids no more on thy sweet morn  
Awake their thresholds to adorn  
Wi dewey flowers-May locks new come  
And princifeathers cluttering bloom  
And blue bells from the woodland moss  
And cowslip cucking balls to toss  
Above the garlands swinging hight  
Hang in the soft eves sober light  
These maid and child did yearly pull  
By many a folded apron full  
But all is past the merry song  
Of maidens hurrying along  
To crown at eve the earliest cow  
Is gone and dead and silent now  
The laugh raisd at the mocking thorn  
Tyd to the cows tail last that morn  
The kerchief at arms length displayd  
Held up by pairs of swain and maid  
While others bolted underneath  
Bawling loud wi panting breath  
'Duck under water' as they ran  
Alls ended as they ne'er began  
While the new thing that took thy place  
Wears faded smiles upon its face  
And where enclosure has its birth

It spreads a mildew oer her mirth  
The herd no longer one by one  
Goes plodding on her morning way  
And garlands lost and sports nigh gone  
Leaves her like thee a common day  
Yet summer smiles upon thee still  
Wi natures sweet unalterd will  
And at thy births unworshipd hours  
Fills her green lap wi swarms of flowers  
To crown thee still as thou hast been  
Of spring and summer months the queen.

John Clare

# Meet Me In The Green Glen

Love, meet me in the green glen,  
Beside the tall elm-tree,  
Where the sweetbriar smells so sweet agen;  
There come with me.  
Meet me in the green glen.

Meet me at the sunset  
Down in the green glen,  
Where we've often met  
By hawthorn-tree and foxes' den,  
Meet me in the green glen.

Meet me in the green glen,  
By sweetbriar bushes there;  
Meet me by your own sen,  
Where the wild thyme blossoms fair.  
Meet me in the green glen.

Meet me by the sweetbriar,  
By the mole-hill swelling there;  
When the west glows like a fire  
God's crimson bed is there.  
Meet me in the green glen.

John Clare

# Merry Maid

Bonny and stout and brown, without a hat,  
She frowns offended when they call her fat--  
Yet fat she is, the merriest in the place,  
And all can know she wears a pretty face.  
But still she never heeds what praise can say,  
But does the work, and oft runs out to play,  
To run about the yard and ramp and noise  
And spring the mop upon the servant boys.  
When old hens noise and cackle every where  
She hurries eager if the eggs are dear,  
And runs to seek them when they lay away  
To get them ready for the market day.  
She gambols with the men and laughs aloud  
And only quarrels when they call her proud.

John Clare

## Mouse's Nest

I found a ball of grass among the hay  
And progged it as I passed and went away;  
And when I looked I fancied something stirred,  
And turned again and hoped to catch the bird —  
When out an old mouse bolted in the wheats  
With all her young ones hanging at her teats;  
She looked so odd and so grotesque to me,  
I ran and wondered what the thing could be,  
And pushed the knapweed bunches where I stood;  
Then the mouse hurried from the craking brood.  
The young ones squeaked, and as I went away  
She found her nest again among the hay.  
The water o'er the pebbles scarce could run  
And broad old cesspools glittered in the sun.

John Clare

# Nature's Hymn To The Deity

All nature owns with one accord  
The great and universal Lord:  
The sun proclaims him through the day,  
The moon when daylight drops away,  
The very darkness smiles to wear  
The stars that show us God is there,  
On moonlight seas soft gleams the sky  
And 'God is with us' waves reply.

Winds breathe from God's abode 'we come,'  
Storms louder own God is their home,  
And thunder yet with louder call,  
Sounds 'God is mightiest over all';  
Till earth right loath the proof to miss  
Echoes triumphantly 'He is,'  
And air and ocean makes reply,  
God reigns on earth, in air and sky.

All nature owns with one accord  
The great and universal Lord:  
Insect and bird and tree and flower--  
The witnesses of every hour--  
Are pregnant with his prophesy  
And 'God is with us' all reply.  
The first link in the mighty plan  
Is still--and all upbraideth man.

John Clare

# Night Wind

Darkness like midnight from the sobbing woods  
Clamours with dismal tidings of the rain  
Roaring as rivers breaking loose in floods  
To spread and foam and deluge all the plain  
The cotter listens at his door again  
Half doubting whether it be floods or wind  
And through the thickening darkness looks affraid  
Thinking of roads that travel has to find  
Through night's black depths in danger's garb arrayed  
And the loud glabber round the flaze soon stops  
When hushed to silence by a lifted hand  
Of fearing dame who hears the noise in dread  
And thinks a deluge comes to drown the land  
Nor dares she go to bed untill the tempest drops

John Clare



# Nobody Cometh To Woo

On Martinmas eve the dogs did bark,  
And I opened the window to see,  
When every maiden went by with her spark  
But neer a one came to me.  
And O dear what will become of me?  
And O dear what shall I do,  
When nobody whispers to marry me--  
Nobody cometh to woo?

None's born for such troubles as I be:  
If the sun wakens first in the morn  
'Lazy hussy' my parents both call me,  
And I must abide by their scorn,  
For nobody cometh to marry me,  
Nobody cometh to woo,  
So here in distress must I tarry me--  
What can a poor maiden do?

If I sigh through the window when Jerry  
The ploughman goes by, I grow bold;  
And if I'm disposed to be merry,  
My parents do nothing but scold;  
And Jerry the clown, and no other,  
Eer cometh to marry or woo;  
They think me the moral of mother  
And judge me a terrible shrew.

For mother she hateth all fellows,  
And spinning's my father's desire,  
While the old cat growls bass with the bellows  
If eer I hitch up to the fire.  
I make the whole house out of humour,  
I wish nothing else but to please,  
Would fortune but bring a new comer  
To marry, and make me at ease!

When I've nothing my leisure to hinder  
I scarce get as far as the eaves;  
Her head's instant out of the window

Calling out like a press after thieves.  
The young men all fall to remarking,  
And laugh till they're weary to see't,  
While the dogs at the noise begin barking,  
And I slink in with shame from the street.

My mother's aye jealous of loving,  
My father's aye jealous of play,  
So what with them both there's no moving,  
I'm in durance for life and a day.  
O who shall I get for to marry me?  
Who will have pity to woo?  
Tis death any longer to tarry me,  
And what shall a poor maiden do?

John Clare

# November

The landscape sleeps in mist from morn till noon;  
And, if the sun looks through, 'tis with a face  
Beamless and pale and round, as if the moon,  
When done the journey of her nightly race,  
Had found him sleeping, and supplied his place.  
For days the shepherds in the fields may be,  
Nor mark a patch of sky - blindfold they trace,  
The plains, that seem without a bush or tree,  
Whistling aloud by guess, to flocks they cannot see.

The timid hare seems half its fears to lose,  
Crouching and sleeping 'neath its grassy lair,  
And scarcely startles, tho' the shepherd goes  
Close by its home, and dogs are barking there;  
The wild colt only turns around to stare  
At passer by, then knaps his hide again;  
And moody crows beside the road forbear  
To fly, tho' pelted by the passing swain;  
Thus day seems turn'd to night, and tries to wake in vain.

The owlet leaves her hiding-place at noon,  
And flaps her grey wings in the doubling light;  
The hoarse jay screams to see her out so soon,  
And small birds chirp and startle with affright;  
Much doth it scare the superstitious wight,  
Who dreams of sorry luck, and sore dismay;  
While cow-boys think the day a dream of night,  
And oft grow fearful on their lonely way,  
Fancying that ghosts may wake, and leave their graves by day.

Yet but awhile the slumbering weather flings  
Its murky prison round - then winds wake loud;  
With sudden stir the startled forest sings  
Winter's returning song - cloud races cloud,  
And the horizon throws away its shroud,  
Sweeping a stretching circle from the eye;  
Storms upon storms in quick succession crowd,  
And o'er the sameness of the purple sky  
Heaven paints, with hurried hand, wild hues of every dye.

At length it comes along the forest oaks,  
With sobbing ebbs, and uproar gathering high;  
The scared, hoarse raven on its cradle croaks,  
And stockdove-flocks in hurried terrors fly,  
While the blue hawk hangs o'er them in the sky.-  
The hedger hastens from the storm begun,  
To seek a shelter that may keep him dry;  
And foresters low bent, the wind to shun,  
Scarce hear amid the strife the poacher's muttering gun.

The ploughman hears its humming rage begin,  
And hies for shelter from his naked toil;  
Buttoning his doublet closer to his chin,  
He bends and scampers o'er the elting soil,  
While clouds above him in wild fury boil,  
And winds drive heavily the beating rain;  
He turns his back to catch his breath awhile,  
Then ekes his speed and faces it again,  
To seek the shepherd's hut beside the rushy plain.

The boy, that scareth from the spiry wheat  
The melancholy crow - in hurry weaves,  
Beneath an ivied tree, his sheltering seat,  
Of rushy flags and sedges tied in sheaves,  
Or from the field a shock of stubble thieves.  
There he doth dithering sit, and entertain  
His eyes with marking the storm-driven leaves;  
Oft spying nests where he spring eggs had ta'en,  
And wishing in his heart 'twas summer-time again.

Thus wears the month along, in checker'd moods,  
Sunshine and shadows, tempests loud, and calms;  
One hour dies silent o'er the sleepy woods,  
The next wakes loud with unexpected storms;  
A dreary nakedness the field deforms -  
Yet many a rural sound, and rural sight,  
Lives in the village still about the farms,  
Where toil's rude uproar hums from morn till night  
Noises, in which the ears of Industry delight.

At length the stir of rural labour's still,

And Industry her care awhile forgoes;  
When Winter comes in earnest to fulfil  
His yearly task, at bleak November's close,  
And stops the plough, and hides the field in snows;  
When frost locks up the stream in chill delay,  
And mellows on the hedge the jetty sloes,  
For little birds - then Toil hath time for play,  
And nought but threshers' flails awake the dreary day.

John Clare

## Now Is Past

\_Now\_ is past--the happy \_now\_  
When we together roved  
Beneath the wildwood's oak-tree bough  
And Nature said we loved.  
Winter's blast  
The \_now\_ since then has crept between,  
And left us both apart.  
Winters that withered all the green  
Have froze the beating heart.  
Now is past.

\_Now\_ is past since last we met  
Beneath the hazel bough;  
Before the evening sun was set  
Her shadow stretched below.  
Autumn's blast  
Has stained and blighted every bough;  
Wild strawberries like her lips  
Have left the mosses green below,  
Her bloom's upon the hips.  
Now is past.

\_Now\_ is past, is changed agen,  
The woods and fields are painted new.  
Wild strawberries which both gathered then,  
None know now where they grew.  
The skys oercast.  
Wood strawberries faded from wood sides,  
Green leaves have all turned yellow;  
No Adelaide walks the wood rides,  
True love has no bed-fellow.  
Now is past.

John Clare

# Patty Of The Vale

'A weedling child on lonely lea  
My evening rambles chanced to see;  
And much the weedling tempted me  
To crop its tender flower;

Exposed to wind and heavy rain,  
It's head bow'd lowly on the plain;  
Hand silently it seem'd in pain  
Of life's endanger'd hour.

And wilt thou bid my bloom decay,  
And crop my flower, and me betray,  
And cast my injured sweets away?-  
Its silence seemly sigh'd

'A moment's idol of thy mind!  
And is a stranger so unkind  
to leave the shameful root behind,  
Bereft of all its pride?'

And so it seemly did complain;  
And beating fell the heavy rain;  
And low it droop'd upon the plain,  
To fate resign'd to fall:

My heart did melt at its decline,  
And 'Come,' said I, 'thou gem divine,  
My fate shall stand the storm with thine;  
So took the root and all.'

John Clare

# Peggy

Peggy said good morning and I said good bye,  
When farmers dib the corn and laddies sow the rye.  
Young Peggy's face was common sense and I was rather shy  
When I met her in the morning when the farmers sow the rye.

Her half laced boots fit tightly as she tripped along the grass,  
And she set her foot so lightly where the early bee doth pass.  
Oh Peggy was a young thing, her face was common sense,  
I courted her about the spring and loved her ever thence.

Oh Peggy was the young thing and bonny as to size;  
Her lips were cherries of the spring and hazel were her eyes.  
Oh Peggy she was straight and tall as is the poplar tree,  
Smooth as the freestone of the wall, and very dear to me.

Oh Peggy's gown was chocolate and full of cherries white;  
I keep a bit on't for her sake and love her day and night.  
I drest myself just like a prince and Peggy went to woo,  
But she's been gone some ten years since, and I know not what to do.

John Clare



# Peggy's The Lady Of The Hall

And will she leave the lowly clowns  
For silk and satins gay,  
Her woollen aprons and drab gowns  
For lady's cold array?  
And will she leave the wild hedge rose,  
The redbreast and the wren,  
And will she leave her Sunday beaus  
And milk shed in the glen?  
And will she leave her kind friends all  
To be the Lady of the Hall?

The cowslips bowed their golden drops,  
The white thorn white as sheets;  
The lamb agen the old ewe stops,  
The wren and robin tweets.  
And Peggy took her milk pails still,  
And sang her evening song,  
To milk her cows on Cowslip Hill  
For half the summer long.  
But silk and satins rich and rare  
Are doomed for Peggy still to wear.

But when the May had turned to haws,  
The hedge rose swelled to hips,  
Peggy was missed without a cause,  
And left us in eclipse.  
The shepherd in the hovel milks,  
Where builds the little wren,  
And Peggy's gone, all clad in silks--  
Far from the happy glen,  
From dog-rose, woodbine, clover, all  
To be the Lady of the Hall.

John Clare

## Pleasures Of Fancy

A path, old tree, goes by thee crooking on,  
And through this little gate that claps and bangs  
Against thy rifted trunk, what steps hath gone?  
Though but a lonely way, yet mystery hangs  
O'er crowds of pastoral scenes recordless here.  
The boy might climb the nest in thy young boughs  
That's slept half an eternity; in fear  
The herdsman may have left his startled cows  
For shelter when heaven's thunder voice was near;  
Here too the woodman on his wallet laid  
For pillow may have slept an hour away;  
And poet pastoral, lover of the shade,  
Here sat and mused half some long summer day  
While some old shepherd listened to the lay.

John Clare

# Ploughman Singing

Here morning in the ploughman's songs is met  
Ere yet one footstep shows in all the sky,  
And twilight in the east, a doubt as yet,  
Shows not her sleeve of grey to know her bye.  
Woke early, I arose and thought that first  
In winter time of all the world was I.  
The old owls might have hallooed if they durst,  
But joy just then was up and whistled bye  
A merry tune which I had known full long,  
But could not to my memory wake it back,  
Until the ploughman changed it to the song.  
O happiness, how simple is thy track.  
--Tinged like the willow shoots, the east's young brow  
Glows red and finds thee singing at the plough.

John Clare

# Quail's Nest

I wandered out one rainy day  
And heard a bird with merry joys  
Cry 'wet my foot' for half the way;  
I stood and wondered at the noise,

When from my foot a bird did flee--  
The rain flew bouncing from her breast  
I wondered what the bird could be,  
And almost trampled on her nest.

The nest was full of eggs and round--  
I met a shepherd in the vales,  
And stood to tell him what I found.  
He knew and said it was a quail's,

For he himself the nest had found,  
Among the wheat and on the green,  
When going on his daily round,  
With eggs as many as fifteen.

Among the stranger birds they feed,  
Their summer flight is short and low;  
There's very few know where they breed,  
And scarcely any where they go.

John Clare

## Remembrances

Summer pleasures they are gone like to visions every one  
And the cloudy days of autumn and of winter cometh on  
I tried to call them back but unbidden they are gone  
Far away from heart and eye and for ever far away  
Dear heart and can it be that such raptures meet decay  
I thought them all eternal when by Langley Bush I lay  
I thought them joys eternal when I used to shout and play  
On its bank at 'clink and bandy' 'chock' and 'taw' and  
ducking stone  
Where silence sitteth now on the wild heath as her own  
Like a ruin of the past all alone

When I used to lie and sing by old eastwells boiling spring  
When I used to tie the willow boughs together for a 'swing'  
And fish with crooked pins and thread and never catch a  
thing  
With heart just like a feather- now as heavy as a stone  
When beneath old lea close oak I the bottom branches broke  
To make our harvest cart like so many working folk  
And then to cut a straw at the brook to have a soak  
O I never dreamed of parting or that trouble had a sting  
Or that pleasures like a flock of birds would ever take to  
wing  
Leaving nothing but a little naked spring

When jumping time away on old cross berry way  
And eating awes like sugar plumbs ere they had lost the may  
And skipping like a leveret before the peep of day  
On the rolly polly up and downs of pleasant swordy well  
When in round oaks narrow lane as the south got black again  
We sought the hollow ash that was shelter from the rain  
With our pockets full of peas we had stolen from the grain  
How delicious was the dinner time on such a showry day  
O words are poor receipts for what time hath stole away  
The ancient pulpit trees and the play

When for school oer 'little field' with its brook and wooden  
brig  
Where I swaggered like a man though I was not half so big  
While I held my little plough though twas but a willow twig  
And drove my team along made of nothing but a name  
'Gee hep' and 'hoit' and 'woi'- O I never call to mind  
These pleasant names of places but I leave a sigh behind  
While I see the little mouldywharps hang sweeing to the wind  
On the only aged willow that in all the field remains  
And nature hides her face where theyre sweeing in their  
chains  
And in a silent murmuring complains

Here was commons for the hills where they seek for  
freedom still  
Though every commons gone and though traps are set to kill  
The little homeless miners- O it turns my bosom chill  
When I think of old 'sneap green' puddocks nook and hilly  
snow  
Where bramble bushes grew and the daisy gemmed in dew  
And the hills of silken grass like to cushions to the view  
When we threw the pissmire crumbs when we's nothing  
else to do  
All leveled like a desert by the never weary plough  
All vanished like the sun where that cloud is passing now  
All settled here for ever on its brow

I never thought that joys would run away from boys  
Or that boys would change their minds and forsake such  
summer joys  
But alack I never dreamed that the world had other toys  
To petrify first feelings like the fable into stone  
Till I found the pleasure past and a winter come at last  
Then the fields were sudden bare and the sky got overcast  
And boyhoods pleasing haunts like a blossom in the blast  
Was shrivelled to a withered weed and trampled down and  
done  
Till vanished was the morning spring and set that summer  
sun  
And winter fought her battle strife and won

By Langley bush I roam but the bush hath left its hill  
On cower green I stray tis a desert strange and chill  
And spreading lea close oak ere decay had penned its will  
To the axe of the spoiler and self interest fell a prey  
And cross berry way and old round oaks narrow lane  
With its hollow trees like pulpits I shall never see again  
Inclosure like a Buonaparte let not a thing remain  
It levelled every bush and tree and levelled every hill  
And hung the moles for traitors - though the brook is  
running still  
It runs a naked brook cold and chill

O had I known as then joy had left the paths of men  
I had watched her night and day besure and never slept agen  
And when she turned to go O I'd caught her mantle then  
And wooed her like a lover by my lonely side to stay  
Aye knelt and worshipped on as love in beautys bower  
And clung upon her smiles as a bee upon her flower  
And gave her heart my poesys all cropt in a sunny hour  
As keepsakes and pledges to fade away  
But love never heeded to treasure up the may  
So it went the comon road with decay.

John Clare

# Rural Morning

Soon as the twilight through the distant mist  
In silver hemmings skirts the purple east,  
Ere yet the sun unveils his smiles to view  
And dries the morning's chilly robes of dew,  
Young Hodge the horse-boy, with a soodly gait,  
Slow climbs the stile, or opes the creaky gate,  
With willow switch and halter by his side  
Prepared for Dobbin, whom he means to ride;  
The only tune he knows still whistling oer,  
And humming scraps his father sung before,  
As 'Wantley Dragon,' and the 'Magic Rose,'  
The whole of music that his village knows,  
Which wild remembrance, in each little town,  
From mouth to mouth through ages handles down.  
Onward he jolls, nor can the minstrel-throngs  
Entice him once to listen to their songs;  
Nor marks he once a blossom on his way;  
A senseless lump of animated clay--  
With weather-beaten hat of rusty brown,  
Stranger to brinks, and often to a crown;  
With slop-frock suiting to the ploughman's taste,  
Its greasy skirtings twisted round his waist;  
And hardened high-lows clenched with nails around,  
Clamping defiance oer the stoney ground,  
The deadly foes to many a blossomed sprout  
That luckless meets him in his morning's rout.  
In hobbling speed he roams the pasture round,  
Till hunted Dobbin and the rest are found;  
Where some, from frequent meddlings of his whip,  
Well know their foe, and often try to slip;  
While Dobbin, tamed by age and labour, stands  
To meet all trouble from his brutish hands,  
And patient goes to gate or knowly brake,  
The teasing burden of his foe to take;  
Who, soon as mounted, with his switching weals,  
Puts Dob's best swiftness in his heavy heels,  
The toltering bustle of a blundering trot  
Which whips and cudgels neer increased a jot,  
Though better speed was urged by the clown--



And thus he snorts and jostles to the town.

And now, when toil and summer's in its prime,  
In every vill, at morning's earliest time,  
To early-risers many a Hodge is seen,  
And many a Dob's heard clattering oer the green.

Now straying beams from day's unclosing eye  
In copper-coloured patches flush the sky,  
And from night's prison strugglingly encroach,  
To bring the summons of warm day's approach,  
Till, slowly mounting oer the ridge of clouds  
That yet half shows his face, and half enshrouds,  
The unfettered sun takes his unbounded reign  
And wakes all life to noise and toil again:  
And while his opening mellows oer the scenes  
Of wood and field their many mingling greens,  
Industry's bustling din once more devours  
The soothing peace of morning's early hours:  
The grunt of hogs freed from their nightly dens  
And constant cacklings of new-laying hens,  
And ducks and geese that clamorous joys repeat  
The splashing comforts of the pond to meet,  
And chirping sparrows dropping from the eaves  
For offal kernels that the poultry leaves,  
Oft signal-calls of danger chittering high  
At skulking cats and dogs approaching nigh.  
And lowing steers that hollow echoes wake  
Around the yard, their nightly fast to break,  
As from each barn the lumping flail rebounds  
In mingling concert with the rural sounds;  
While oer the distant fields more faintly creep  
The murmuring bleatings of unfolding sheep,  
And ploughman's callings that more hoarse proceed  
Where industry still urges labour's speed,  
The bellowing of cows with udders full  
That wait the welcome halloo of 'come mull,'  
And rumbling waggons deafening again,  
Rousing the dust along the narrow lane,  
And cracking whips, and shepherd's hooting cries,  
From woodland echoes urging sharp replies.  
Hodge, in his waggon, marks the wondrous tongue,

And talks with echo as he drives along;  
Still cracks his whip, bawls every horse's name,  
And echo still as ready bawls the same:  
The puzzling mystery he would gladly cheat,  
And fain would utter what it can't repeat,  
Till speedless trials prove the doubted elf  
As skilled in noise and sounds as Hodge himself;  
And, quite convinced with the proofs it gives,  
The boy drives on and fancies echo lives,  
Like some wood-fiend that frights benighted men,  
The troubling spirit of a robber's den.

And now the blossom of the village view,  
With airy hat of straw, and apron blue,  
And short-sleeved gown, that half to guess reveals  
By fine-turned arms what beauty it conceals;  
Whose cheeks health flushes with as sweet a red  
As that which stripes the woodbine oer her head;  
Deeply she blushes on her morn's employ,  
To prove the fondness of some passing boy,  
Who, with a smile that thrills her soul to view,  
Holds the gate open till she passes through,  
While turning nods beck thanks for kindness done,  
And looks--if looks could speak--proclaim her won.  
With well-scoured buckets on proceeds the maid,  
And drives her cows to milk beneath the shade,  
Where scarce a sunbeam to molest her steals--  
Sweet as the thyme that blossoms where she kneels;  
And there oft scares the cooing amorous dove  
With her own favoured melodies of love.  
Snugly retired in yet dew-laden bowers,  
This sweetest specimen of rural flowers  
Displays, red glowing in the morning wind,  
The powers of health and nature when combined.

Last on the road the cowboy careless swings,  
Leading tamed cattle in their tending strings,  
With shining tin to keep his dinner warm  
Swung at his back, or tucked beneath his arm;  
Whose sun-burnt skin, and cheeks chuffed out with fat,  
Are dyed as rusty as his napless hat.  
And others, driving loose their herds at will,

Are now heard whooping up the pasture-hill;  
Peeled sticks they bear of hazel or of ash,  
The rib-marked hides of restless cows to thrash.  
In sloven garb appears each bawling boy,  
As fit and suiting to his rude employ;  
His shoes, worn down by many blundering treads,  
Oft show the tenants needing safer sheds:  
The pithy bunch of unripe nuts to seek,  
And crabs sun-reddened with a tempting cheek,  
From pasture hedges, daily puts to rack  
His tattered clothes, that scarcely screen the back,--  
Daubed all about as if besmeared with blood,  
Stained with the berries of the brambly wood  
That stud the straggling briars as black as jet,  
Which, when his cattle lair, he runs to get;  
Or smaller kinds, as if beglossed with dew  
Shining dim-powdered with a downy blue,  
That on weak tendrils lowly creeping grow  
Where, choaked in flags and sedges, wandering slow,  
The brook purls simmering its declining tide  
Down the crooked boundings of the pasture-side.  
There they to hunt the luscious fruit delight,  
And dabbling keep within their charges' sight;  
Oft catching prickly struttles on their rout,  
And miller-thumbs and gudgeons driving out,  
Hid near the arched brig under many a stone  
That from its wall rude passing clowns have thrown.  
And while in peace cows eat, and chew their cuds,  
Moozing cool sheltered neath the skirting woods,  
To double uses they the hours convert,  
Turning the toils of labour into sport;  
Till morn's long streaking shadows lose their tails,  
And cooling winds swoon into faltering gales;  
And searching sunbeams warm and sultry creep,  
Waking the teasing insects from their sleep;  
And dreaded gadflies with their drowsy hum  
On the burnt wings of mid-day zephyrs come,--  
Urging each lown to leave his sports in fear,  
To stop his starting cows that dread the fly;  
Droning unwelcome tidings on his ear,  
That the sweet peace of rural morn's gone by.



# Scandal

She hastens out and scarcely pins her clothes  
To hear the news and tell the news she knows;  
She talks of sluts, marks each unmended gown,  
Her self the dirtiest slut in all the town.  
She stands with eager haste at slander's tale,  
And drinks the news as drunkards drink their ale.  
Excuse is ready at the biggest lie--  
She only heard it and it passes bye.  
The very cat looks up and knows her face  
And hastens to the chair to get the place;  
When once set down she never goes away,  
Till tales are done and talk has nought to say.  
She goes from house to house the village oer,  
Her slander bothers everybody's door.

John Clare

## Schoolboys In Winter

The schoolboys still their morning ramble take  
To neighboring village school with playing speed,  
Loitering with passtime's leisure till they quake,  
Oft looking up the wild-geese droves to heed,  
Watching the letters which their journeys make;  
Or plucking haws on which their fieldfares feed,  
And hips and sloes; and on each shallow lake  
Making glib slides, where they like shadows go  
Till some fresh passtimes in their minds awake.  
Then off they start anew and hasty blow  
Their numbed and clumpsing fingers till they glow;  
Then races with their shadows wildly run  
That stride huge giants o'er the shining snow  
In the pale splendour of the winter sun.

John Clare

# Secret Love

I hid my love when young till I  
Couldn't bear the buzzing of a fly;  
I hid my love to my despite  
Till I could not bear to look at light:  
I dare not gaze upon her face  
But left her memory in each place;  
Where eer I saw a wild flower lie  
I kissed and bade my love good bye.

I met her in the greenest dells  
Where dewdrops pearl the wood blue bells  
The lost breeze kissed her bright blue eye,  
The bee kissed and went singing by,  
A sunbeam found a passage there,  
A gold chain round her neck so fair;  
As secret as the wild bee's song  
She lay there all the summer long.

I hid my love in field and town  
Till een the breeze would knock me down,  
The bees seemed singing ballads oer,  
The fly's bass turned a lion's roar;  
And even silence found a tongue,  
To haunt me all the summer long;  
The riddle nature could not prove  
Was nothing else but secret love.

John Clare

# Signs Of Winter

The cat runs races with her tail. The dog  
Leaps oer the orchard hedge and knarls the grass.  
The swine run round and grunt and play with straw,  
Snatching out hasty mouthfuls from the stack.  
Sudden upon the elmtree tops the crow  
Unceremonious visit pays and croaks,  
Then swops away. From mossy barn the owl  
Bobs hasty out--wheels round and, scared as soon,  
As hastily retires. The ducks grow wild  
And from the muddy pond fly up and wheel  
A circle round the village and soon, tired,  
Plunge in the pond again. The maids in haste  
Snatch from the orchard hedge the mizzled clothes  
And laughing hurry in to keep them dry.

John Clare



# Snow Storm

What a night! The wind howls, hisses, and but stops  
To howl more loud, while the snow volley keeps  
Incessant batter at the window pane,  
Making our comfort feel as sweet again;  
And in the morning, when the tempest drops,  
At every cottage door mountainous heaps  
Of snow lie drifted, that all entrance stops  
Untill the besom and the shovel gain  
The path, and leave a wall on either side.  
The shepherd rambling valleys white and wide  
With new sensations his old memory fills,  
When hedges left at night, no more descried,  
Are turned to one white sweep of curving hills,  
And trees turned bushes half their bodies hide.

The boy that goes to fodder with surprise  
Walks oer the gate he opened yesternight.  
The hedges all have vanished from his eyes;  
Een some tree tops the sheep could reach to bite.  
The novel scene emboldens new delight,  
And, though with cautious steps his sports begin,  
He bolder shuffles the huge hills of snow,  
Till down he drops and plunges to the chin,  
And struggles much and oft escape to win--  
Then turns and laughs but dare not further go;  
For deep the grass and bushes lie below,  
Where little birds that soon at eve went in  
With heads tucked in their wings now pine for day  
And little feel boys oer their heads can stray.

John Clare

## Song #1

Mary, leave thy lowly cot  
When thy thickest jobs are done;  
When thy friends will miss thee not,  
Mary, to the pastures run.  
Where we met the other night  
Neath the bush upon the plain,  
Be it dark or be it light,  
Ye may guess we'll meet again.

Should ye go or should ye not,  
Never shilly-shally, dear.  
Leave your work and leave your cot,  
Nothing need ye doubt or fear:  
Fools may tell ye lies in spite,  
Calling me a roving swain;  
Think what passed the other night--  
I'll be bound ye'll meet again.

John Clare

## Song #2

One gloomy eve I roamed about  
Neath Oxey's hazel bowers,  
While timid hares were darting out,  
To crop the dewy flowers;  
And soothing was the scene to me,  
Right pleased was my soul,  
My breast was calm as summer's sea  
When waves forget to roll.

But short was even's placid smile,  
My startled soul to charm,  
When Nelly lightly skipt the stile,  
With milk-pail on her arm:  
One careless look on me she flung,  
As bright as parting day;  
And like a hawk from covert sprung,  
It pounced my peace away.

John Clare

## Song #3

I peeled bits of straws and I got switches too  
From the grey peeling willow as idlers do,  
And I switched at the flies as I sat all alone  
Till my flesh, blood, and marrow was turned to dry bone.  
My illness was love, though I knew not the smart,  
But the beauty of love was the blood of my heart.  
Crowded places, I shunned them as noises too rude  
And fled to the silence of sweet solitude.  
Where the flower in green darkness buds, blossoms, and fades,  
Unseen of all shepherds and flower-loving maids--  
The hermit bees find them but once and away.  
There I'll bury alive and in silence decay.

I looked on the eyes of fair woman too long,  
Till silence and shame stole the use of my tongue:  
When I tried to speak to her I'd nothing to say,  
So I turned myself round and she wandered away.  
When she got too far off, why, I'd something to tell,  
So I sent sighs behind her and walked to my cell.  
Willow switches I broke and peeled bits of straws,  
Ever lonely in crowds, in Nature's own laws--  
My ball room the pasture, my music the bees,  
My drink was the fountain, my church the tall trees.  
Who ever would love or be tied to a wife  
When it makes a man mad all the days of his life?

John Clare

## Song #4

I wish I was where I would be,  
With love alone to dwell,  
Was I but her or she but me,  
Then love would all be well.  
I wish to send my thoughts to her  
As quick as thoughts can fly,  
But as the winds the waters stir  
The mirrors change and fly.

John Clare

## Song #5

I would not feign a single sigh  
Nor weep a single tear for thee:  
The soul within these orbs burns dry;  
A desert spreads where love should be.  
I would not be a worm to crawl  
A writhing suppliant in thy way;  
For love is life, is heaven, and all  
The beams of an immortal day.

For sighs are idle things and vain,  
And tears for idiots vainly fall.  
I would not kiss thy face again  
Nor round thy shining slippers crawl.  
Love is the honey, not the bee,  
Nor would I turn its sweets to gall  
For all the beauty found in thee,  
Thy lily neck, rose cheek, and all.

I would not feign a single tale  
Thy kindness or thy love to seek;  
Nor sigh for Jenny of the Vale,  
Her ruby smile or rosy cheek.  
I would not have a pain to own  
For those dark curls and those bright eyes  
A frowning lip, a heart of stone,  
False love and folly I despise.

John Clare

# Song's Eternity

What is song's eternity?  
Come and see.  
Can it noise and bustle be?  
Come and see.  
Praises sung or praises said  
Can it be?  
Wait awhile and these are dead -  
Sigh, sigh;  
Be they high or lowly bred  
They die.

What is song's eternity?  
Come and see.  
Melodies of earth and sky,  
Here they be.  
Song once sung to Adam's ears  
Can it be?  
Ballads of six thousand years  
Thrive, thrive;  
Songs awaken with the spheres  
Alive.

Mighty songs that miss decay,  
What are they?  
Crowds and cities pass away  
Like a day.  
Books are out and books are read;  
What are they?  
Years will lay them with the dead -  
Sigh, sigh;  
Trifles unto nothing wed,  
They die.

Dreamers, mark the honey bee;  
Mark the tree  
Where the blue cap "tootle tee"  
Sings a glee  
Sung to Adam and to Eve -  
Here they be.

When floods covered every bough,  
Noah's ark  
Heard that ballad singing now;  
Hark, hark,

"Tootle tootle tootle tee" -  
Can it be  
Pride and fame must shadows be?  
Come and see -  
Every season owns her own;  
Bird and bee  
Sing creation's music on;  
Nature's glee  
Is in every mood and tone  
Eternity.

John Clare



# Spear Thistle

Where the broad sheepwalk bare and brown  
[Yields] scant grass pining after showers,  
And winds go fanning up and down  
The little strawy bents and nodding flowers,  
There the huge thistle, spurred with many thorns,  
The suncrack't upland's russet swells adorns.

Not unvoid of beauty there they come,  
Armed warriors, waiting neither suns nor showers,  
Guarding the little clover plots to bloom  
While sheep nor oxen dare not crop their flowers  
Unsheathing their own knobs of tawny flowers  
When summer cometh in her hottest hours.

The pewit, swopping up and down  
And screaming round the passer by,  
Or running o'er the herbage brown  
With cottle crown uplifted high,  
Loves in its clumps to make a home  
Where danger seldom cares to come.

The yellowhammer, often prest  
For spot to build and be unseen,  
Will in its shelter trust her nest  
When fields and meadows glow with green;  
And larks, though paths go closely by,  
Will in its shade securely lie.

The partridge too, that scarce can trust  
The open downs to be at rest,  
Will in its clumps lie down, and dust  
And prune its horseshoe-circled breast,  
And oft in shining fields of green  
Will lay and raise its brood unseen.

The sheep when hunger presses sore  
May nip the clover round its nest;  
But soon the thistle wounding sore  
Relieves it from each brushing guest,

That leaves a bit of wool behind,  
The yellowhammer loves to find.

The horse will set his foot and bite  
Close to the ground lark's guarded nest  
And snort to meet the prickly sight;  
He fans the feathers of her breast--  
Yet thistles prick so deep that he  
Turns back and leaves her dwelling free.

Its prickly knobs the dews of morn  
Doth bead with dressing rich to see,  
When threads doth hang from thorn to thorn  
Like the small spinner's tapestry;  
And from the flowers a sultry smell  
Comes that agrees with summer well.

The bee will make its bloom a bed,  
The humble bee in tawny brown;  
And one in jacket fringed with red  
Will rest upon its velvet down  
When overtaken in the rain,  
And wait till sunshine comes again.

And there are times when travel goes  
Along the sheep tracks' beaten ways,  
Then pleasure many a praise bestows  
Upon its blossoms' pointed rays,  
When other things are parched beside  
And hot day leaves it in its pride.

John Clare

## Sport In The Meadows

Maytime is to the meadows coming in,  
And cowslip peeps have gotten eer so big,  
And water blobs and all their golden kin  
Crowd round the shallows by the striding brig.  
Daisies and buttercups and ladysmocks  
Are all abouten shining here and there,  
Nodding about their gold and yellow locks  
Like morts of folken flocking at a fair.  
The sheep and cows are crowding for a share  
And snatch the blossoms in such eager haste  
That basket-bearing children running there  
Do think within their hearts they'll get them all  
And hoot and drive them from their graceless waste  
As though there wa'n't a cowslip peep to spare.  
--For they want some for tea and some for wine  
And some to maken up a cuckaball  
To throw across the garland's silken line  
That reaches oer the street from wall to wall.  
--Good gracious me, how merrily they fare:  
One sees a fairer cowslip than the rest,  
And off they shout--the foremost bidding fair  
To get the prize--and earnest half and jest  
The next one pops her down--and from her hand  
Her basket falls and out her cowslips all  
Tumble and litter there--the merry band  
In laughing friendship round about her fall  
To helpen gather up the littered flowers  
That she no loss may mourn. And now the wind  
In frolic mood among the merry hours  
Wakens with sudden start and tosses off  
Some untied bonnet on its dancing wings;  
Away they follow with a scream and laugh,  
And aye the youngest ever lags behind,  
Till on the deep lake's very bank it hings.  
They shout and catch it and then off they start  
And chase for cowslips merry as before,  
And each one seems so anxious at the heart  
As they would even get them all and more.  
One climbs a molehill for a bunch of may,

One stands on tiptoe for a linnet's nest  
And pricks her hand and throws her flowers away  
And runs for plantin leaves to have it drest.  
So do they run about en all the day  
And tease the grass-hid larks from getting rest.  
--Scarce give they time in their unruly haste  
To tie a shoestring that the grass unties--  
And thus they run the meadows' bloom to waste,  
Till even comes and dulls their phantasies,  
When one finds losses out to stifle smiles  
Of silken bonnet-strings--and utters sigh  
O'er garments renten clambering over stiles.  
Yet in the morning fresh afield they hie,  
Bidding the last day's troubles all goodbye;  
When red pied cow again their coming hears,  
And ere they clap the gate she tosses up  
Her head and hastens from the sport she fears:  
The old yoe calls her lamb nor cares to stoop  
To crop a cowslip in their company.  
Thus merrily the little noisy troop  
Along the grass as rude marauders hie,  
For ever noisy and for ever gay  
While keeping in the meadows holiday.

John Clare

## Spring's Messengers

Where slanting banks are always with the sun  
The daisy is in blossom even now;  
And where warm patches by the hedges run  
The cottager when coming home from plough  
Brings home a cowslip root in flower to set.  
Thus ere the Christmas goes the spring is met  
Setting up little tents about the fields  
In sheltered spots.--Primroses when they get  
Behind the wood's old roots, where ivy shields  
Their crimped, curdled leaves, will shine and hide.  
Cart ruts and horses' footings scarcely yield  
A slur for boys, just crizzled and that's all.  
Frost shoots his needles by the small dyke side,  
And snow in scarce a feather's seen to

John Clare

# Stonepit

The passing traveller with wonder sees  
A deep and ancient stonepit full of trees;  
So deep and very deep the place has been,  
The church might stand within and not be seen.  
The passing stranger oft with wonder stops  
And thinks he e'en could walk upon their tops,  
And often stoops to see the busy crow,  
And stands above and sees the eggs below;  
And while the wild horse gives its head a toss,  
The squirrel dances up and runs across.  
The boy that stands and kills the black nosed bee  
Dares down as soon as magpies' nests are found,  
And wonders when he climbs the highest tree  
To find it reaches scarce above the ground.

John Clare

# Sudden Shower

Black grows the southern sky, betokening rain,  
And humming hive-bees homeward hurry bye:  
They feel the change; so let us shun the grain,  
And take the broad road while our feet are dry.  
Ay, there some dropples moistened on my face,  
And pattered on my hat--tis coming nigh!  
Let's look about, and find a sheltering place.  
The little things around, like you and I,  
Are hurrying through the grass to shun the shower.  
Here stoops an ash-tree--hark! the wind gets high,  
But never mind; this ivy, for an hour,  
Rain as it may, will keep us dryly here:  
That little wren knows well his sheltering bower,  
Nor leaves his dry house though we come so near.

John Clare

# Summer

Come we to the summer, to the summer we will come,  
For the woods are full of bluebells and the hedges full of bloom,  
And the crow is on the oak a-building of her nest,  
And love is burning diamonds in my true lover's breast;  
She sits beneath the whitethorn a-plaiting of her hair,  
And I will to my true lover with a fond request repair;  
I will look upon her face, I will in her beauty rest,  
And lay my aching weariness upon her lovely breast.

The clock-a-clay is creeping on the open bloom of May,  
The merry bee is trampling the pinky threads all day,  
And the chaffinch it is brooding on its grey mossy nest  
In the whitethorn bush where I will lean upon my lover's breast;  
I'll lean upon her breast and I'll whisper in her ear  
That I cannot get a wink o'sleep for thinking of my dear;  
I hunger at my meat and I daily fade away  
Like the hedge rose that is broken in the heat of the day.

John Clare



# Summer Evening

The frog half fearful jumps across the path,  
And little mouse that leaves its hole at eve  
Nimbles with timid dread beneath the swath;  
My rustling steps awhile their joys deceive,  
Till past, and then the cricket sings more strong,  
And grasshoppers in merry moods still wear  
The short night weary with their fretting song.  
Up from behind the molehill jumps the hare,  
Cheat of his chosen bed, and from the bank  
The yellowhammer flutters in short fears  
From off its nest hid in the grasses rank,  
And drops again when no more noise it hears.  
Thus nature's human link and endless thrall,  
Proud man, still seems the enemy of all.

John Clare

# Summer Images

Now swarthy Summer, by rude health embrowned,  
Precedence takes of rosy fingered Spring;  
And laughing Joy, with wild flowers prank'd, and crown'd,  
A wild and giddy thing,  
And Health robust, from every care unbound,  
Come on the zephyr's wing,  
And cheer the toiling clown.

Happy as holiday-enjoying face,  
Loud tongued, and "merry as a marriage bell,"  
Thy lightsome step sheds joy in every place;  
And where the troubled dwell,  
Thy witching charms wean them of half their cares;  
And from thy sunny spell,  
They greet joy unawares.

Then with thy sultry locks all loose and rude,  
And mantle laced with gems of garish light,  
Come as of wont; for I would fain intrude,  
And in the world's despite,  
Share the rude wealth that thy own heart beguiles;  
If haply so I might  
Win pleasure from thy smiles.

Me not the noise of brawling pleasure cheers,  
In nightly revels or in city streets;  
But joys which soothe, and not distract the ears,  
That one at leisure meets  
In the green woods, and meadows summer-shorn,  
Or fields, where bee-fly greets  
The ear with mellow horn.

The green-swathed grasshopper, on treble pipe,  
Sings there, and dances, in mad-hearted pranks;  
There bees go courting every flower that's ripe,  
On baulks and sunny banks;  
And droning dragon-fly, on rude bassoon,  
Attempts to give God thanks  
In no discordant tune.

The speckled thrush, by self-delight embued,  
There sings unto himself for joy's amends,  
And drinks the honey dew of solitude.  
There Happiness attends  
With inbred Joy until the heart o'erflow,  
Of which the world's rude friends,  
Nought heeding, nothing know.

There the gay river, laughing as it goes,  
Plashes with easy wave its flaggy sides,  
And to the calm of heart, in calmness shows  
What pleasure there abides,  
To trace its sedgy banks, from trouble free:  
Spots Solitude provides  
To muse, and happy be.

There ruminating 'neath some pleasant bush,  
On sweet silk grass I stretch me at mine ease,  
Where I can pillow on the yielding rush;  
And, acting as I please,  
Drop into pleasant dreams; or musing lie,  
Mark the wind-shaken trees,  
And cloud-betravelled sky.

There think me how some barter joy for care,  
And waste life's summer-health in riot rude,  
Of nature, nor of nature's sweets aware.  
When passions vain intrude,  
These, by calm musings, softened are and still;  
And the heart's better mood  
Feels sick of doing ill.

There I can live, and at my leisure seek  
Joys far from cold restraints--not fearing pride--  
Free as the winds, that breathe upon my cheek  
Rude health, so long denied.  
Here poor Integrity can sit at ease,  
And list self-satisfied  
The song of honey-bees.

The green lane now I traverse, where it goes

Nought guessing, till some sudden turn espies  
Rude batter'd finger post, that stooping shows  
Where the snug mystery lies;  
And then a mossy spire, with ivy crown,  
Cheers up the short surprise,  
And shows a peeping town.

I see the wild flowers, in their summer morn  
Of beauty, feeding on joy's luscious hours;  
The gay convolvulus, wreathing round the thorn,  
Agape for honey showers;  
And slender kingcup, burnished with the dew  
Of morning's early hours,  
Like gold yminted new.

And mark by rustic bridge, o'er shallow stream,  
Cow-tending boy, to toil unreconciled,  
Absorbed as in some vagrant summer dream;  
Who now, in gestures wild,  
Starts dancing to his shadow on the wall,  
Feeling self-gratified,  
Nor fearing human thrall.

Or thread the sunny valley laced with streams,  
Or forests rude, and the o'ershadow'd brims  
Of simple ponds, where idle shepherd dreams,  
Stretching his listless limbs;  
Or trace hay-scented meadows, smooth and long,  
Where joy's wild impulse swims  
In one continued song.

I love at early morn, from new mown swath,  
To see the startled frog his route pursue;  
To mark while, leaping o'er the dripping path,  
His bright sides scatter dew,  
The early lark that from its bustle flies,  
To hail his matin new;  
And watch him to the skies.

To note on hedgerow baulks, in moisture sprent,  
The jetty snail creep from the mossy thorn,  
With earnest heed, and tremulous intent,

Frail brother of the morn,  
That from the tiny bent's dew-misted leaves  
Withdraws his timid horn,  
And fearful vision weaves.

Or swallow heed on smoke-tanned chimney top,  
Wont to be first unsealing Morning's eye,  
Ere yet the bee hath gleaned one wayward drop  
Of honey on his thigh;  
To see him seek morn's airy couch to sing,  
Until the golden sky  
Bepaint his russet wing.

Or sauntering boy by tanning corn to spy,  
With clapping noise to startle birds away,  
And hear him bawl to every passer by  
To know the hour of day;  
While the uncradled breezes, fresh and strong,  
With waking blossoms play,  
And breathe Æolian song.

I love the south-west wind, or low or loud,  
And not the less when sudden drops of rain  
Moisten my glowing cheek from ebon cloud,  
Threatening soft showers again,  
That over lands new ploughed and meadow grounds,  
Summer's sweet breath unchain,  
And wake harmonious sounds.

Rich music breathes in Summer's every sound;  
And in her harmony of varied greens,  
Woods, meadows, hedge-rows, corn-fields, all around  
Much beauty intervenes,  
Filling with harmony the ear and eye;  
While o'er the mingling scenes  
Far spreads the laughing sky.

See, how the wind-enamoured aspen leaves  
Turn up their silver lining to the sun!  
And hark! the rustling noise, that oft deceives,  
And makes the sheep-boy run:  
The sound so mimics fast-approaching showers,

He thinks the rain's begun,  
And hastes to sheltering bowers.

But now the evening curdles dank and grey,  
Changing her watchet hue for sombre weed;  
And moping owls, to close the lids of day,  
On drowsy wing proceed;  
While chickering crickets, tremulous and long,  
Light's farewell inly heed,  
And give it parting song.

The pranking bat its flighty circlet makes;  
The glow-worm burnishes its lamp anew;  
O'er meadows dew-besprent, the beetle wakes  
Inquiries ever new,  
Teazing each passing ear with murmurs vain,  
As wanting to pursue  
His homeward path again.

Hark! 'tis the melody of distant bells  
That on the wind with pleasing hum rebounds  
By fitful starts, then musically swells  
O'er the dim stilly grounds;  
While on the meadow-bridge the pausing boy  
Listens the mellow sounds,  
And hums in vacant joy.

Now homeward-bound, the hedger bundles round  
His evening faggot, and with every stride  
His leathern doublet leaves a rustling sound,  
Till silly sheep beside  
His path start tremulous, and once again  
Look back dissatisfied,  
And scour the dewy plain.

How sweet the soothing calmness that distills  
O'er the heart's every sense its opiate dews,  
In meek-eyed moods and ever balmy trills!  
That softens and subdues,  
With gentle Quiet's bland and sober train,  
Which dreamy eve renews  
In many a mellow strain!

I love to walk the fields, they are to me  
A legacy no evil can destroy;  
They, like a spell, set every rapture free  
That cheer'd me when a boy.  
Play--pastime--all Time's blotting pen conceal'd,  
Comes like a new-born joy,  
To greet me in the field.

For Nature's objects ever harmonize  
With emulous Taste, that vulgar deed annoys;  
Which loves in pensive moods to sympathize,  
And meet vibrating joys  
O'er Nature's pleasing things; nor slighting, deems  
Pastimes, the Muse employs,  
Vain and obtrusive themes.

John Clare

## Sunday Dip

The morning road is thronged with merry boys  
Who seek the water for their Sunday joys;  
They run to seek the shallow pit, and wade  
And dance about the water in the shade.  
The boldest ventures first and dashes in,  
And others go and follow to the chin,  
And duck about, and try to lose their fears,  
And laugh to hear the thunder in their ears.  
They bundle up the rushes for a boat  
And try across the deepest place to float:  
Beneath the willow trees they ride and stoop--  
The awkward load will scarcely bear them up.  
Without their aid the others float away,  
And play about the water half the day.

John Clare



# The Ants

What wonder strikes the curious, while he views  
The black ant's city, by a rotten tree,  
Or woodland bank! In ignorance we muse:  
Pausing, annoyed,--we know not what we see,  
Such government and thought there seem to be;  
Some looking on, and urging some to toil,  
Dragging their loads of bent-stalks slavishly:  
And what's more wonderful, when big loads foil  
One ant or two to carry, quickly then  
A swarm flock round to help their fellow-men.  
Surely they speak a language whisperingly,  
Too fine for us to hear; and sure their ways  
Prove they have kings and laws, and that they be  
Deformed remnants of the Fairy-days.

John Clare

# The Badger

WHEN midnight comes a host of dogs and men  
Go out and track the badger to his den,  
And put a sack within the hole and lie  
Till the old grunting badger passes by.  
He comes and hears - they let the strongest loose.  
The old fox hears the noise and drops the goose.  
The poacher shoots and hurries from the cry,  
And the old hare half wounded buzzes by.  
They get a forkéd stick to bear him down  
And clap the dogs and take him to the town,  
And bait him all the day with many dogs,  
And laugh and shout and fright the scampering hogs.  
He runs along and bites at all he meets:  
They shout and hollo down the noisy streets.  
He turns about to face the loud uproar  
And drives the rebels to their very door.  
The frequent stone is hurled wher'er they go;  
When badgers fight, then everyone's a foe.  
The dogs are clapped and urged to join the fray;  
The badger turns and drives them all away.  
Though scarcely half as big, demure and small,  
He fights with dogs for hours and beats them all.  
The heavy mastiff, savage in the fray,  
Lies down and licks his feet and turns away.  
The bulldog knows his match and waxes cold  
The badger grins and never leaves his hold.  
He drives the crowd and follows at their heels  
And bites them through - the drunkard swears and reels.  
The frightened women take the boys away,  
The blackguard laughs and hurries on the fray.  
He tries to reach the woods, an awkward race,  
But sticks and cudgels quickly stop the chase.  
He turns again and drives the noisy crowd  
And beats the many dogs in noises loud.  
He drives away and beats them every one,  
And then they loose them all and set them on.  
He falls as dead and kicked by boys and men,  
Then starts and grins and drives the crowd again;  
Till kicked and torn and beaten out he lies

And leaves his hold and cackles, groans and dies.

John Clare

# The Beautiful Stranger

I cannot know what country owns thee now,  
With France's forest lilies on thy brow.  
When England knew thee thou wert passing fair;  
I never knew a foreign face so rare.  
The world of waters rolls and rushes bye,  
Nor lets me wander where thy vallies lie.  
But surely France must be a pleasant place  
That greets the stranger with so fair a face;  
The English maiden blushes down the dance,  
But few can equal the fair maid of France.  
I saw thee lovely and I wished thee mine,  
And the last song I ever wrote is thine.

Thy country's honour on thy face attends;  
Men may be foes but beauty makes us friends.

John Clare

# The Cellar Door

By the old tavern door on the causey there lay  
A hogshead of stingo just rolled from a dray,  
And there stood the blacksmith awaiting a drop  
As dry as the cinders that lay in his shop;  
And there stood the cobbler as dry as a bun,  
Almost crackt like a bucket when left in the sun.  
He'd whetted his knife upon pendil and hone  
Till he'd not got a spittle to moisten the stone;  
So ere he could work--though he'd lost the whole day--  
He must wait the new broach and bemoisten his clay.

The cellar was empty, each barrel was drained  
To its dregs--and Sir John like a rebel remained  
In the street--for removal too powerful and large  
For two or three toppers to take into charge.  
Odd zooks, said a gipsey, with bellows to mend,  
Had I strength I would just be for helping a friend  
To walk on his legs: but a child in the street  
Had as much power as he to put John on his feet.  
Then up came the blacksmith: Sir Barley, said he,  
I should just like to storm your old tower for a spree;

And my strength for your strength and bar your renown  
I'd soon try your spirit by cracking your crown.  
And the cobbler he tuckt up his apron and spit  
In his hands for a burster--but devil a bit  
Would he move--so as yet they made nothing of land;  
For there lay the knight like a whale in the sand.  
Said the tinker: If I could but drink of his vein  
I should just be as strong and as stubborn again.  
Push along, said the toper, the cellar's adry:  
There's nothing to moisten the mouth of a fly.

Says the host, We shall burn out with thirst, he's so big.  
There's a cag of small swipes half as sour as a wig.  
In such like extremes, why, extremes will come pat;  
So let's go and wet all our whistles with that.  
Says the gipsey, May I never bottom a chair  
If I drink of small swipes while Sir John's lying there.

And the blacksmith he threw off his apron and swore  
Small swipes should bemoisten his gullet no more:  
Let it out on the floor for the dry cock-a-roach--  
And he held up his hammer with threatens to broach

Sir John in his castle without leave or law  
And suck out his blood with a reed or a straw  
Ere he'd soak at the swipes--and he turned him to start,  
Till the host for high treason came down a full quart.  
Just then passed the dandy and turned up his nose:  
They'd fain have him shove, but he looked at his clothes  
And nipt his nose closer and twirled his stick round  
And simpered, Tis nuisance to lie on the ground.  
But Bacchus, he laughed from the old tavern sign,  
Saying, Go on, thou shadow, and let the sun shine.

Then again they all tried, and the tinker he swore  
That the hogshead had grown twice as heavy or more.  
Nay nay, said the toper, and reeled as he spoke,  
We're all getting weak, that's the end of the joke.  
The ploughman came up and cut short his old tune,  
Hallooed 'woi' to his horses and though it was June  
Said he'd help them an hour ere he'd keep them adry;  
Well done, said the blacksmith with hopes running high;  
He moves, and, by jingo, success to the plough!  
Aye aye, said the cobbler, we'll conquer him now.

The hogshead rolled forward, the toper fell back,  
And the host laughed aloud as his sides they would crack  
To see the old tinker's toil make such a gap  
In his coat as to rend it from collar to flap.  
But the tinker he grumbled and cried Fiddle-dee!  
This garment hath been an old tenant with me;  
And a needle and thread with a little good skill  
When I've leisure will make it stand more weathers still.  
Then crack went his breeks from the hip to the knee  
With his thrusting--no matter; for nothing cared he.

So long as Sir John rolled along to the door,  
He's a chip of our block, said the blacksmith, and swore;  
And as sure as I live to drive nails in a shoe  
He shall have at my cost a full pitcher or two.

And the toper he hiccuped--which hindered an oath--  
So long as he'd credit, he'd pitcher them both.  
But the host stopt to hint when he'd ordered the dray  
Sir Barleycorn's order was purchase and pay.  
And now the old knight is imprisoned and ta'en  
To waste in the tavern man's cellar again.

And now, said the blacksmith, let forfeits come first  
For the insult swipes offered, or his hoops I will burst.  
Here it is, my old hearties--Then drink your thirst full,  
Said the host, for the stingo is worth a strong pull.  
Never fear for your legs if they're broken to-day;  
Winds only blow straws, dust, and feathers away.  
But the cask that is full, like a giant he lies,  
And giants alone can his spirits capsize.  
If he lies in the path, though a king's coming bye,  
John Barleycorn's mighty and there he will lie.

Then the toper sat down with a hiccup and felt  
If he'd still an odd coin in his pocket to melt,  
And he made a wry face, for his pocket was bare.  
--But he laughed and danced up, What, old boy, are you there?  
When he felt that a stiver had got to his knee  
Through a hole in his fob, and right happy was he.  
Says the tinker, I've brawled till no breath I have got  
And not met with twopence to purchase a pot.  
Says the toper, I've powder to charge a long gun,  
And a stiver I've found when I thought I'd got none;

So helping a thirsty old friend in his need  
Is my duty--take heart, thou art welcome indeed.  
Then the smith with his tools in Sir John made a breach,  
And the toper he hiccuped and ended his speech;  
And pulled at the quart, till the snob he declared  
When he went to drink next that the bottom was bared.  
No matter for that, said the toper, and grinned;  
I had but a soak and neer rested for wind.  
That's the law, said the smith, with a look rather vexed,  
But the quart was a forfeit; so pay for the next.

Thus they talked of their skill and their labour till noon  
When the sober man's toil was exactly half done,

And there the plough lay--people hardly could pass  
And the horses let loose polished up the short grass  
And browsed on the bottle of flags lying there,  
By the gipsey's old budget, for mending a chair.  
The miller's horse tied to the old smithy door  
Stood stamping his feet, by the flies bitten sore,  
Awaiting the smith as he wanted a shoe;  
And he stamp till another fell off and made two:

Till the miller, expecting that all would get loose,  
Went to seek him and cursed him outright for a goose;  
But he dipt his dry beak in the mug once or twice  
And forgot all his passion and toil in a trice.  
And the flybitten horse at the old smithy post  
Might stamp till his shoes and his legs they were lost.  
He sung his old songs and forgot his old mill--  
Blow winds high or low, she might rest her at will.  
And the cobbler, in spite of his bustle for pelf,  
Left the shop all the day to take care of itself.

And the toper who carried his house on his head,  
No wife to be teasing, no bairns to be fed,  
Would sit out the week or the month or the year  
Or a life-time so long as he'd credit for beer.  
The ploughman he talked of his skill as divine,  
How he could plough thurrows as straight as a line;  
And the blacksmith he swore, had he but the command,  
He could shoe the king's hunter the best in the land;  
And the cobbler declared, was his skill but once seen,  
He should soon get an order for shoes from the queen.

But the tinker he swore he could beat them all three,  
For gi' me a pair of old bellows, says he,  
And I'll make them roar out like the wind in a storm  
And make them blow fire out of coal hardly warm.  
The toper said nothing but wished the quart full  
And swore he could toss it all off at a pull.  
Have one, said the tinker; but wit was away,  
When the bet was to bind him he'd nothing to pay.  
And thus in the face of life's sun-and-shower weather  
They drank, bragged, and sung, and got merry together.



The sun he went down--the last gleam from his brow  
Flung a smile of repose on the holiday plough;  
The glooms they approached, and the dews like a rain  
Fell thick and hung pearls on the old sorrel mane  
Of the horse that the miller had brought to be shod,  
And the morning awoke, saw a sight rather odd--  
For a bit of the halter still hung at the door,  
Bit through by the horse now at feed on the moor;  
And the old tinker's budget lay still in the weather,  
While all kept on singing and drinking together.

John Clare

# The Cottager

True as the church clock hand the hour pursues  
He plods about his toils and reads the news,  
And at the blacksmith's shop his hour will stand  
To talk of 'Lunun' as a foreign land.  
For from his cottage door in peace or strife  
He neer went fifty miles in all his life.  
His knowledge with old notions still combined  
Is twenty years behind the march of mind.  
He views new knowledge with suspicious eyes  
And thinks it blasphemy to be so wise.  
On steam's almighty tales he wondering looks  
As witchcraft gleaned from old blackletter books.  
Life gave him comfort but denied him wealth,  
He toils in quiet and enjoys his health,  
He smokes a pipe at night and drinks his beer  
And runs no scores on tavern screens to clear.  
He goes to market all the year about  
And keeps one hour and never stays it out.  
Een at St. Thomas tide old Rover's bark  
Hails Dapple's trot an hour before it's dark.  
He is a simple-worded plain old man  
Whose good intents take errors in their plan.  
Oft sentimental and with saddened vein  
He looks on trifles and bemoans their pain,  
And thinks the angler mad, and loudly storms  
With emphasis of speech oer murdered worms.  
And hunters cruel--pleading with sad care  
Pity's petition for the fox and hare,  
Yet feels self-satisfaction in his woes  
For war's crushed myriads of his slaughtered foes.  
He is right scrupulous in one pretext  
And wholesale errors swallows in the next.  
He deems it sin to sing, yet not to say  
A song--a mighty difference in his way.  
And many a moving tale in antique rhymes  
He has for Christmas and such merry times,  
When 'Chevy Chase,' his masterpiece of song,  
Is said so earnest none can think it long.  
Twas the old vicar's way who should be right,

For the late vicar was his heart's delight,  
And while at church he often shakes his head  
To think what sermons the old vicar made,  
Downright and orthodox that all the land  
Who had their ears to hear might understand,  
But now such mighty learning meets his ears  
He thinks it Greek or Latin which he hears,  
Yet church receives him every sabbath day  
And rain or snow he never keeps away.  
All words of reverence still his heart reveres,  
Low bows his head when Jesus meets his ears,  
And still he thinks it blasphemy as well  
Such names without a capital to spell.  
In an old corner cupboard by the wall  
His books are laid, though good, in number small,  
His Bible first in place; from worth and age  
Whose grandsire's name adorns the title page,  
And blank leaves once, now filled with kindred claims,  
Display a world's epitome of names.  
Parents and children and grandchildren all  
Memory's affections in the lists recall.  
And prayer-book next, much worn though strongly bound,  
Proves him a churchman orthodox and sound.  
The 'Pilgrim's Progress' and the 'Death of Abel'  
Are seldom missing from his Sunday table,  
And prime old Tusser in his homely trim,  
The first of bards in all the world with him,  
And only poet which his leisure knows;  
Verse deals in fancy, so he sticks to prose.  
These are the books he reads and reads again  
And weekly hunts the almanacks for rain.  
Here and no further learning's channels ran;  
Still, neighbours prize him as the learned man.  
His cottage is a humble place of rest  
With one spare room to welcome every guest,  
And that tall poplar pointing to the sky  
His own hand planted when an idle boy,  
It shades his chimney while the singing wind  
Hums songs of shelter to his happy mind.  
Within his cot the largest ears of corn  
He ever found his picture frames adorn:  
Brave Granby's head, De Grosse's grand defeat;

He rubs his hands and shows how Rodney beat.  
And from the rafters upon strings depend  
Beanstalks beset with pods from end to end,  
Whose numbers without counting may be seen  
Wrote on the almanack behind the screen.  
Around the corner up on worsted strung  
Pooties in wreaths above the cupboard hung.  
Memory at trifling incidents awakes  
And there he keeps them for his children's sakes,  
Who when as boys searched every sedgy lane,  
Traced every wood and shattered clothes again,  
Roaming about on rapture's easy wing  
To hunt those very pooty shells in spring.  
And thus he lives too happy to be poor  
While strife neer pauses at so mean a door.  
Low in the sheltered valley stands his cot,  
He hears the mountain storm and feels it not;  
Winter and spring, toil ceasing ere tis dark,  
Rests with the lamb and rises with the lark,  
Content his helpmate to the day's employ  
And care neer comes to steal a single joy.  
Time, scarcely noticed, turns his hair to grey,  
Yet leaves him happy as a child at play.

John Clare

# The Cross Roads; Or, The Haymaker's Story

Stopt by the storm, that long in sullen black  
From the south-west stained its encroaching track,  
Haymakers, hustling from the rain to hide,  
Sought the grey willows by the pasture-side;  
And there, while big drops bow the grassy stems,  
And bleb the withering hay with pearly gems,  
Dimple the brook, and patter in the leaves,  
The song or tale an hour's restraint relieves.  
And while the old dames gossip at their ease,  
And pinch the snuff-box empty by degrees,  
The young ones join in love's delightful themes,  
Truths told by gipsies, and expounded dreams;  
And mutter things kept secrets from the rest,  
As sweethearts' names, and whom they love the best;  
And dazzling ribbons they delight to show,  
And last new favours of some veigling beau,  
Who with such treachery tries their hearts to move,  
And, like the highest, bribes the maidens' love.  
The old dames, jealous of their whispered praise,  
Throw in their hints of man's deluding ways;  
And one, to give her counsels more effect,  
And by example illustrate the fact  
Of innocence overcome by flattering man,  
Thrice tapped her box, and pinched, and thus began.

'Now wenches listen, and let lovers lie,  
Ye'll hear a story ye may profit by;  
I'm your age treble, with some oddments to't,  
And right from wrong can tell, if ye'll but do't:  
Ye need not giggle underneath your hat,  
Mine's no joke-matter, let me tell you that;  
So keep ye quiet till my story's told,  
And don't despise your betters cause they're old.

'That grave ye've heard of, where the four roads meet,  
Where walks the spirit in a winding-sheet,  
Oft seen at night, by strangers passing late,  
And tarrying neighbours that at market wait,  
Stalking along as white as driven snow,

And long as one's shadow when the sun is low;  
The girl that's buried there I knew her well,  
And her whole history, if ye'll hark, can tell.  
Her name was Jane, and neighbour's children we,  
And old companions once, as ye may be;  
And like to you, on Sundays often strolled  
To gipsies' camps to have our fortunes told;  
And oft, God rest her, in the fortune-book  
Which we at hay-time in our pockets took,  
Our pins at blindfold on the wheel we stuck,  
When hers would always prick the worst of luck;  
For try, poor thing, as often as she might,  
Her point would always on the blank alight;  
Which plainly shows the fortune one's to have,  
As such like go unwedded to the grave,--  
And so it proved.--The next succeeding May,  
We both to service went from sports and play,  
Though in the village still; as friends and kin  
Thought neighbour's service better to begin.  
So out we went:--Jane's place was reckoned good,  
Though she bout life but little understood,  
And had a master wild as wild can be,  
And far unfit for such a child as she;  
And soon the whisper went about the town,  
That Jane's good looks procured her many a gown  
From him, whose promise was to every one,  
But whose intention was to wive with none.  
Twas nought to wonder, though begun by guess;  
For Jane was lovely in her Sunday dress,  
And all expected such a rosy face  
Would be her ruin--as was just the case.  
The while the change was easily perceived,  
Some months went by, ere I the tales believed;  
For there are people nowadays, Lord knows,  
Will sooner hatch up lies than mend their clothes;  
And when with such-like tattle they begin,  
Don't mind whose character they spoil a pin:  
But passing neighbours often marked them smile,  
And watched him take her milkpail oer a stile;  
And many a time, as wandering closer by,  
From Jenny's bosom met a heavy sigh;  
And often marked her, as discoursing deep,

When doubts might rise to give just cause to weep,  
Smothering their notice, by a wished disguise  
To slive her apron corner to her eyes.  
Such signs were mournful and alarming things,  
And far more weighty than conjecture brings;  
Though foes made double what they heard of all,  
Swore lies as proofs, and prophesied her fall.  
Poor thoughtless wench! it seems but Sunday past  
Since we went out together for the last,  
And plain enough indeed it was to find  
She'd something more than common on her mind;  
For she was always fond and full of chat,  
In passing harmless jokes bout beaus and that,  
But nothing then was scarcely talked about,  
And what there was, I even forced it out.  
A gloomy wanness spoiled her rosy cheek,  
And doubts hung there it was not mine to seek;  
She neer so much as mentioned things to come,  
But sighed oer pleasures ere she left her home;  
And now and then a mournful smile would raise  
At freaks repeated of our younger days,  
Which I brought up, while passing spots of ground  
Where we, when children, 'hurly-burlied' round,  
Or 'blindman-buffed' some morts of hours away--  
Two games, poor thing, Jane dearly loved to play.  
She smiled at these, but shook her head and sighed  
When eer she thought my look was turned aside;  
Nor turned she round, as was her former way,  
To praise the thorn, white over then with May;  
Nor stooped once, though thousands round her grew,  
To pull a cowslip as she used to do:  
For Jane in flowers delighted from a child--  
I like the garden, but she loved the wild--  
And oft on Sundays young men's gifts declined,  
Posies from gardens of the sweetest kind,  
And eager scrambled the dog-rose to get,  
And woodbine-flowers at every bush she met.  
The cowslip blossom, with its ruddy streak,  
Would tempt her furlongs from the path to seek;  
And gay long purple, with its tufty spike,  
She'd wade oer shoes to reach it in the dyke;  
And oft, while scratching through the briary woods

For tempting cuckoo-flowers and violet buds,  
Poor Jane, I've known her crying sneak to town,  
Fearing her mother, when she'd torn her gown.  
Ah, these were days her conscience viewed with pain,  
Which all are loth to lose, as well as Jane.  
And, what I took more odd than all the rest,  
Was, that same night she neer a wish exprest  
To see the gipsies, so beloved before,  
That lay a stone's throw from us on the moor:  
I hinted it; she just replied again--  
She once believed them, but had doubts since then.  
And when we sought our cows, I called, 'Come mull!'  
But she stood silent, for her heart was full.  
She loved dumb things: and ere she had begun  
To milk, caressed them more than eer she'd done;  
But though her tears stood watering in her eye,  
I little took it as her last good-bye;  
For she was tender, and I've often known  
Her mourn when beetles have been trampled on:  
So I neer dreamed from this, what soon befell,  
Till the next morning rang her passing-bell.  
My story's long, but time's in plenty yet,  
Since the black clouds betoken nought but wet;  
And I'll een snatch a minute's breath or two,  
And take another pinch, to help me through.

'So, as I said, next morn I heard the bell,  
And passing neighbours crossed the street, to tell  
That my poor partner Jenny had been found  
In the old flag-pool, on the pasture, drowned.  
God knows my heart! I twittered like a leaf,  
And found too late the cause of Sunday's grief;  
For every tongue was loosed to gabble oer  
The slanderous things that secret passed before:  
With truth or lies they need not then be strict,  
The one they railed at could not contradict.  
Twas now no secret of her being beguiled,  
For every mouth knew Jenny died with child;  
And though more cautious with a living name,  
Each more than guessed her master bore the blame.  
That very morning, it affects me still,  
Ye know the foot-path sidles down the hill,



Ignorant as babe unborn I passed the pond  
To milk as usual in our close beyond,  
And cows were drinking at the water's edge,  
And horses browsed among the flags and sedge,  
And gnats and midges danced the water oer,  
Just as I've marked them scores of times before,  
And birds sat singing, as in mornings gone,--  
While I as unconcerned went soodling on,  
But little dreaming, as the wakening wind  
Flapped the broad ash-leaves oer the pond reclin'd,  
And oer the water crinked the curdled wave,  
That Jane was sleeping in her watery grave.  
The neatherd boy that used to tend the cows,  
While getting whip-sticks from the dangling boughs  
Of osiers drooping by the water-side,  
Her bonnet floating on the top espied;  
He knew it well, and hastened fearful down  
To take the terror of his fears to town,--

A melancholy story, far too true;  
And soon the village to the pasture flew,  
Where, from the deepest hole the pond about,  
They dragged poor Jenny's lifeless body out,  
And took her home, where scarce an hour gone by  
She had been living like to you and I.  
I went with more, and kissed her for the last,  
And thought with tears on pleasures that were past;  
And, the last kindness left me then to do,  
I went, at milking, where the blossoms grew,  
And handfuls got of rose and lambtoe sweet,  
And put them with her in her winding-sheet.  
A wilful murder, jury made the crime;  
Nor parson 'lowed to pray, nor bell to chime;  
On the cross roads, far from her friends and kin,  
The usual law for their ungodly sin  
Who violent hands upon themselves have laid,  
Poor Jane's last bed unchristian-like was made;  
And there, like all whose last thoughts turn to heaven,  
She sleeps, and doubtless hoped to be forgiven.  
But, though I say't, for maids thus veigled in  
I think the wicked men deserve the sin;  
And sure enough we all at last shall see

The treachery punished as it ought to be.  
For ere his wickedness pretended love,  
Jane, I'll be bound, was spotless as the dove,  
And's good a servant, still old folks allow,  
As ever scoured a pail or milked a cow;  
And ere he led her into ruin's way,  
As gay and buxom as a summer's day:  
The birds that ranted in the hedge-row boughs,  
As night and morning we have sought our cows,  
With yokes and buckets as she bounced along,  
Were often deafed to silence with her song.

But now she's gone:--girls, shun deceitful men,  
The worst of stumbles ye can fall agen;  
Be deaf to them, and then, as twere, ye'll see  
Your pleasures safe as under lock and key.  
Throw not my words away, as many do;  
They're gold in value, though they're cheap to you.  
And husseys hearken, and be warned from this,  
If ye love mothers, never do amiss:  
Jane might love hers, but she forsook the plan  
To make her happy, when she thought of man.  
Poor tottering dame, it was too plainly known,  
Her daughter's dying hastened on her own,  
For from the day the tidings reached her door  
She took to bed and looked up no more,  
And, ere again another year came round,  
She, well as Jane, was laid within the ground;  
And all were grieved poor Goody's end to see:  
No better neighbour entered house than she,  
A harmless soul, with no abusive tongue,  
Trig as new pins, and tight's the day was long;  
And go the week about, nine times in ten  
Ye'd find her house as cleanly as her sen.  
But, Lord protect us! time such change does bring,  
We cannot dream what oer our heads may hing;  
The very house she lived in, stick and stone,  
Since Goody died, has tumbled down and gone:  
And where the marjoram once, and sage, and rue,  
And balm, and mint, with curled-leaf parsley grew,  
And double marygolds, and silver thyme,  
And pumpkins neath the window used to climb;

And where I often when a child for hours  
Tried through the pales to get the tempting flowers,  
As lady's laces, everlasting peas,  
True-love-lies-bleeding, with the hearts-at-ease,  
And golden rods, and tansy running high  
That oer the pale-tops smiled on passers-by,  
Flowers in my time that every one would praise,  
Though thrown like weeds from gardens nowadays;  
Where these all grew, now henbane stinks and spreads,  
And docks and thistles shake their seedy heads,  
And yearly keep with nettles smothering oer;--  
The house, the dame, the garden known no more:  
While, neighbouring nigh, one lonely elder-tree  
Is all that's left of what had used to be,  
Marking the place, and bringing up with tears  
The recollections of one's younger years.  
And now I've done, ye're each at once as free  
To take your trundle as ye used to be;  
To take right ways, as Jenny should have ta'en,  
Or headlong run, and be a second Jane;  
For by one thoughtless girl that's acted ill  
A thousand may be guided if they will:  
As oft mong folks to labour bustling on,  
We mark the foremost kick against a stone,  
Or stumble oer a stile he meant to climb,  
While hind ones see and shun the fall in time.  
But ye, I will be bound, like far the best  
Love's tickling nick-nacks and the laughing jest,  
And ten times sooner than be warned by me,  
Would each be sitting on some fellow's knee,  
Sooner believe the lies wild chaps will tell  
Than old dames' cautions, who would wish ye well:  
So have your wills.'--She pinched her box again,  
And ceased her tale, and listened to the rain,  
Which still as usual pattered fast around,  
And bowed the bent-head loaded to the ground;  
While larks, their naked nest by force forsook,  
Pruned their wet wings in bushes by the brook.

The maids, impatient now old Goody ceased,  
As restless children from the school released,  
Right gladly proving, what she'd just foretold,

That young ones' stories were preferred to old,  
Turn to the whisperings of their former joy,  
That oft deceive, but very rarely cloy.

John Clare

# The Crow Sat On The Willow

The crow sat on the willow tree  
A-lifting up his wings,  
And glossy was his coat to see,  
And loud the ploughman sings,  
'I love my love because I know  
The milkmaid she loves me';  
And hoarsely croaked the glossy crow  
Upon the willow tree.  
'I love my love' the ploughman sung,  
And all the fields with music rung.

'I love my love, a bonny lass,  
She keeps her pails so bright,  
And blythe she trips the dewy grass  
At morning and at night.  
A cotton dress her morning gown,  
Her face was rosy health:  
She traced the pastures up and down  
And nature was her wealth.'  
He sung, and turned each furrow down,  
His sweetheart's love in cotton gown.

'My love is young and handsome  
As any in the town,  
She's worth a ploughman's ransom  
In the drab cotton gown.'  
He sang and turned his furrow oer  
And urged his team along,  
While on the willow as before  
The old crow croaked his song:  
The ploughman sung his rustic lay  
And sung of Phoebe all the day.

The crow he was in love no doubt  
And [so were] many things:  
The ploughman finished many a bout,  
And lustily he sings,  
'My love she is a milking maid  
With red rosy cheek;

Of cotton drab her gown was made,  
I loved her many a week.'  
His milking maid the ploughman sung  
Till all the fields around him rung.

John Clare

# The Cuckoo

The cuckoo, like a hawk in flight,  
With narrow pointed wings  
Whews o'er our heads - soon out of sight  
And as she flies she sings:  
And darting down the hedgerow side  
She scares the little bird  
Who leaves the nest it cannot hide  
While plaintive notes are heard.

I've watched it on an old oak tree  
Sing half an hour away  
Until its quick eye noticed me  
And then it whewed away.  
Its mouth when open shone as red  
As hips upon the brier,  
Like stock doves seemed its winged head  
But striving to get higher

It heard me rustle and above leaves  
Soon did its flight pursue,  
Still waking summer's melodies  
And singing as it flew.  
So quick it flies from wood to wood  
'Tis miles off 'ere you think it gone;  
I've thought when I have listening stood  
Full twenty sang - when only one.

When summer from the forest starts  
Its melody with silence lies,  
And, like a bird from foreign parts,  
It cannot sing for all it tries.  
'Cuck cuck' it cries and mocking boys  
Crie 'Cuck' and then it stutters more  
Till quick forgot its own sweet voice  
It seems to know itself no more.

John Clare

# The Dying Child

He could not die when trees were green,  
For he loved the time too well.  
His little hands, when flowers were seen,  
Were held for the bluebell,  
As he was carried o'er the green.

His eye glanced at the white-nosed bee;  
He knew those children of the spring:  
When he was well and on the lea  
He held one in his hands to sing,  
Which filled his heart with glee.

Infants, the children of the spring!  
How can an infant die  
When butterflies are on the wing,  
Green grass, and such a sky?  
How can they die at spring?

He held his hands for daisies white,  
And then for violets blue,  
And took them all to bed at night  
That in the green fields grew,  
As childhood's sweet delight.

And then he shut his little eyes,  
And flowers would notice not;  
Birds' nests and eggs caused no surprise,  
He now no blossoms got;  
They met with plaintive sighs.

When winter came and blasts did sigh,  
And bare were plain and tree,  
As he for ease in bed did lie  
His soul seemed with the free,  
He died so quietly.

John Clare



# The Fallen Elm

Old elm that murmured in our chimney top  
The sweetest anthem autumn ever made  
And into mellow whispering calms would drop  
When showers fell on thy many coloured shade  
And when dark tempests mimic thunder made -  
While darkness came as it would strangle light  
With the black tempest of a winter night  
That rocked thee like a cradle in thy root -  
How did I love to hear the winds upbraid  
Thy strength without - while all within was mute.  
It seasoned comfort to our hearts' desire,  
We felt that kind protection like a friend  
And edged our chairs up closer to the fire,  
Enjoying comfort that was never penned.  
Old favourite tree, thou'st seen time's changes lower,  
Though change till now did never injure thee;  
For time beheld thee as her sacred dower  
And nature claimed thee her domestic tree.  
Storms came and shook thee many a weary hour,  
Yet stedfast to thy home thy roots have been;  
Summers of thirst parched round thy homely bower  
Till earth grew iron - still thy leaves were green.  
The children sought thee in thy summer shade  
And made their playhouse rings of stick and stone;  
The mavis sang and felt himself alone  
While in thy leaves his early nest was made,  
And I did feel his happiness mine own,  
Nought heeding that our friendship was betrayed,  
Friend not inanimate - though stocks and stones  
There are, and many formed of flesh and bones.  
Thou owned a language by which hearts are stirred  
Deeper than by a feeling clothed in word,  
And speakest now what's known of every tongue,  
Language of pity and the force of wrong.  
What cant assumes, what hypocrites will dare,  
Speaks home to truth and shows it what they are.  
I see a picture which thy fate displays  
And learn a lesson from thy destiny;  
Self-interest saw thee stand in freedom's ways -

So thy old shadow must a tyrant be.  
Thou'st heard the knave, abusing those in power,  
Bawl freedom loud and then oppress the free;  
Thou'st sheltered hypocrites in many a shower,  
That when in power would never shelter thee.  
Thou'st heard the knave supply his canting powers  
With wrong's illusions when he wanted friends;  
That bawled for shelter when he lived in showers  
And when clouds vanished made thy shade amends -  
With axe at root he felled thee to the ground  
And barked of freedom - O I hate the sound  
Time hears its visions speak, - and age sublime  
Hath made thee a disciple unto time.  
- It grows the cant term of enslaving tools  
To wrong another by the name of right;  
Thus came enclosure - ruin was its guide,  
But freedom's cottage soon was thrust aside  
And workhouse prisons raised upon the site.  
Een nature's dwellings far away from men,  
The common heath, became the spoiler's prey;  
The rabbit had not where to make his den  
And labour's only cow was drove away.  
No matter - wrong was right and right was wrong,  
And freedom's bawl was sanction to the song.  
- Such was thy ruin, music-making elm;  
The right of freedom was to injure thine:  
As thou wert served, so would they overwhelm  
In freedom's name the little that is mine.  
And there are knaves that brawl for better laws  
And cant of tyranny in stronger power  
Who glut their vile unsatiated maws  
And freedom's birthright from the weak devour.

John Clare

# The Fear Of Flowers

The nodding oxeye bends before the wind,  
The woodbine quakes lest boys their flowers should find,  
And prickly dogrose spite of its array  
Can't dare the blossom-seeking hand away,  
While thistles wear their heavy knobs of bloom  
Proud as a warhorse wears its haughty plume,  
And by the roadside danger's self defy;  
On commons where pined sheep and oxen lie  
In ruddy pomp and ever thronging mood  
It stands and spreads like danger in a wood,  
And in the village street where meanest weeds  
Can't stand untouched to fill their husks with seeds,  
The haughty thistle oer all danger towers,  
In every place the very wasp of flowers.

John Clare

# The Fens

Wandering by the river's edge,  
I love to rustle through the sedge  
And through the woods of reed to tear  
Almost as high as bushes are.  
Yet, turning quick with shudder chill,  
As danger ever does from ill,  
Fear's moment ague quakes the blood,  
While plop the snake coils in the flood  
And, hissing with a forked tongue,  
Across the river winds along.  
In coat of orange, green, and blue  
Now on a willow branch I view,  
Grey waving to the sunny gleam,  
Kingfishers watch the ripple stream  
For little fish that nimble bye  
And in the gravel shallows lie.

Eddies run before the boats,  
Gurgling where the fisher floats,  
Who takes advantage of the gale  
And hoists his handkerchief for sail  
On osier twigs that form a mast--  
While idly lies, nor wanted more,  
The spirit that pushed him on before.

There's not a hill in all the view,  
Save that a forked cloud or two  
Upon the verge of distance lies  
And into mountains cheats the eyes.  
And as to trees the willows wear  
Lopped heads as high as bushes are;  
Some taller things the distance shrouds  
That may be trees or stacks or clouds  
Or may be nothing; still they wear  
A semblance where there's nought to spare.

Among the tawny tasselled reed  
The ducks and ducklings float and feed.  
With head oft dabbing in the flood

They fish all day the weedy mud,  
And tumbler-like are bobbing there,  
Heels topsy turvy in the air.

The geese in troops come droving up,  
Nibble the weeds, and take a sup;  
And, closely puzzled to agree,  
Chatter like gossips over tea.  
The gander with his scarlet nose  
When strife's at height will interpose;  
And, stretching neck to that and this,  
With now a mutter, now a hiss,  
A nibble at the feathers too,  
A sort of 'pray be quiet do,'  
And turning as the matter mends,  
He stills them into mutual friends;  
Then in a sort of triumph sings  
And throws the water oer his wings.

Ah, could I see a spinney nigh,  
A puddock riding in the sky  
Above the oaks with easy sail  
On stilly wings and forked tail,  
Or meet a heath of furze in flower,  
I might enjoy a quiet hour,  
Sit down at rest, and walk at ease,  
And find a many things to please.  
But here my fancy's moods admire  
The naked levels till they tire,  
Nor een a molehill cushion meet  
To rest on when I want a seat.

Here's little save the river scene  
And grounds of oats in rustling green  
And crowded growth of wheat and beans,  
That with the hope of plenty leans  
And cheers the farmer's gazing brow,  
Who lives and triumphs in the plough--  
One sometimes meets a pleasant sward  
Of swarthy grass; and quickly marred  
The plough soon turns it into brown,  
And, when again one rambles down

The path, small hillocks burning lie  
And smoke beneath a burning sky.  
Green paddocks have but little charms  
With gain the merchandise of farms;  
And, muse and marvel where we may,  
Gain mars the landscape every day--  
The meadow grass turned up and copt,  
The trees to stumpy dotterels lopt,  
The hearth with fuel to supply  
For rest to smoke and chatter bye;  
Giving the joy of home delights,  
The warmest mirth on coldest nights.  
And so for gain, that joy's repay,  
Change cheats the landscape every day,  
Nor trees nor bush about it grows  
That from the hatchet can repose,  
And the horizon stooping smiles  
Oer treeless fens of many miles.  
Spring comes and goes and comes again  
And all is nakedness and fen.

John Clare

# The Firetail's Nest

'Tweet' pipes the robin as the cat creeps by  
Her nestling young that in the elderns lie,  
And then the bluecap tootles in its glee,  
Picking the flies from orchard apple tree,  
And 'pink' the chaffinch cries its well-known strain,  
Urging its kind to utter 'pink' again,  
While in a quiet mood hedgesparrows try  
An inward stir of shadowed melody.  
Around the rotten tree the firetail mourns  
As the old hedger to his toil returns,  
Chopping the grain to stop the gap close by  
The hole where her blue eggs in safety lie.  
Of everything that stirs she dreameth wrong  
And pipes her 'tweet tut' fears the whole day long.

John Clare

# The Flitting

I've left my own old home of homes,  
Green fields and every pleasant place;  
The summer like a stranger comes,  
I pause and hardly know her face.  
I miss the hazel's happy green,  
The blue bell's quiet hanging blooms,  
Where envy's sneer was never seen,  
Where staring malice never comes.

I miss the heath, its yellow furze,  
Molehills and rabbit tracks that lead  
Through beesom, ling, and teazel burrs  
That spread a wilderness indeed;  
The woodland oaks and all below  
That their white powdered branches shield,  
The mossy paths: the very crow  
Croaks music in my native field.

I sit me in my corner chair  
That seems to feel itself from home,  
And hear bird music here and there  
From hawthorn hedge and orchard come;  
I hear, but all is strange and new:  
I sat on my old bench in June,  
The sailing puddock's shrill 'peelew'  
On Royce Wood seemed a sweeter tune.

I walk adown the narrow lane,  
The nightingale is singing now,  
But like to me she seems at loss  
For Royce Wood and its shielding bough.  
I lean upon the window sill,  
The trees and summer happy seem;  
Green, sunny green they shine, but still  
My heart goes far away to dream.

Of happiness, and thoughts arise  
With home-bred pictures many a one,  
Green lanes that shut out burning skies



And old crooked stiles to rest upon;  
Above them hangs the maple tree,  
Below grass swells a velvet hill,  
And little footpaths sweet to see  
Go seeking sweeter places still,

With bye and bye a brook to cross  
Oer which a little arch is thrown:  
No brook is here, I feel the loss  
From home and friends and all alone.  
--The stone pit with its shelvy sides  
Seemed hanging rocks in my esteem;  
I miss the prospect far and wide  
From Langley Bush, and so I seem

Alone and in a stranger scene,  
Far, far from spots my heart esteems,  
The closen with their ancient green,  
Heaths, woods, and pastures, sunny streams.  
The hawthorns here were hung with may,  
But still they seem in deader green,  
The sun een seems to lose its way  
Nor knows the quarter it is in.

I dwell in trifles like a child,  
I feel as ill becomes a man,  
And still my thoughts like weedlings wild  
Grow up to blossom where they can.  
They turn to places known so long  
I feel that joy was dwelling there,  
So home-fed pleasure fills the song  
That has no present joys to hear.

I read in books for happiness,  
But books are like the sea to joy,  
They change--as well give age the glass  
To hunt its visage when a boy.  
For books they follow fashions new  
And throw all old esteems away,  
In crowded streets flowers never grew,  
But many there hath died away.

Some sing the pomps of chivalry  
As legends of the ancient time,  
Where gold and pearls and mystery  
Are shadows painted for sublime;  
But passions of sublimity  
Belong to plain and simpler things,  
And David underneath a tree  
Sought when a shepherd Salem's springs,

Where moss did into cushions spring,  
Forming a seat of velvet hue,  
A small unnoticed trifling thing  
To all but heaven's hailing dew.  
And David's crown hath passed away,  
Yet poesy breathes his shepherd-skill,  
His palace lost--and to this day  
The little moss is blossoming still.

Strange scenes mere shadows are to me,  
Vague impersonifying things;  
I love with my old haunts to be  
By quiet woods and gravel springs,  
Where little pebbles wear as smooth  
As hermits' beads by gentle floods,  
Whose noises do my spirits soothe  
And warm them into singing moods.

Here every tree is strange to me,  
All foreign things where eer I go,  
There's none where boyhood made a swee  
Or clambered up to rob a crow.  
No hollow tree or woodland bower  
Well known when joy was beating high,  
Where beauty ran to shun a shower  
And love took pains to keep her dry,

And laid the sheaf upon the ground  
To keep her from the dripping grass,  
And ran for stocks and set them round  
Till scarce a drop of rain could pass  
Through; where the maidens they reclined  
And sung sweet ballads now forgot,

Which brought sweet memories to the mind,  
But here no memory knows them not.

There have I sat by many a tree  
And leaned oer many a rural stile,  
And conned my thoughts as joys to me,  
Nought heeding who might frown or smile.  
Twas nature's beauty that inspired  
My heart with rapture not its own,  
And she's a fame that never tires;  
How could I feel myself alone?

No, pasture molehills used to lie  
And talk to me of sunny days,  
And then the glad sheep resting bye  
All still in ruminating praise  
Of summer and the pleasant place  
And every weed and blossom too  
Was looking upward in my face  
With friendship's welcome 'how do ye do?'

All tenants of an ancient place  
And heirs of noble heritage,  
Coeval they with Adam's race  
And blest with more substantial age.  
For when the world first saw the sun  
These little flowers beheld him too,  
And when his love for earth begun  
They were the first his smiles to woo.

There little lambtoe bunches springs  
In red tinged and begolden dye  
For ever, and like China kings  
They come but never seem to die.  
There may-bloom with its little threads  
Still comes upon the thorny bowers  
And neer forgets those prickly heads  
Like fairy pins amid the flowers.

And still they bloom as on the day  
They first crowned wilderness and rock,  
When Abel haply wreathed with may

The firstlings of his little flock,  
And Eve might from the matted thorn  
To deck her lone and lovely brow  
Reach that same rose that heedless scorn  
Misnames as the dog rosey now.

Give me no high-flown fangled things,  
No haughty pomp in marching chime,  
Where muses play on golden strings  
And splendour passes for sublime,  
Where cities stretch as far as fame  
And fancy's straining eye can go,  
And piled until the sky for shame  
Is stooping far away below.

I love the verse that mild and bland  
Breathes of green fields and open sky,  
I love the muse that in her hand  
Bears flowers of native poesy;  
Who walks nor skips the pasture brook  
In scorn, but by the drinking horse  
Leans oer its little brig to look  
How far the sallows lean across,

And feels a rapture in her breast  
Upon their root-fringed grains to mark  
A hermit morehen's sedgy nest  
Just like a naiad's summer bark.  
She counts the eggs she cannot reach  
Admires the spot and loves it well,  
And yearns, so nature's lessons teach,  
Amid such neighbourhoods to dwell.

I love the muse who sits her down  
Upon the molehill's little lap,  
Who feels no fear to stain her gown  
And pauses by the hedgerow gap;  
Not with that affectation, praise  
Of song, to sing and never see  
A field flower grown in all her days  
Or een a forest's aged tree.

Een here my simple feelings nurse  
A love for every simple weed,  
And een this little shepherd's purse  
Grieves me to cut it up; indeed  
I feel at times a love and joy  
For every weed and every thing,  
A feeling kindred from a boy,  
A feeling brought with every Spring.

And why? this shepherd's purse that grows  
In this strange spot, in days gone bye  
Grew in the little garden rows  
Of my old home now left; and I  
Feel what I never felt before,  
This weed an ancient neighbour here,  
And though I own the spot no more  
Its every trifle makes it dear.

The ivy at the parlour end,  
The woodbine at the garden gate,  
Are all and each affection's friend  
That render parting desolate.  
But times will change and friends must part  
And nature still can make amends;  
Their memory lingers round the heart  
Like life whose essence is its friends.

Time looks on pomp with vengeful mood  
Or killing apathy's disdain;  
So where old marble cities stood  
Poor persecuted weeds remain.  
She feels a love for little things  
That very few can feel beside,  
And still the grass eternal springs  
Where castles stood and grandeur died.

John Clare

# The Flood

On Lolham Brigs in wild and lonely mood  
I've seen the winter floods their gambols play  
Through each old arch that trembled while I stood  
Bent o'er its wall to watch the dashing spray  
As their old stations would be washed away  
Crash came the ice against the jambs and then  
A shudder jarred the arches - yet once more  
It breasted raving waves and stood agen  
To wait the shock as stubborn as before  
- White foam brown crested with the russet soil  
As washed from new plough lands would dart beneath  
Then round and round a thousand eddies boil  
On tother side - then pause as if for breath  
One minute - and engulfed - like life in death

Whose wreckly stains dart on the floods away  
More swift than shadows in a stormy day  
Straws trail and turn and steady - all in vain  
The engulfing arches shoot them quickly through  
The feather dances flutters and again  
Darts through the deepest dangers still afloat  
Seeming as faireys whisked it from the view  
And danced it o'er the waves as pleasures boat  
Light hearted as a thought in May -  
Trays - uptorn bushes - fence demolished rails  
Loaded with weeds in sluggish motions stray  
Like water monsters lost each winds and trails  
Till near the arches - then as in affright  
It plunges - reels - and shudders out of sight

Waves trough - rebound - and fury boil again  
Like plunging monsters rising underneath  
Who at the top curl up a shaggy main  
A moment catching at a surer breath  
Then plunging headlong down and down - and on  
Each following boil the shadow of the last  
And other monsters rise when those are gone  
Crest their fringed waves - plunge onward and are past  
- The chill air comes around me ocean blea

From bank to bank the waterstrife is spread  
Strange birds like snow spots o'er the huzzing sea  
Hang where the wild duck hurried past and fled  
On roars the flood - all restless to be free  
Like trouble wandering to eternity

John Clare

# The Fox

The shepherd on his journey heard when nigh  
His dog among the bushes barking high;  
The ploughman ran and gave a hearty shout,  
He found a weary fox and beat him out.  
The ploughman laughed and would have ploughed him in  
But the old shepherd took him for the skin.  
He lay upon the furrow stretched for dead,  
The old dog lay and licked the wounds that bled,  
The ploughman beat him till his ribs would crack,  
And then the shepherd slung him at his back;  
And when he rested, to his dog's surprise,  
The old fox started from his dead disguise;  
And while the dog lay panting in the sedge  
He up and snapt and bolted through the hedge.

He scampered to the bushes far away;  
The shepherd called the ploughman to the fray;  
The ploughman wished he had a gun to shoot.  
The old dog barked and followed the pursuit.  
The shepherd threw his hook and tottered past;  
The ploughman ran but none could go so fast;  
The woodman threw his faggot from the way  
And ceased to chop and wondered at the fray.  
But when he saw the dog and heard the cry  
He threw his hatchet--but the fox was bye.  
The shepherd broke his hook and lost the skin;  
He found a badger hole and bolted in.  
They tried to dig, but, safe from danger's way,  
He lived to chase the hounds another day.

John Clare



# The Frightened Ploughman

I went in the fields with the leisure I got,  
The stranger might smile but I heeded him not,  
The hovel was ready to screen from a shower,  
And the book in my pocket was read in an hour.

The bird came for shelter, but soon flew away;  
The horse came to look, and seemed happy to stay;  
He stood up in quiet, and hung down his head,  
And seemed to be hearing the poem I read.

The ploughman would turn from his plough in the day  
And wonder what being had come in his way,  
To lie on a molehill and read the day long  
And laugh out aloud when he'd finished his song.

The pewit turned over and stooped oer my head  
Where the raven croaked loud like the ploughman ill-bred,  
But the lark high above charmed me all the day long,  
So I sat down and joined in the chorus of song.

The foolhardy ploughman I well could endure,  
His praise was worth nothing, his censure was poor,  
Fame bade me go on and I toiled the day long  
Till the fields where he lived should be known in my song.

John Clare

# The Gipsy's Camp

How oft on Sundays, when I'd time to tramp,  
My rambles led me to a gipsy's camp,  
Where the real effigy of midnight hags,  
With tawny smoked flesh and tattered rags,  
Uncouth-brimmed hat, and weather-beaten cloak,  
Neath the wild shelter of a knotty oak,  
Along the greensward uniformly pricks  
Her pliant bending hazel's arching sticks:  
While round-topt bush, or briar-entangled hedge,  
Where flag-leaves spring beneath, or ramping sedge,  
Keeps off the bothering bustle of the wind,  
And give the best retreat she hopes to find.  
How oft I've bent me oer her fire and smoke,  
To hear her gibberish tale so quaintly spoke,  
While the old Sybil forged her boding clack,  
Twin imps the meanwhile bawling at her back;  
Oft on my hand her magic coin's been struck,  
And hoping chink, she talked of morts of luck:  
And still, as boyish hopes did first agree,  
Mingled with fears to drop the fortune's fee,  
I never failed to gain the honours sought,  
And Squire and Lord were purchased with a goat.  
But as man's unbelieving taste came round,  
She furious stamp't her shoeless foot aground,  
Wiped bye her soot-black hair with clenching fist,  
While through her yellow teeth the spittle hist,  
Swearing by all her lucky powers of fate,  
Which like as footboys on her actions wait,  
That fortune's scale should to my sorrow turn,  
And I one day the rash neglect should mourn;  
That good to bad should change, and I should be  
Lost to this world and all eternity;  
That poor as Job I should remain unblest:--  
(Alas, for fourpence how my die is cast!)  
Of not a hoarded farthing be possesst,  
And when all's done, be shoved to hell at last!

John Clare

# The Instinct Of Hope

Is there another world for this frail dust  
To warm with life and be itself again?  
Something about me daily speaks there must,  
And why should instinct nourish hopes in vain?  
'Tis nature's prophesy that such will be,  
And everything seems struggling to explain  
The close sealed volume of its mystery.  
Time wandering onward keeps its usual pace  
As seeming anxious of eternity,  
To meet that calm and find a resting place.  
E'en the small violet feels a future power  
And waits each year renewing blooms to bring,  
And surely man is no inferior flower  
To die unworthy of a second spring?

John Clare

# The Landrail

How sweet and pleasant grows the way  
Through summer time again  
While Landrails call from day to day  
Amid the grass and grain

We hear it in the weeding time  
When knee deep waves the corn  
We hear it in the summers prime  
Through meadows night and morn

And now I hear it in the grass  
That grows as sweet again  
And let a minutes notice pass  
And now tis in the grain

Tis like a fancy everywhere  
A sort of living doubt  
We know tis something but it neer  
Will blab the secret out

If heard in close or meadow plots  
It flies if we pursue  
But follows if we notice not  
The close and meadow through

Boys know the note of many a bird  
In their birdnesting bounds  
But when the landrails noise is heard  
They wonder at the sounds

They look in every tuft of grass  
Thats in their rambles met  
They peep in every bush they pass  
And none the wiser get

And still they hear the craiking sound  
And still they wonder why  
It surely cant be under ground  
Nor is it in the sky

And yet tis heard in every vale  
An undiscovered song  
And makes a pleasant wonder tale  
For all the summer long

The shepherd whistles through his hands  
And starts with many a whoop  
His busy dog across the lands  
In hopes to fright it up

Tis still a minutes length or more  
Till dogs are off and gone  
Then sings and louder than before  
But keeps the secret on

Yet accident will often meet  
The nest within its way  
And weeders when they weed the wheat  
Discover where they lay

And mowers on the meadow lea  
Chance on their noisy guest  
And wonder what the bird can be  
That lays without a nest

In simple holes that birds will rake  
When dusting on the ground  
They drop their eggs of curious make  
Deep blotched and nearly round

A mystery still to men and boys  
Who know not where they lay  
And guess it but a summer noise  
Among the meadow hay

John Clare

# The Lass With The Delicate Air

Timid and smiling, beautiful and shy,  
She drops her head at every passer bye.  
Afraid of praise she hurries down the streets  
And turns away from every smile she meets.  
The forward clown has many things to say  
And holds her by the gown to make her stay,  
The picture of good health she goes along,  
Hale as the morn and happy as her song.  
Yet there is one who never feels a fear  
To whisper pleasing fancies in her ear;  
Yet een from him she shuns a rude embrace,  
And stooping holds her hands before her face,--  
She even shuns and fears the bolder wind,  
And holds her shawl, and often looks behind.

John Clare

# The Lout

For Sunday's play he never makes excuse,  
But plays at taw, and buys his Spanish juice.  
Hard as his toil, and ever slow to speak,  
Yet he gives maidens many a burning cheek;  
For none can pass him but his witless grace  
Of bawdry brings the blushes in her face.  
As vulgar as the dirt he treads upon  
He calls his cows or drives his horses on;  
He knows the lamest cow and strokes her side  
And often tries to mount her back and ride,  
And takes her tail at night in idle play,  
And makes her drag him homeward all the way.  
He knows of nothing but the football match,  
And where hens lay, and when the duck will hatch.

John Clare

# The Maid Of Jerusalem

Maid of Jerusalem, by the Dead Sea,  
I wandered all sorrowing thinking of thee,--  
Thy city in ruins, thy kindred deplored,  
All fallen and lost by the Ottoman's sword.

I saw thee sit there in disconsolate sighs,  
Where the hall of thy fathers a ruined heap lies.  
Thy fair finger showed me the place where they trod,  
In thy childhood where flourished the city of God.

The place where they fell and the scenes where they lie,  
In the tomb of Siloa--the tear in her eye  
She stifled: transfixed there it grew like a pearl,  
Beneath the dark lash of the sweet Jewish Girl.

Jerusalem is fallen! still thou art in bloom,  
As fresh as the ivy around the lone tomb,  
And fair as the lily of morning that waves  
Its sweet-scented bells over desolate graves.

When I think of Jerusalem in kingdoms yet free,  
I shall think of its ruins and think upon thee;  
Thou beautiful Jewess, content thou mayest roam;  
A bright spot in Eden still blooms as thy home.

John Clare



# The Maid Of Ocram, Or, Lord Gregory

Gay was the Maid of Ocram  
As lady eer might be  
Ere she did venture past a maid  
To love Lord Gregory.  
Fair was the Maid of Ocram  
And shining like the sun  
Ere her bower key was turned on two  
Where bride bed lay for none.

And late at night she sought her love--  
The snow slept on her skin--  
Get up, she cried, thou false young man,  
And let thy true love in.  
And fain would he have loosed the key  
All for his true love's sake,  
But Lord Gregory then was fast asleep,  
His mother wide awake.

And up she threw the window sash,  
And out her head put she:  
And who is that which knocks so late  
And taunts so loud to me?  
It is the Maid of Ocram,  
Your own heart's next akin;  
For so you've sworn, Lord Gregory,  
To come and let me in.

O pause not thus, you know me well,  
Haste down my way to win.  
The wind disturbs my yellow locks,  
The snow sleeps on my skin.--  
If you be the Maid of Ocram,  
As much I doubt you be,  
Then tell me of three tokens  
That passed with you and me.--

O talk not now of tokens  
Which you do wish to break;  
Chilled are those lips you've kissed so warm,

And all too numbed to speak.  
You know when in my father's bower  
You left your cloak for mine,  
Though yours was nought but silver twist  
And mine the golden twine.--

If you're the lass of Ocram,  
As I take you not to be,  
The second token you must tell  
Which past with you and me.--  
O know you not, O know you not  
Twas in my father's park,  
You led me out a mile too far  
And courted in the dark?

When you did change your ring for mine  
My yielding heart to win,  
Though mine was of the beaten gold  
Yours but of burnished tin,  
Though mine was all true love without,  
Yours but false love within?

O ask me no more tokens  
For fast the snow doth fall.  
Tis sad to strive and speak in vain,  
You mean to break them all.--  
If you are the Maid of Ocram,  
As I take you not to be,  
You must mention the third token  
That passed with you and me.--

Twas when you stole my maidenhead;  
That grieves me worst of all.--  
Begone, you lying creature, then  
This instant from my hall,  
Or you and your vile baby  
Shall in the deep sea fall;  
For I have none on earth as yet  
That may me father call.--

O must none close my dying feet,  
And must none close my hands,

And may none bind my yellow locks  
As death for all demands?  
You need not use no force at all,  
Your hard heart breaks the vow;  
You've had your wish against my will  
And you shall have it now.

And must none close my dying feet,  
And must none close my hands,  
And will none do the last kind deeds  
That death for all demands?--  
Your sister, she may close your feet,  
Your brother close your hands,  
Your mother, she may wrap your waist  
In death's fit wedding bands;  
Your father, he may tie your locks  
And lay you in the sands.--

My sister, she will weep in vain,  
My brother ride and run,  
My mother, she will break her heart;  
And ere the rising sun  
My father will be looking out--  
But find me they will none.  
I go to lay my woes to rest,  
None shall know where I'm gone.  
God must be friend and father both,  
Lord Gregory will be none.--

Lord Gregory started up from sleep  
And thought he heard a voice  
That screamed full dreadful in his ear,  
And once and twice and thrice.  
Lord Gregory to his mother called:  
O mother dear, said he,  
I've dreamt the Maid of Ocrum  
Was floating on the sea.

Lie still, my son, the mother said,  
Tis but a little space  
And half an hour has scarcely passed  
Since she did pass this place.--

O cruel, cruel mother,  
When she did pass so nigh  
How could you let me sleep so sound  
Or let her wander bye?  
Now if she's lost my heart must break--  
I'll seek her till I die.

He sought her east, he sought her west,  
He sought through park and plain;  
He sought her where she might have been  
But found her not again.  
I cannot curse thee, mother,  
Though thine's the blame, said he  
I cannot curse thee, mother,  
Though thou'st done worse to me.  
Yet do I curse thy pride that aye  
So tauntingly aspires;  
For my love was a gay knight's heir,  
And my father was a squire's.

And I will sell my park and hall;  
And if ye wed again  
Ye shall not wed for titles twice  
That made ye once so vain.  
So if ye will wed, wed for love,  
As I was fain to do;  
Ye've gave to me a broken heart,  
And I'll give nought to you.

Your pride has wronged your own heart's blood;  
For she was mine by grace,  
And now my lady love is gone  
None else shall take her place.  
I'll sell my park and sell my hall  
And sink my titles too.  
Your pride's done wrong enough as now  
To leave it more to do.

She owneth none that owned them all  
And would have graced them well;  
None else shall take the right she missed  
Nor in my bosom dwell.--

And then he took and burnt his will  
Before his mother's face,  
And tore his patents all in two,  
While tears fell down apace--  
But in his mother's haughty look  
Ye nought but frowns might trace.

And then he sat him down to grieve,  
But could not sit for pain.  
And then he laid him on the bed  
And ne'er got up again.

John Clare

# The Maple Tree

The Maple with its tassell flowers of green  
That turns to red, a stag horn shapèd seed  
Just spreading out its scalloped leaves is seen,  
Of yellowish hue yet beautifully green.  
Bark ribb'd like corderoy in seamy screed  
That farther up the stem is smoother seen,  
Where the white hemlock with white umbel flowers  
Up each spread stoven to the branches towers  
And mossy round the stoven spread dark green  
And blotched leaved orchis and the blue-bell flowers -  
Thickly they grow and neath the leaves are seen.  
I love to see them gemm'd with morning hours.  
I love the lone green places where they be  
And the sweet clothing of the Maple tree.

John Clare

# The Mores

Far spread the moorey ground a level scene  
Bespread with rush and one eternal green  
That never felt the rage of blundering plough  
Though centurys wreathed spring's blossoms on its brow  
Still meeting plains that stretched them far away  
In uncheckt shadows of green brown, and grey  
Unbounded freedom ruled the wandering scene  
Nor fence of ownership crept in between  
To hide the prospect of the following eye  
Its only bondage was the circling sky  
One mighty flat undwarfed by bush and tree  
Spread its faint shadow of immensity  
And lost itself, which seemed to eke its bounds  
In the blue mist the horizon's edge surrounds  
Now this sweet vision of my boyish hours  
Free as spring clouds and wild as summer flowers  
Is faded all - a hope that blossomed free,  
And hath been once, no more shall ever be  
Inclosure came and trampled on the grave  
Of labour's rights and left the poor a slave  
And memory's pride ere want to wealth did bow  
Is both the shadow and the substance now  
The sheep and cows were free to range as then  
Where change might prompt nor felt the bonds of men  
Cows went and came, with evening morn and night,  
To the wild pasture as their common right  
And sheep, unfolded with the rising sun  
Heard the swains shout and felt their freedom won  
Tracked the red fallow field and heath and plain  
Then met the brook and drank and roamed again  
The brook that dribbled on as clear as glass  
Beneath the roots they hid among the grass  
While the glad shepherd traced their tracks along  
Free as the lark and happy as her song  
But now all's fled and flats of many a dye  
That seemed to lengthen with the following eye  
Moors, loosing from the sight, far, smooth, and blea  
Where swopt the plover in its pleasure free  
Are vanished now with commons wild and gay

As poet's visions of life's early day  
Mulberry-bushes where the boy would run  
To fill his hands with fruit are grubbed and done  
And hedgrow-briars - flower-lovers overjoyed  
Came and got flower-pots - these are all destroyed  
And sky-bound mores in mangled garbs are left  
Like mighty giants of their limbs bereft  
Fence now meets fence in owners' little bounds  
Of field and meadow large as garden grounds  
In little parcels little minds to please  
With men and flocks imprisoned ill at ease  
Each little path that led its pleasant way  
As sweet as morning leading night astray  
Where little flowers bloomed round a varied host  
That travel felt delighted to be lost  
Nor grudged the steps that he had ta-en as vain  
When right roads traced his journeys and again -  
Nay, on a broken tree he'd sit awhile  
To see the mores and fields and meadows smile  
Sometimes with cowslaps smothered - then all white  
With daisies - then the summer's splendid sight  
Of cornfields crimson o'er the headache bloomd  
Like splendid armys for the battle plumed  
He gazed upon them with wild fancy's eye  
As fallen landscapes from an evening sky  
These paths are stopt - the rude philistine's thrall  
Is laid upon them and destroyed them all  
Each little tyrant with his little sign  
Shows where man claims earth glows no more divine  
But paths to freedom and to childhood dear  
A board sticks up to notice 'no road here'  
And on the tree with ivy overhung  
The hated sign by vulgar taste is hung  
As tho' the very birds should learn to know  
When they go there they must no further go  
Thus, with the poor, scared freedom bade goodbye  
And much they feel it in the smothered sigh  
And birds and trees and flowers without a name  
All sighed when lawless law's enclosure came  
And dreams of plunder in such rebel schemes  
Have found too truly that they were but dreams.



John Clare

# The Nightingale's Nest

Up this green woodland-ride let's softly rove,  
And list the nightingale - she dwells just here.  
Hush ! let the wood-gate softly clap, for fear  
The noise might drive her from her home of love ;  
For here I've heard her many a merry year -  
At morn, at eve, nay, all the live-long day,  
As though she lived on song. This very spot,  
Just where that old-man's-beard all wildly trails  
Rude arbours o'er the road, and stops the way -  
And where that child its blue-bell flowers hath got,  
Laughing and creeping through the mossy rails -  
There have I hunted like a very boy,  
Creeping on hands and knees through matted thorn  
To find her nest, and see her feed her young.  
And vainly did I many hours employ :  
All seemed as hidden as a thought unborn.  
And where those crimping fern-leaves ramp among  
The hazel's under boughs, I've nestled down,  
And watched her while she sung ; and her renown  
Hath made me marvel that so famed a bird  
Should have no better dress than russet brown.  
Her wings would tremble in her ecstasy,  
And feathers stand on end, as 'twere with joy,  
And mouth wide open to release her heart  
Of its out-sobbing songs. The happiest part  
Of summer's fame she shared, for so to me  
Did happy fancies shapen her employ ;  
But if I touched a bush, or scarcely stirred,  
All in a moment stopt. I watched in vain :  
The timid bird had left the hazel bush,  
And at a distance hid to sing again.  
Lost in a wilderness of listening leaves,  
Rich Ecstasy would pour its luscious strain,  
Till envy spurred the emulating thrush  
To start less wild and scarce inferior songs ;  
For while of half the year Care him bereaves,  
To damp the ardour of his speckled breast ;  
The nightingale to summer's life belongs,  
And naked trees, and winter's nipping wrongs,

Are strangers to her music and her rest.  
Her joys are evergreen, her world is wide -  
Hark! there she is as usual - let's be hush -  
For in this black-thorn clump, if rightly guest,  
Her curious house is hidden. Part aside  
These hazel branches in a gentle way,  
And stoop right cautious 'neath the rustling boughs,  
For we will have another search to day,  
And hunt this fern-strewn thorn-clump round and round ;  
And where this reeded wood-grass idly bows,  
We'll wade right through, it is a likely nook :  
In such like spots, and often on the ground,  
They'll build, where rude boys never think to look -  
Aye, as I live ! her secret nest is here,  
Upon this white-thorn stump ! I've searched about  
For hours in vain. There! put that bramble by -  
Nay, trample on its branches and get near.  
How subtle is the bird ! she started out,  
And raised a plaintive note of danger nigh,  
Ere we were past the brambles ; and now, near  
Her nest, she sudden stops - as choking fear,  
That might betray her home. So even now  
We'll leave it as we found it : safety's guard  
Of pathless solitudes shall keep it still.  
See there! she's sitting on the old oak bough,  
Mute in her fears ; our presence doth retard  
Her joys, and doubt turns every rapture chill.  
Sing on, sweet bird! may no worse hap befall  
Thy visions, than the fear that now deceives.  
We will not plunder music of its dower,  
Nor turn this spot of happiness to thrall ;  
For melody seems hid in every flower,  
That blossoms near thy home. These harebells all  
Seem bowing with the beautiful in song ;  
And gaping cuckoo-flower, with spotted leaves,  
Seems blushing of the singing it has heard.  
How curious is the nest ; no other bird  
Uses such loose materials, or weaves  
Its dwelling in such spots : dead oaken leaves  
Are placed without, and velvet moss within,  
And little scraps of grass, and, scant and spare,  
What scarcely seem materials, down and hair ;

For from men's haunts she nothing seems to win.  
Yet Nature is the builder, and contrives  
Homes for her children's comfort, even here ;  
Where Solitude's disciples spend their lives  
Unseen, save when a wanderer passes near  
That loves such pleasant places. Deep adown,  
The nest is made a hermit's mossy cell.  
Snug lie her curious eggs in number five,  
Of deadened green, or rather olive brown ;  
And the old prickly thorn-bush guards them well.  
So here we'll leave them, still unknown to wrong,  
As the old woodland's legacy of song.

John Clare

# The Old Cottagers

The little cottage stood alone, the pride  
Of solitude surrounded every side.  
Bean fields in blossom almost reached the wall;  
A garden with its hawthorn hedge was all  
The space between.--Green light did pass  
Through one small window, where a looking-glass  
Placed in the parlour, richly there revealed  
A spacious landscape and a blooming field.  
The pasture cows that herded on the moor  
Printed their footsteps to the very door,  
Where little summer flowers with seasons blow  
And scarcely gave the eldern leave to grow.  
The cuckoo that one listens far away  
Sung in the orchard trees for half the day;  
And where the robin lives, the village guest,  
In the old weedy hedge the leafy nest  
Of the coy nightingale was yearly found,  
Safe from all eyes as in the loneliest ground;  
And little chats that in bean stalks will lie  
A nest with cobwebs there will build, and fly  
Upon the kidney bean that twines and towers  
Up little poles in wreaths of scarlet flowers.

There a lone couple lived, secluded there  
From all the world considers joy or care,  
Lived to themselves, a long lone journey trod,  
And through their Bible talked aloud to God;  
While one small close and cow their wants maintained,  
But little needing, and but little gained.  
Their neighbour's name was peace, with her they went,  
With tottering age, and dignified content,  
Through a rich length of years and quiet days,  
And filled the neighbouring village with their praise.

John Clare

# The Old Year

The Old Year's gone away  
To nothingness and night:  
We cannot find him all the day  
Nor hear him in the night:  
He left no footstep, mark or place  
In either shade or sun:  
The last year he'd a neighbour's face,  
In this he's known by none.

All nothing everywhere:  
Mists we on mornings see  
Have more of substance when they're here  
And more of form than he.  
He was a friend by every fire,  
In every cot and hall -  
A guest to every heart's desire,  
And now he's nought at all.

Old papers thrown away,  
Old garments cast aside,  
The talk of yesterday,  
All things identified;  
But times once torn away  
No voices can recall:  
The eve of New Year's Day  
Left the Old Year lost to all.

John Clare

# The Peasant Poet

He loved the brook's soft sound,  
The swallow swimming by.  
He loved the daisy-covered ground,  
The cloud-bedappled sky.  
To him the dismal storm appeared  
The very voice of God;  
And when the evening rack was reared  
Stood Moses with his rod.  
And everything his eyes surveyed,  
The insects in the brake,  
Were creatures God Almighty made,  
He loved them for His sake--  
A silent man in life's affairs,  
A thinker from a boy,  
A peasant in his daily cares,  
A poet in his joy.

John Clare

# The Poet's Death

The world is taking little heed  
And plods from day to day:  
The vulgar flourish like a weed,  
The learned pass away.

We miss him on the summer path  
The lonely summer day,  
Where mowers cut the pleasant swath  
And maidens make the hay.

The vulgar take but little heed;  
The garden wants his care;  
There lies the book he used to read,  
There stands the empty chair.

The boat laid up, the voyage oer,  
And passed the stormy wave,  
The world is going as before,  
The poet in his grave.

John Clare



# The Sailor-Boy

Tis three years and a quarter since I left my own fireside  
To go aboard a ship through love, and plough the ocean wide.  
I crossed my native fields, where the scarlet poppies grew,  
And the groundlark left his nest like a neighbour which I knew.

The pigeons from the dove cote cooed over the old lane,  
The crow flocks from the oakwood went flopping oer the grain;  
Like lots of dear old neighbours whom I shall see no more  
They greeted me that morning I left the English shore.

The sun was just a-rising above the heath of furze,  
And the shadows grow to giants; that bright ball never stirs:  
There the shepherds lay with their dogs by their side,  
And they started up and barked as my shadow they espied.

A maid of early morning twirled her mop upon the moor;  
I wished her my farewell before she closed the door.  
My friends I left behind me for other places new,  
Crows and pigeons all were strangers as oer my head they flew.

Trees and bushes were all strangers, the hedges and the lanes,  
The steeples and the houses and broad untrodden plains.  
I passed the pretty milkmaid with her red and rosy face;  
I knew not where I met her, I was strange to the place.

At last I saw the ocean, a pleasing sight to me:  
I stood upon the shore of a mighty glorious sea.  
The waves in easy motion went rolling on their way,  
English colours were a-flying where the British squadron lay.

I left my honest parents, the church clock and the village;  
I left the lads and lasses, the labour and the tillage;  
To plough the briny ocean, which soon became my joy--  
I sat and sang among the shrouds, a lonely sailor-boy.

John Clare

# The Secret

I loved thee, though I told thee not,  
Right earlily and long,  
Thou wert my joy in every spot,  
My theme in every song.  
And when I saw a stranger face  
Where beauty held the claim,  
I gave it like a secret grace  
The being of thy name.  
And all the charms of face or voice  
Which I in others see  
Are but the recollected choice  
Of what I felt for thee.

John Clare

# The Shepherds Calendar - April

The infant april joins the spring  
And views its watery skye  
As youngling linnet tries its wing  
And fears at first to flye  
With timid step she ventures on  
And hardly dares to smile  
The blossoms open one by one  
And sunny hours beguile

But finer days approacheth yet  
With scenes more sweet to charm  
And suns arrive that rise and set  
Bright strangers to a storm  
And as the birds with louder song  
Each mornings glory cheers  
With bolder step she speeds along  
And looses all her fears  
In wanton gambols like a child  
She tends her early toils  
And seeks the buds along the wild  
That blossom while she smiles  
And laughing on with nought to chide  
She races with the hours  
Or sports by natures lovley side  
And fills her lap with flowers

Tho at her birth north cutting gales  
Her beautys oft disguise  
And hopfull blossoms turning pales  
Upon her bosom dies  
Yet ere she seeks another place  
And ends her reign in this  
She leaves us with as fair a face  
As ere gave birth to bliss

And fairey month of waking mirth  
From whom our joys ensue  
Thou early gladder of the earth  
Thrice welcom here anew

With thee the bud unfolds to leaves  
The grass greens on the lea  
And flowers their tender boon receive  
To bloom and smile with thee

The shepherds on thy pasture walks  
The first fair cowslip finds  
Whose tufted flowers on slender stalks  
Keep nodding to the winds  
And tho thy thorns withhold the may  
Their shades the violets bring  
Which children stoop for in their play  
As tokens of the spring

The time when daisies bloom divine  
With thy calm hours begun  
And crowsfeet blazing blooms are thine  
Bright children of the sun  
Along thy woodlands shaded nooks  
The primrose wanly comes  
And shining in thy pebbly brooks  
The horse-bleb gaily blooms

The long lost charm of sparkling dew  
Thy gentle birth receive  
And on thy wreathing locks we view  
The first unfolding leaves  
And seeking firstling buds and flowers  
The trials of thy skill  
Were pastimes of my infant hours  
And so they haunt me still

To see thy first broad arum leaves  
I loved them from a child  
And where thy woodbines sprouting weaves  
I joyed to trace the wild  
And jocund as thy lambs at play  
I met the wanton wind  
With feelings that have passed away  
Whose shadows cling behind

Those joys which childhood claims its own

Woud they were kin to men  
Those treasures to the world unknown  
When known-was witherd then  
But hovering round our growing years  
To gild cares sable shroud  
Their spirit thro the gloom appears  
As suns behind a cloud

As thou first met my infant eyes  
When thro thy fields I flew  
Whose distance where they meet the skyes  
Was all the worlds I knew  
That warmth of fancys wildest hours  
Which made things kin to life  
That heard a voice in trees and flowers  
Has swoond in reasons strife

Sweet month thy pleasures bids thee be  
The fairest child of spring  
And every hour that comes with thee  
Comes some new joy to bring  
The trees still deepen in their bloom  
Crass greens the meadow lands  
And flowers with every morning come  
As dropt by fairey hands

The field and gardens lovley hours  
Begin and end with thee  
For whats so sweet as peeping flowers  
And bursting buds to see  
What time the dewes unsullied drops  
In burnishd gold distills  
On crocus flowers unclosing tops  
And drooping daffodills

Each day with added glorys come  
And as they leave the night  
Put on the roseys lovley bloom  
And blushes with delight  
And suns that wait their welcome birth  
With earlier haste pursue  
Their journeys to this lower earth

To free their steps from dew

To see thee come all hearts rejoice  
And warms with feelings strong  
With thee all nature finds a voice  
And hums a waking song  
The lover views thy welcome hours  
And thinks of summer come  
And takes the maid thy early flowers  
To tempt her steps from home

Along each hedge and sprouting bush  
The singing birds are blest  
And linnet green and speckld thrush  
Prepare their mossy nest  
On the warm bed thy plain supplys  
The young lambs find repose  
And mid thy green hills basking lies  
Like spots of lingering snows

Young things of tender life again  
Enjoys thy sunny hours  
And gosslings waddle ocr the plain  
As yellow as its flowers  
Or swim the pond in wild delight  
To catch the water flye  
Where hissing geese in ceasless spite  
Make childern scamper bye

Again the fairey tribes pursue  
Their pleasures on the plain  
And brightend with the morning dew  
Black circles shine again  
And on its superstitious ground  
Where flowers seem loath to dwell  
The toadstools fuzzy balls abound  
And mushrooms yearly swell

The seasons beautys all are thine  
That visit with the year  
Beautys that poets think divine  
And all delight to hear

Thy latter days a pleasure brings  
That gladden every heart  
Pleasures that come like lovely things  
But like to shades depart

Thy open leaves and ripen buds  
The cuckoo makes his choice  
And shepherds in thy greening woods  
First hears the cheering voice  
And to thy ripen blooming bowers  
The nightingale belongs  
And singing to thy parting hours  
Keeps night awake with songs

With thee the swallow dares to come  
And primes his sunny wings  
And urge to seek their yearly home  
Thy sun the Martin brings  
And lovely month be leisure mine  
Thy yearly mate to be  
Thou may day scenes may brighter shine  
Their birth belongs to thee

I waked me with thy rising sun  
And thy first glories view'd  
And as thy welcome hours begun  
Their sunny steps pursued  
And now thy sun is on the set  
Like to a lovely eve  
I view thy parting with regret  
And linger loath to leave

Thou lovely April fare thee well  
Thou early child of spring  
Thou born where storms too often dwell  
Thy parents news to bring  
Yet what thy parting youth supplies  
No other months excel  
Thou first for flowers and sunny skies  
Sweet April fare thee well.





# The Shepherd's Calendar - August

Harvest approaches with its bustling day  
The wheat tans brown and barley bleaches grey  
In yellow garb the oat land intervenes  
And tawney glooms the valley thronged with beans  
Silent the village grows, wood wandering dreams  
Seem not so lovely as its quiet seems  
Doors are shut up as on a winters day  
And not a child about them lies at play  
The dust that winnows neath the breezes feet  
Is all that stirs about the silent street  
Fancy might think that desert spreading fear  
Had whisperd terrors into quiets ear  
Or plundering armys past the place had come  
And drove the lost inhabitants from home  
The fields now claim them where a motley crew  
Of old and young their daily tasks pursue  
The barleys beard is grey and wheat is brown  
And wakens toil betimes to leave the town  
The reapers leave their beds before the sun  
And gleaners follow when home toils are done  
To pick the littered ear the reaper leaves  
And glean in open fields among the sheaves  
The ruddy child nursed in the lap of care  
In toils rude ways to do its little share  
Beside its mother poddles oer the land  
Sun burnt and stooping with a weary hand  
Picking its tiney glean of corn or wheat  
While crackling stubbles wound its legs and feet  
Full glad it often is to sit awhile  
Upon a smooth green baulk to ease its toil  
And feign would spend an idle hour to play  
With insects strangers to the moiling day  
Creeping about each rush and grassy stem  
And often wishes it was one of them  
In weariness of heart that it might lye  
Hid in the grass from the days burning eye  
That raises tender blisters on his skin  
Thro holes or openings that have lost a pin  
Free from the crackling stubs to toil and glean

And smiles to think how happy it had been  
Whilst its expecting mother stops to tye  
Her handful up and waiting his supply  
Misses the resting younker from her side  
And shouts of rods and morts of threats beside  
Pointing to the grey willows while she tells  
His fears shall fetch one if he still rebels  
Picturing harsh truths in its unpracticed eye  
How they who idle in the harvest lye  
Shall well deserving in the winter pine  
Or hunt the hedges with the birds and swine  
In vain he wishes that the rushes height  
Were tall as trees to hide him from her sight  
Leaving his pleasant seat he sighs and rubs  
His legs and shows scratchd wounds from piercing stubs  
To make excuse for play but she disdains  
His little wounds and smiles while he complains  
And as he stoops adown in troubles sore  
She sees his grief and bids him sob no more  
As bye and bye on the next sabbath day  
She'll give him well earned pence as well as play  
When he may buy almost with out a stint  
Sweet candied horehound cakes and pepper mint  
Or streaking sticks of luscious lolipop  
What ere he chuses from the tempting shop  
Wi in whose diamond winder shining lye  
Things of all sorts to tempt his eager eye  
Rich sugar plumbs in phials shining bright  
In every hue young fancys to delight  
Coaches and ladys of gilt ginger bread  
And downy plumbs and apples streaked with red  
Such promises all sorrows soon displace  
And smiles are instant kindled in his face  
Scorning all troubles which he felt before  
He picks the trailing ears and mourns no more  
The fields are all alive with busy noise  
Of labours sounds and insects humming joys  
Some oer the glittering sickle sweating stoop  
Startling full oft the partridge coveys up  
Some oer the rustling scythe go bending on  
And shockers follow where their toils have gone  
First turning swaths to wither in the sun

Where mice from terrors dangers nimbly run  
Leaving their tender young in fears alarm  
Lapt up in nests of chimbled grasses warm  
And oft themselves for safty search in vain  
From the rude boy or churlish hearted swain  
Who beat their stone chinkd forks about the groun(  
And spread an instant murder all around  
Tho oft the anxious maidens tender prayer  
Urges the clown their little lives to spare  
Who sighs while trailing the long rake along  
At scenes so cruel and forgets her song  
And stays wi love his murder aiming hand  
Some ted the puffing winnow down the land  
And others following roll them up in heaps  
While cleanly as a barn door beesome sweeps  
The hawling drag wi gathering weeds entwind  
And singing rakers end the toils behind

When the sun stoops to meet the western sky  
And noons hot hours have wanderd weary bye  
They seek an awthorn bush or willow tree  
Or stouk or shock where coolest shadows be  
Where baskets heapd and unbroachd bottles lye  
Which dogs in absence watchd with wary eye  
To catch their breath awhile and share the boon  
Which beavering time allows their toil at noon  
All gathering sit on stubbs or sheaves the hour  
Where scarlet poppys linger still in flower  
Stript in his shirt the hot swain drops adown  
And close beside him in her unpind gown  
Next to her favoured swain the maiden steals  
Blushing at kindness which her love reveals  
Who makes a seat for her of things around  
And drops beside her on the naked ground  
Wearied wi brambles catching at her gown  
And pulling nutts from branches pulld adown  
By friendly swain the maid Wi heaving breast  
Upon her lovers shoulder leans at rest  
Then from its cool retreat the beer they bring  
And hand the stout hooped bottle round the ring  
Each swain soaks hard-the maiden ere she sips  
Shrieks at the bold wasp settling on her lips

That seems determined only hers to greet  
As if it fancied they were cherrys sweet  
So dog forgoes his sleep awhile or play  
Springing at frogs that rustling jump away  
To watch each morsel that the boon bestows  
And wait the bone or crumb the shepherd throws  
For shepherds are no more of ease possest  
But share the harvests labours with the rest

When day declines and labour meets repose  
The bawling boy his evening journey goes  
At toils unwearied call the first and last  
He drives his horses to their nights repast  
In dewey close or meadow to sojourn  
And often ventures on his still return  
Oer garden pales or orchard walls to hie  
When sleeps safe key hath locked up dangers eye  
All but the mastiff watching in the dark  
Who snuffs and knows him and forbears to bark  
With fearful haste he climbs each loaded tree  
And picks for prizes which the ripest be  
Pears plumbs or filberts covered oer in leams  
While the pale moon creeps high in peaceful dreams  
And oer his harvest theft in jealous light  
Fills empty shadows with the power to fright  
And owlet screaming as it bounces nigh  
That from some barn hole pops and hurries bye  
Scard at the cat upon her nightly watch  
For rats that come for dew upon the thatch  
He hears the noise and trembling to escape  
While every object grows a dismal shape  
Drops from the tree in fancys swiftest dread  
By ghosts pursued and scampers home to bed  
Quick tumbling oer the mossy mouldering wall  
And looses half his booty in the fall  
Where soon as ere the morning opes its eyes  
The restless hogs will happen on the prize  
And crump adown the mellow and the green  
And makes all seem as nothing ne'er had been  
Amid the broils of harvests weary reign  
How sweet the sabbath wakes its rest again  
For each weary mind what rapture dwells

To hear once more its pleasant chiming bells  
That from each steeple peeping here and there  
Murmur a soothing lullaby to care  
The shepherd journeying on his morning rounds  
Pauses awhile to hear their pleasing sounds  
While the glad children free from toils employ  
Mimic the ding dong sounds and laugh for joy  
The fields themselves seem happy to be free  
Where insects chatter with unusual glee  
While solitude the stubbs and grass among  
Appears to muse and listen to the song

In quiet peace awakes the welcomed morn  
Men tired and children with their gleaning worn  
Weary and stiff eye round their doors the day  
To rest themselves with little heart for play  
No more keck horns in homestead close resounds  
As in their school boy days at hare and hounds  
Nor running over the street from wall to wall  
With eager shouts at 'cuck and catch the ball'  
In calm delight the sabbath wears along  
Yet round the cross at noon a tempted throng  
Of little youngers with their pence repair  
To buy the downy plumb and luscious pear  
That melt in the mouth-which gardeners never fail  
For gains strong impulse to expose for sale  
And on the circling cross steps in the sun  
Sit when the parson has his sermon done  
When grandams that against his rules rebel  
Come with their baskets heaped with fruit to sell  
That thither all the season did pursue  
With mellow gooseberries of every hue  
Green ruffs and raspberry reds and drops of gold  
That makes mouths water often to behold  
Sold out to clowns in totts oft deemed too small  
Who grudging much the price eat husks and all  
Nor leaves a fragment round to cheer the eye  
Of searching swine that murmurs hungry by  
And currants red and white on cabbage leaves  
While childrens fingers itches to be thieves  
And black red cherries shining to the sight  
As rich as brandy held before the light

Now these are past he still as sunday comes  
Sits on the cross wi baskets heapd wi plumbs  
And Jenitens streakd apples suggar sweet  
Others spice scented ripening wi the wheat  
And pears that melt ith' mouth like honey which  
He oft declares to make their spirits itch  
They are so juicy ripe and better still  
So rich they een might suck em thro a quill  
Here at their leisure gather many a clown  
To talk of grain and news about the town  
And here the boy wi toils earnd penny comes  
In hurrying speed to purchase pears or plumbs  
And oer the basket hangs wi many a smile  
Wi hat in hand to hold his prize the while

Not so the boys that begs for pence in vain  
Of deaf eard dames that threat while they complain  
Who talk of the good dinners they have eat  
And wanting more as nothing but consiet  
Vowing they ne'er shall throw good pence away  
So bids them off and be content wi play  
Reaching her rod that hangs the chimney oer  
And scaring their rude whinings to the door  
Who sob aloud and hang their hats adown  
To hide their tears and sawn along the town  
Venturing wi sullen step his basket nigh  
And often dipping a desiring eye  
Stone hearted dames thrifts errors to believe  
Who make their little bellys yearn to thieve  
But strong temptation must to fears resign  
For close beside the stocks in terror shine  
So choaking substitutes for loss of pelf  
He keeps his hungry fingers to himself  
And mopes and sits the sabbath hours away  
Wi heart too weary and too sad for play  
So sundays scenes and leisure passes bye  
In rests soft peace and home tranquillity  
Till monday morning doth its cares pursue  
And wakes the harvests busy toils anew

John Clare

# The Shepherds Calendar - December

While snow the window-panes bedim,  
The fire curls up a sunny charm,  
Where, creaming o'er the pitcher's rim,  
The flowering ale is set to warm;  
Mirth, full of joy as summer bees,  
Sits there, its pleasures to impart,  
And children, 'tween their parent's knees,  
Sing scraps of carols o'er by heart.

And some, to view the winter weathers,  
Climb up the window-seat with glee,  
Likening the snow to falling feathers,  
In fancy infant ecstasy;  
Laughing, with superstitious love,  
O'er visions wild that youth supplies,  
Of people pulling geese above,  
And keeping Christmas in the skies.

As tho' the homestead trees were drest,  
In lieu of snow, with dancing leaves,  
As tho' the sun-dried martin's nest,  
Instead of ickles, hung the eaves,  
The children hail the happy day -  
As if the snow were April's grass,  
And pleas'd, as 'neath the warmth of May,  
Sport o'er the water froze as glass.

John Clare

# The Shepherds Calendar - February - A Thaw

The snow is gone from cottage tops  
The thatch moss glows in brighter green  
And eves in quick succession drops  
Where grinning ices once hath been  
Pit patting wi a pleasant noise  
In tubs set by the cottage door  
And ducks and geese wi happy joys  
Douse in the yard pond brimming oer

The sun peeps thro the window pane  
Which childern mark wi laughing eye  
And in the wet street steal again  
To tell each other spring is nigh  
And as young hope the past recalls  
In playing groups will often draw  
Building beside the sunny walls  
Their spring-play-huts of sticks or straw

And oft in pleasures dreams they hie  
Round homsteads by the village side  
Scratching the hedgrow mosses bye  
Where painted pooty shells abide  
Mistaking oft the ivy spray  
For leaves that come wi budding spring  
And wondering in their search for play  
Why birds delay to build and sing

The milkmaid singing leaves her bed  
As glad as happy thoughts can be  
While magpies chatter oer her head  
As jocund in the change as she  
Her cows around the closes stray  
Nor lingering wait the foddering boy  
Tossing the molehills in their play  
And staring round in frolic joy

Ploughmen go whistling to their toils  
And yoke again the rested plough  
And mingling oer the mellow soils



Boys' shouts and whips are noising now

The shepherd now is often seen  
By warm banks oer his work to bend  
Or oer a gate or stile to lean  
Chattering to a passing friend

Odd hive bees fancying winter oer  
And dreaming in their combs of spring  
Creeps on the slab beside their door  
And strokes its legs upon its wing  
While wild ones half asleep are humming  
Round snowdrop bells a feeble note  
And pigeons coo of summer coming  
Picking their feathers on the cote

The barking dogs by lane and wood  
Drive sheep afield from foddering ground  
And eccho in her summer mood  
Briskly mocks the cheery sound  
The flocks as from a prison broke  
Shake their wet fleeces in the sun  
While following fast a misty smoke  
Reeks from the moist grass as they run

Nor more behind his masters heels  
The dog creeps oer his winter pace  
But cocks his tail and oer the fields  
Runs many a wild and random chase  
Following in spite of chiding calls  
The startld cat wi harmless glee  
Scaring her up the weed green walls  
Or mossy mottld apple tree

As crows from morning perches flye  
He barks and follows them in vain  
Een larks will catch his nimble eye  
And off he starts and barks again  
Wi breathless haste and blinded guess  
Oft following where the hare hath gone  
Forgetting in his joys excess  
His frolic puppy days are done

The gossips saunter in the sun  
As at the spring from door to door  
Of matters in the village done  
And secret newsings muttered oer  
Young girls when they each other meet  
Will stand their tales of love to tell  
While going on errands down the street  
Or fetching water from the well

A calm of pleasure listens round  
And almost whispers winter bye  
While fancy dreams of summer sounds  
And quiet rapture fills the eye  
The sun beams on the hedges lye  
The south wind murmurs summer soft  
And maids hang out white cloaths to dry  
Around the eldern skirted croft

Each barns green thatch reeks in the sun  
Its mate the happy sparrow calls  
And as nest building spring begun  
Peeps in the holes about the walls

The wren a sunny side the stack  
Wi short tail ever on the strunt  
Cockd gadding up above his back  
Again for dancing gnats will hunt

The gladdend swine bolt from the sty  
And round the yard in freedom run  
Or stretching in their slumbers lye  
Beside the cottage in the sun  
The young horse whinneys to its mate  
And sickens from the threshers door  
Rubbing the straw yards banded gate  
Longing for freedom on the moor

Hens leave their roosts wi cackling calls  
To see the barn door free from snow  
And cocks flye up the mossy walls  
To clap their spangld wings and crow

About the steeples sunny top  
The jackdaw flocks resemble spring  
And in the stone archd windows pop  
Wi summer noise and wanton wing

The small birds think their wants are oer  
To see the snow hills fret again  
And from the barns chaff litterd door  
Betake them to the greening plain  
The woodmans robin startles coy  
Nor longer at his elbow comes  
To peck wi hungers eager joy  
Mong mossy stulps the litterd crumbs

Neath hedge and walls that screen the wind  
The gnats for play will Hock together  
And een poor flyes odd hopes will find  
To venture in the mocking weather  
From out their hiding holes again  
Wi feeble pace they often creep  
Along the sun warmd window pane  
Like dreaming things that walk in sleep

The mavis thrush wi wild delight  
Upon the orchards dripping tree  
Mutters to see the day so bright  
Spring scraps of young hopes poesy  
And oft dame stops her burring wheel  
To hear the robins note once more  
That tutles while he pecks his meal  
From sweet briar hips beside the door

The hedghog from its hollow root  
Sees the wood moss clear of snow  
And hunts each hedge for fallen fruit  
Crab hip and winter bitten sloe  
And oft when checkd by sudden fears  
As shepherd dog his haunt espies  
He rolls up in a ball of spears  
And all his barking rage defies

Thus nature of the spring will dream

While south winds thaw but soon again  
Frost breaths upon the stiffening stream  
And numbs it into ice-the plain

Soon wears its merry garb of white  
And icicles that fret at noon  
Will eke their icy tails at night  
Beneath the chilly stars and moon

Nature soon sickens of her joys  
And all is sad and dumb again  
Save merry shouts of sliding boys  
About the frozen furrowd plain  
The foddering boy forgets his song  
And silent goes wi folded arms  
And croodling shepherds bend along  
Crouching to the whizzing storms

John Clare

# The Shepherds Calendar - January- Winters Day

Withering and keen the winter comes  
While comfort flies to close shut rooms  
And sees the snow in feathers pass  
Winnowing by the window glass  
And unfelt tempests howl and beat  
Above his head in corner seat  
And musing oer the changing scene  
Farmers behind the tavern screen  
Sit-or wi elbow idly prest  
On hob reclines the corners guest  
Reading the news to mark again  
The bankrupt lists or price of grain  
Or old moores anual prophecys  
That many a theme for talk supplys  
Whose almanacks thumbd pages swarm  
Wi frost and snow and many a storm  
And wisdom gossipd from the stars  
Of polities and bloody wars  
He shakes his head and still proceeds  
Neer doubting once of what he reads  
All wonders are wi faith supplyd  
Bible at once and weather guide  
Puffing the while his red tipt pipe  
Dreaming oer troubles nearly ripe  
Yet not quite lost in profits way  
He'll turn to next years harvest day  
And winters leisure to regale  
Hopes better times and sips his ale  
While labour still pursues his way  
And braves the tempest as he may  
The thresher first thro darkness deep  
Awakes the mornings winter sleep  
Scaring the owlet from her prey  
Long before she dreams of day  
That blinks above head on the snow  
Watching the mice that squeaks below  
And foddering boys sojourn again  
By ryhme hung hedge and frozen plain  
Shuffling thro the sinking snows

Blowing his fingers as he goes  
To where the stock in bellowings hoarse  
Call for their meals in dreary close  
And print full many a hungry track  
Round circling hedge that guards the stack  
Wi higgling tug he cuts the hay  
And bares the forkfull loads away  
And morn and evening daily throws  
The little heaps upon the snows  
The shepherd too in great coat wrapt  
And straw bands round his stockings lapt  
Wi plodding dog that sheltering steals  
To shun the wind behind his heels  
Takes rough and smooth the winter weather  
And paces thro the snow together  
While in the fields the lonely plough  
Enjoys its frozen sabbath now  
And horses too pass time away  
In leisures hungry holiday  
Rubbing and lunging round the yard  
Dreaming no doubt of summer sward  
As near wi idle pace they draw  
To brouze the upheapd cribs of straw  
While whining hogs wi hungry roar  
Crowd around the kitchen door  
Or when their scanty meal is done  
Creep in the straw the cold to shun  
And old hens scratting all the day  
Seeks curnels chance may throw away  
Pausing to pick the seed and grain  
Then dusting up the chaff again  
While in the barn holes hid from view  
The cats their patient watch pursue  
For birds which want in flocks will draw  
From woods and fields to pick the straw  
The soodling boy that saunters round  
The yard on homward dutys bound  
Now fills the troughs for noisy hogs  
Oft asking aid from barking dogs  
That tuggles at each flopping ear  
Of such as scramble on too near  
Or circl'd round wi thirsty stock

That for his swinging labours flock  
At clanking pump his station takes  
Half hid in mist their breathing makes  
Or at the pond before the door  
Which every night leaves frozen oer  
Wi heavy beetle<sup>1</sup> splinters round  
The glossy ice wi jarring sound  
While huddling geese as half asleep  
Doth round the imprisond water creep  
Silent and sad to wait his aid  
And soon as ere a hole is made  
They din his ears wi pleasures cry  
And hiss at all that ventures nigh  
Splashing wi jealous joys & vain  
Their fill ere it be froze again  
And woodstack climbs at maids desire  
Throwing down faggots for the fire  
Where stealing time he often stands  
To warm his half froze tingling hands  
The schoolboy still in dithering joys  
Pastime in leisure hours employs  
And be the weather as it may  
Is never at a loss for play  
Rolling up giant heaps of snow  
As noontide frets its little thaw  
Making rude things of various names  
Snow men or aught their fancy frames  
Till numbd wi cold they quake away  
And join at hotter sports to play  
Kicking wi many a flying bound  
The football oer the frozen ground  
Or seeking bright glib ice to play  
To sailing slide the hours away  
As smooth and quick as shadows run  
When clouds in autumn pass the sun  
Some hurrying rambles eager take  
To skait upon the meadow lake  
Scaring the snipe from her retreat  
From shelving banks unfrozen seat  
Or running brook where icy spars  
Which the pale sunlight specks wi stars  
Shoots crizzling oer the restless tide

To many a likeness petrified  
Where fancy often stoops to pore  
And turns again to wonder more  
The more hen too wi fear opprest  
Starts from her reedy shelterd nest  
Bustling to get from foes away  
And scarcely flies more fast then they  
Skaiting along wi curving springs  
Wi arms spread out like herons wings  
They race away for pleasures sake  
A hunters speed along the lake  
And oft neath trees where ice is thin  
Meet narrow scapes from breaking in  
Again the robin waxes tame  
And ventures pitys crumbs to claim  
Picking the trifles off the snow  
Which dames on purpose daily throw  
And perching on the window sill  
Where memory recolecting still  
Knows the last winters broken pane  
And there he hops and peeps again  
The clouds of starnels dailey fly  
Blackening thro the evening sky  
To whittleseas<sup>1</sup> reed wooded mere  
And ozier holts by rivers near  
And many a mingld swathy crowd  
Rook crow and jackdaw noising loud  
Fly too and fro to dreary fen  
Dull winters weary flight agen  
Flopping on heavy wings away  
As soon as morning wakens grey  
And when the sun sets round and red  
Returns to naked woods to bed  
Wood pigeons too in flocks appear  
By hunger tamd from timid fear  
They mid the sheep unstartld steal  
And share wi them a scanty meal  
Picking the green leaves want bestows  
Of turnips sprouting thro the snows  
The ickles from the cottage eaves  
Which cold nights freakish labour leaves  
Fret in the sun a partial thaw



Pattring on the pitted snow  
But soon as ere hes out of sight  
They eke afresh their tails at night  
The sun soon creepeth out of sight  
Behind the woods-and running night  
Makes haste to shut the days dull eye  
And grizzles oer the chilly sky  
Dark deep and thick by day forsook  
As cottage chimneys sooty nook  
While maidens fresh as summer roses  
Joining from the distant closes  
Haste home wi yokes and swinging pail  
And thresher too sets by his flail  
And leaves the mice at peace agen  
To fill their holes wi stolen grain  
And owlets glad his toils are oer  
Swoops by him as he shuts the door  
The shepherd seeks his cottage warm  
And tucks his hook beneath his arm  
And weary in the cold to roam  
Scenting the track that leadeth home  
His dog wi swifter pace proceeds  
And barks to urge his masters speed  
Then turns and looks him in the face  
And trots before Wi mending pace  
Till out of whistle from the swain  
He sits him down and barks again  
Anxious to greet the opend door  
And meet the cottage fire once more  
The robin that wi nimble eye  
Glegs round a danger to espy  
Now pops from out the opend door  
From crumbs half left upon the floor  
Nor wipes his bill on perching chair  
Nor stays to clean a feather there  
Scard at the cat that sliveth in  
A chance from evenings glooms to win  
To jump on chairs or tables nigh  
Seeking what plunder may supply  
The childerns litterd scraps to thieve  
Or aught that negligence may leave  
Creeping when huswives cease to watch

Or dairey doors are off the latch  
On cheese or butter to regale  
Or new milk reeking in .the pale  
The hedger now in leathern coat  
From woodland wilds and fields remote  
After a journey far and slow  
Knocks from his shoes the caking snow  
And opes the welcome creaking door  
Throwing his faggot on the floor  
And at his listening wifes desire  
To eke afresh the blazing fire  
Wi sharp bill cuts the hazel bands  
Then sets him down to warm his hands  
And tell in labours happy way  
His story of the passing day  
While as the warm blaze cracks and gleams  
The supper reeks in savoury steams  
Or keetle simmers merrily  
And tinkling cups are set for tea  
Thus doth the winters dreary day  
From morn to evening wear away.

John Clare

## The Shepherds Calendar - July

Daughter of pastoral smells and sights  
And sultry days and dewy nights  
July resumes her yearly place  
Wi her milking maiden face  
Ruddy and tawny yet sweet to view  
When everywhere's a vale of dew  
And raps it round her looks that smiles  
A lovely rest to daily toils  
Wi last months closing scenes and days  
Her sultry beaming birth begins

Hay makers still in grounds appear  
And some are thinning nearly clear  
Save oddly lingering shocks about  
Which the tithman counteth out  
Sticking their green boughs where they go  
The parsons yearly claims to know  
Which farmers view wi grudging eye  
And grumbling drive their waggons by  
In hedge bound close and meadow plains  
Striped groups of busy bustling swains  
From all her hants wi noises rude  
Drives to the wood lands solitude  
That seeks a spot unmarked wi paths  
Far from the close and meadow swaths  
Wi smutty song and story gay  
They cart the withered smelling hay  
Boys loading on the waggon stand  
And men below wi sturdy hand  
Heave up the shocks on lathy prong  
While horse boys lead the team along  
And maidens drag the rake behind  
Wi light dress shaping to the wind  
And trembling locks of curly hair  
And snow white bosoms nearly bare  
That charms ones sight amid the hay  
Like lingering blossoms of the may  
From clowns rude jokes they often turn  
And oft their cheeks wi blushes burn

From talk which to escape a sneer  
They oft affect as not to hear  
Some in the nooks about the ground  
Pile up the stacks swelld bellying round  
The milking cattles winter fare  
That in the snow are fodderd there  
Warm spots wi black thorn thickets lind  
And trees to brake the northern wind  
While masters oft the sultry hours  
Will urge their speed and talk of showers  
When boy from home trots to the stack  
Wi dinner upon dobbins back  
And bottles to the saddle tyd  
Or ballancd upon either side  
A horse thats past his toiling day  
Yet still a favorite in his way  
That trots on errands up and down  
The fields and too and fro from town  
Long ere his presence comes in sight  
Boys listen wi heart felt delight  
And know his footsteps down the road  
Hastening wi the dinner load  
Then they seek in close or meadows  
High hedgerows wi grey willow shadows  
To hide beneath from sultry noon  
And rest them at their dinner boon  
Where helping shepherd for the lass  
Will seek a hillock on the grass  
The thickset hedge or stack beside  
Where teasing pismires ne'er abide  
And when tis found down drops the maid  
Proud wi the kind attention paid  
And still the swain wi notice due  
Waits on her all the dinner through  
And fills her horn which she tho dry  
In shoyness often pushes bye  
While he will urge wi many a smile  
It as a strength to help her toil  
And in her hand will oft contrive  
From out his pocket pulld to slive  
Stole fruit when no one turns his eve  
To wet her mouth when shes adry

Offerd when she refuses ale  
Noons sultry labour to regale  
Teazd wi the countless multitude  
Of flyes that every where intrude  
While boys wi boughs will often try  
To beat them from them as they lye  
Who find their labour all in vain  
And soon as scard they swarm again  
Thus while each swain and boy and lass  
Sit at their dinner on the grass  
The teams wi gears thrown on their backs  
Stand pulling at the shocks or racks  
Switching their tails and turning round  
To knap the gadflys teasing wound  
While dob that brought the dinners load  
Too tricky to be turnd abroad  
Needing the scuttle shook wi grain  
To coax him to be caught again  
Is to a tree at tether tyd  
Ready for boy to mount and ride  
Nipping the grass about his pound  
And stamping battering hooves around  
Soon as each ground is clear of hay  
The shepherd whoops his flocks away  
From fallow fields to plentys scenes  
Shining as smooth as bowling greens  
But scard wi clipping tides alarms  
They bleat about the close in swarms  
And hide neath hedges in the cool  
Still panting tho wi out their whool  
Markd wi the tard brands lasting dye  
And make a restless hue and cry  
Answering the lambs that call again  
And for their old dams seek in vain  
Running mid the stranger throng  
And ever meeting wi the wrong  
Fiegn wi some old yoe to abide  
Who smells and tosses them aside  
And some as if they know its face  
Will meet a lamb wi mended pace  
But proving hopes indulgd in vain  
They turn around and blair again

Till weand from memory half forgot  
They spread and feed and notice not  
Save now and then to lambs shrill crys  
Odd yoes in hoarser tone replys  
Still may be seen the mowing swain  
On balks between the fields of grain  
Who often stops his thirst to ease  
To pick the juicy pods of pease  
And oft as chances bring to pass  
Stoops oer his scythe stuck in the grass  
To seek the brimming honey comb  
Which bees so long were toiling home  
And rifld from so many flowers  
And carried thro so many hours  
He tears their small hives mossy ball  
Where the brown labourers hurded all  
Who gather homward one by one  
And see their nest and honey gone  
Humming around his rushing toil  
Their mellancholly wrongs awhile  
Then oer the sweltering swaths they stray  
And hum disconsolate away  
And oft neath hedges cooler screen  
Where meadow sorrel lingers green  
Calld 'sour grass' by the knowing clown  
The mower gladly chews it down  
And slakes his thirst the best he may  
When singing brooks are far away  
And his hoopd bottle woeful tale  
Is emptied of its cheering ale  
That lulld him in unconscious sleep  
At dinners hour beneath a heap  
Of grass or bush or edding shock  
Till startld by the country clock  
That told the hours his toil had lost  
Who coud but spare an hour at most  
And wearing past the setting sun  
He stays to get his labour done  
The gipsey down the meadow brook  
Wi long pole and reaping hook  
Tyd at its end amid the streams  
That glitters wi the hot sunbeams

Reachs and cuts the bulrush down  
And hawks them round each neighboring town  
Packd at his back or tyd in loads  
On asses down the dusty roads  
He jogs and shouts from door to door  
His well known note of calling oer  
Offering to huswives cheap repairs  
Mending their broken bottomd chairs  
Wi step half walk half dance, and eye  
Ready to smile on passers bye  
Wi load well suiting weather warm  
Tuckd carlessly beneath his arm  
Or peeping coat and side between  
In woolen bag of faded green  
Half conseald and half displayd  
A purpose tell tale to his trade  
The gipsey fiddler jogs away  
To village feast and holiday  
Scraping in public house to trye  
What beer his music will supply  
From clowns who happy wi the din  
Dance their hand naild hilos thin  
Along the roads in passing crowds  
Followd by dust like smoaking clouds  
Scotch droves of beast a little breed  
In swelterd weary mood proceed  
A patient race from scottish hills  
To fatten by our pasture rills  
Lean wi the wants of mountain soil  
But short and stout for travels toil  
Wi cockd up horns and curling crown  
And dewlap bosom hanging down  
Followd by slowly pacing swains  
Wild to our rushy flats and plains  
At whom the shepherds dog will rise  
And shake himself and in supprise  
Draw back and waffle in affright  
Barking the traveller out of sight  
And mowers oer their scythes will bear  
Upon their uncooth dress to stare  
And shepherds as they trample bye  
Leaves oer their hooks a wondering eye

To witness men so oddly clad  
In petticoats of banded plad  
Wi blankets oer their shoulders slung  
To camp at night the fields among  
When they for rest on commons stop  
And blue cap like a stocking top  
Cockt oer their faces summer brown  
Wi scarlet tazzeles on the crown  
Rude patterns of the thistle flower  
Untrickd and open to the shower  
And honest faces fresh and free  
That breath of mountain liberty  
The pindar on the sabbath day  
Soon as the darkness waxes grey  
Before one sun beam oer the ground  
Spindles its light and shadow round  
Goes round the fields at early morn  
To see what stock are in the corn  
To see what chances sheep may win  
Thro gaps the gipsey pilfers thin  
Or if theyve forcd a restless way  
By rubbing at a loosend tray  
Or nuzling colt that trys to catch  
A gate at night left off the latch  
By traveller seeking home in haste  
Or the clown by fareys chas'd  
That listning while he makes a stand  
Opens each gate wi fearful hand  
And dreads a minute to remain  
To put it on the latch again  
And cows who often wi their horns  
Toss from the gaps the stuffing thorns  
These like a fox upon the watch  
He in the morning trycs to catch  
And drives them to the pound for pay  
Carless about the sabbath day  
Soon as the morning wakens red  
The shepherd startles from his bed  
And rocks afield his moving pace  
While folded sheep will know his face  
Rising as he appears in sight  
To shake their coats as in delight



His shadow stalking stride for stride  
Stretches a giant by his side  
Long as a tree without a top  
And oft it urges him to stop  
Both in his journey and his song  
And wonders why it seems so long  
And bye and bye as morning dies  
Shrinks to an unbrichd boy in size  
Then as the evening gathers blue  
Grows to a giants length anew  
Puzzld the more he stops to pause  
His wisdom vainly seeks the cause  
Again his journey he pursues  
Lengthening his track along the dews  
And his dog that turnd to pick  
From his sides the sucking tick  
Insects that on cattle creep  
And bites the labourer laid asleep  
Pricks up his ears to see twas gone  
Ana shakes his hide and hastens on  
And the while the shepherd stayd  
Trailing a track the hare had made  
Bolts thro the creeping hedge again  
And hurring follows wi the swain  
The singing shouting herding boys  
Follows again their wild employs  
And ere the sun puts half his head  
From out his crimson pillowd bed  
And bawls behind his cows again  
That one by one lobs down the lane  
Wi wild weeds in his hat anew  
The summer sorts of every hue  
And twigs of leaves that please his eye  
To his old haunts he hallows bye  
Wi dog that loiters bv his side  
Or trotts before wi nimble stridc  
That waits till bid to bark and run  
And panteth from the dreaded sun  
And oft amid the sunny day  
Will join a partner in his play  
And in his antic tricks and glee  
Will prove as fond of sport as he

And by the flag pool summer warm  
He'll watch the motions of his arm  
That holds a stick or stone to throw  
In the sun gilded flood below  
And head oer ears he dances in  
Nor fears to wet his curly skin  
The boys field cudgel to restore  
And brings it in his mouth ashore  
And eager as for crust or bone  
He'll run to catch the pelted stone  
Till wearied out he shakes his hide  
And drops his tail and sneaks aside  
Unheeding whistles shouts and calls  
To take a rest where thickly falls  
The rush clumps shadows there he lyes  
Licking his skin and catching flies  
Or picking tween his stretching feet  
The bone he had not time to eat  
Before when wi the teasing boy  
He was so throngd wi plays employ  
Noon gathers wi its blistering breath  
Around and day dyes still as death  
The breeze is stopt the lazy bough  
Hath not a leaf that dances now  
The totter grass upon the hill  
And spiders threads is hanging still  
The feathers dropt from morehens wings  
Upon the waters surface clings  
As stedfast and as heavy seem  
As stones beneath them in the stream  
Hawkweed and groundsels fairey downs  
Unruffld keep their seeding crowns  
And in the oven heated air  
Not one light thing is floating there  
Save that to the earnest eye  
The restless heat swims twittering bye  
The swine run restless down the street  
Anxious some pond or ditch to meet  
From days hot swoonings to retire  
Wallowing in the weeds and mire  
The linnets seek the twiggs that lye  
Close to the brook and brig stones drye

At top and sit and dip their bills  
Till they have drunk their little fills  
Then flurt their wings and wet their feathers  
To cool them in the blazing weathers  
Dashing the water oer their heads  
Then high them to some cooling sheds  
Where dark wood glooms about the plain  
To pick their feathers smooth again  
The young quick's branches seem as dead  
And scorch from yellow into red  
Ere autumn hath its pencil taen  
Their shades in different hues to stain  
Following behind the crawling ploughs  
Whiping oft their sweating brows  
The boys lead horses yokd in pairs  
To jumping harrows linkd that tears  
And teazes the hard clods to dust  
Placing for showers in hopes their trust  
The farmer follows sprinkling round  
Wi turnip seed the panting ground  
Providing food for beast and sheep  
When winters snows are falling deep  
Oft proving hopes and wishes vain  
While clouds disperse that promisd rain  
When soon as ere the turnip creeps  
From out the crust burnt soil and peeps  
Upon the farmers watching eye  
Tis eaten by the jumping flye  
And eager neath the midday sun  
Soon as each plough teams toil is done  
Scarse waiting till the gears are taen  
From off their backs by boy and swain  
From hayfilld racks they turn away  
Nor in the stable care to stay  
Hurr[y]ing to the trough to drink  
Or from the yard ponds muddy brink  
Rush in and wi long winded soak  
Drink till theyre almost fit to choak  
And from the horsbees teasing din  
Thrust deep their burning noses in  
Almost above their greedy eyes  
To cool their mouths and shun the flyes

Deaf to the noise the geese will make  
That grudge the worthy share they take  
Boys now neath green lanes meeting bough  
Each noons half holiday from plough  
Take out their hungry teams till night  
That nipp the grass wi eager bite  
Wi long tails switching never still  
They lounge neath trees when eat their fill  
And stamp and switch till closing day  
Brushing the teasing flyes away  
Endless labour all in vain  
That start in crowds to turn again  
When the sun is sinking down  
And dyes more deep the shadows brown  
And gradual into slumber glooms  
How sweet the village evening comes  
To weary hinds from toil releasd  
And panting sheep and torturd beast  
The shepherd long wi heat opprest  
Betakes him to his cottage rest  
And his tird dog that plods along  
Wi panting breath and lolling tongue  
Runs eager as the brook appears  
And dashes in head over ears  
Startling reed sparrow broods to fiye  
That in the reed woods slumberd nigh  
And water rotts in haste to hide  
Nibbling the sedges close beside  
Lapping while he floats about  
To quench his thirst then drabbles out  
And shakes his coat and like the swain  
Is happy night is come again

The beast that to the pond did creep  
And rushd in water belly deep  
The gad flyes threatning hums to shun  
And horse bee darting in the sun  
Lashing their tails the while they stood  
And sprinkling thick their sides wi mud  
Snuff the cool air now day is gone  
And linger slow and idly on  
To the pebbly fore to drink

And drop and rest upon its brink  
Ruminating on their beds  
Calm as the sky above their heads  
The horse whose mouth is seldom still  
Is up and cropping at his will  
The moisting grass unteazd and free  
In summer eves serenity  
Uncheckt by flyes he grazes on  
Right happy that the day is gone  
Ne'er leaving off to turn around  
His stooping head to knap the wound  
And tail that switchd his sides all day  
Is quiet now the suns away  
The cowboys as their herd plod on  
Before them homward one by one  
Grows happy as their toil grows short  
And full of fancys restless sport  
Oft starts along wi sinking day  
Acting proud their soldier play  
Wi peeld bark sash around each waist  
And rush caps oer each beaver placd  
Stuck wi a headaches red cockade  
And wooden swords and sticks displayd  
For flags-thus march the evening troop  
While soon one strikes a whistle up  
And others wi their dinner tins  
The evenings falling quiet dins  
Patting wi hollow sounding tums  
And imitating pipes and drums  
Calling their cows that plod before  
Their army marching from the moor  
And thus they act till met the town  
Carless of laughs from passing clown  
Even their dogs too tird for play  
Loiter on their evening way  
Oft rolling on the damping grass  
Or stopping wi the milking lass  
Waiting a chance the ways conseal  
A mouth full from her pails to steal  
Dropping down to pick a bone  
The hedger from his wallets thrown  
Or found upon some greensward platt

Where hayfolks at their dinner sat  
Sweet the cows breath down the lane  
Steaming the fragrance of the plain  
As home they rock and bawling wait  
Till boys run to unloose the gate  
And from their milksheds all adry  
Turn to the pump wi anxious eye  
Where shoud the maids wi boys repair  
To fill the dashing bucket there  
They hurry spite of threatning clown  
And kick the milkers bucket down  
And horses oft wi eager stoop  
Will bend adown to steal a sup  
Watching a moments chance to win  
And dip their eager noses in  
As by they pass or set it down  
To rest or chatter to a clown  
And knats wi their small slender noise  
Bother too the troubl'd boys  
And teaze the cows that while she chides  
Will kick and turn to lick their sides  
And like so many hanting sprites  
Will bite and weal the maid anights  
Who dreams of love and sleeps so sound  
As ne'er to feel each little wound  
Till waken by the morning sun  
She wonders at the injury done  
Thinking in fears simplicity  
That faireys dreaded mistery  
On her white bosom in the dark  
Had been and left each blisterd mark  
The fox begins his stunt odd bark  
Down in its dew bed drops the lark  
And on the heath amid the gorse  
The night hawk stints the feeding horse  
That pricks his ear wi startling eye  
And snorts to hear its trembling crye  
The owlet leaves his ivy tree  
Into its hive slow sails the bee  
The mower seeks his cloaths and hides  
His scythe home bent wi weary strides  
And oer his shoulder swings his bag

Bearing in hand his empty cag  
Hay makers on their homward way  
Into the fields will often stray  
Among the grain when no one sees  
Nestle and fill their laps wi peas  
Sheep scard wi tweenlight doubting eye  
Leap the path and canter bye  
Nipping wi moment stoops the plain  
And turning quick to gaze again  
Till silence upon eve awaits  
And milkmaids cease to clap the gates  
And homward to the town are gone  
Wi whispering sweethearts chatting on  
And shepherds homward tracks are past  
And dogs rude barks are still at last  
Then down they drop as suits their wills  
Or nips the thyme on pismire hills  
Where nought is seen but timid hares  
That nights sweet welcome gladly shares  
And shadows stooping as they stoop  
Beside them when the moon gets up  
Reviving wi the ruddy moon  
The nightingale resumes his tune  
What time the horsboy drives away  
His loose teams from the toils of day  
To crop the closes dewy blade  
Where the hay stacks fenced and made  
Or on the commons bushy plain  
To rest till the sun comes again  
Whistling and bawling loud and long  
The burthen of some drawling song  
That grows more loud as eve grows late  
Yet when he opes the clapping gate  
He cant help turning in his joys  
To look if his fear damping noise  
Has raised a mischief in the wind  
And waked a ghost to stalk behind  
And when hes turned them safe aground  
And hooked the chain the gate around  
Wi quicker speed he homward sings  
And leaves them in the mushroom rings  
Wi the dewdrunk dancing elves

To eat or rest as suits themselves  
And as he hastes from labour done  
An owlets whoop een makes him run  
And bats shill flickerings bobbing near  
Turns his heart blood cold wi fear  
And when at home wi partner ralph  
He hugs himself to think hes safe  
And tells his tale while others smile  
Of all he thought and feard the while  
The black house bee hath ceasd to sing  
And white nosd one wi out a sting  
That boys will catch devoid of dread  
Are in their little holes abed  
And martins neath the mossey eves  
Oft startld at the sparrow thieves  
That in their house will often peep  
Breaking their little weary sleep  
And oft succeed when left alone  
In making their clay huts their own  
Where the cock sparrow on the scout  
Watches and keeps the owner out  
The geese have left the home close moats  
And at the yard gate clean their coats  
Or neath their feathers tuck their heads  
Asleep till driven to their sheds  
The pigeon droves in whisking flight  
Hurrying to their coats ere night  
In coveys round the village meet  
And in the dove coat holes retreat  
Nor more about the wheaten grounds  
The bird boys bell and clapper sounds  
Retiring wi the setting sun  
His toil and shout and song is done  
The shrill bat wi its flitting mate  
Starts thro the church vaults iron grate  
Deaths daily visitors and all  
He meets save slanting suns that fall  
At eve as if they lovd to shed  
Their daily memory oer the dead  
Hodge neath the climbing elms that drop  
Their branches oer a dove coat top  
Hath milkd his cows and taken in



On yokes the reeking pales or tin  
And been across the straw to chain  
The hen roost wicket safe again  
And done his yard rounds hunting eggs  
And taen his hat from off the peggs  
To scamper to the circling cross  
To have a game at pitch and toss  
And day boy hath his supper got  
Of milk before twas hardly hot  
Eager from toil to get away  
And join the boys at taw to play  
Neath black smiths cinder litterd shed  
Till the hour to go to bed  
Old gossips on the greensward bench  
Sit where the hound milking wench  
Will set her buckets down to rest  
And be awhile their evening guest  
To whom their box is held while she  
Takes the smallest nips that be  
That soon as snift begins to teaze  
And makes her turn away to sneeze  
While old dames say the sign is plain  
That she will dream about her swain  
And toss the cloaths from off her bed  
And cautions her of roguish ned  
Holding their hands agen their hips  
To laugh as up she starts and trip  
In quickend speed along the town  
Bidding good night to passing clown

From the black smiths shop the swain  
Jogs wi ploughshares laid again  
And drops them by the stable shed  
Where gears on pegs hang over head  
Ready for driving boys to take  
On fore horse when their toils awake  
The kitchen wench wi face red hot  
As blazing fire neath supper pot  
Hath cleand her pails and pansions all  
And set them leaning by the wall  
And twird her whool mop clean again  
And hung it on the pales to drain

Now by the maids requesting smile  
The shepherd mounts the wood stack pile  
Reard high against the orchard pales  
And cause of thorns she oft bewails  
Prickd hands and holes in sunday gown  
He throws the smoothest faggot down  
And hawls it in at her desire  
Ready for the kitching fire

Beneath the elderns village shade  
Oer her well curb leans the maid  
To draw the brimming bucket up  
While passing boy to beg a sup  
Will stop his roll or rocking cart  
And the maidens gentle heart  
Gives ready leave-the eager clown  
Throws off his hat and stoops adown  
Soaking his fill then hastens on  
To catch his team already gone  
Eager from toil to get release  
And in the hay field feed at peace

The weary thresher leaves his barn  
And emptys from his shoes the corn  
That gatherd in them thro the day  
And homward bends his weary way  
The gardener he is sprinkling showers  
From watering pans on drooping flowers  
And set away his hoe and spade  
While goody neath the cottage shade  
Sits wi a baskett tween her knees  
Ready for supper shelling peas  
And cobbler chatting in the town  
Hath put his window shutter down  
And the knowing parish clerk  
Feign to do his jobs ere dark  
ilath timd the church clock to the sun  
And wound it up for night and done  
And turud the hugh kev in the door  
Chatting his evening story oer  
Up the street the servant maid

Runs wi her errands long delayd  
And ere the door she enters in  
She stops to right a loosend pin  
And smooth wi hasty fingers down  
The crumpling creases in her gown  
Which Rogers oggles rudly made  
For may games forfeit never paid  
And seizd a kiss against her will  
While playing quoits upon the hill  
Wi other shepherds laughing nigh  
That made her shoy and hurry bye  
The blacksmiths gangling toil is oer  
And shut his hot shops branded door  
Folding up his arms to start  
And take at ease his evening quart  
And farmer giles his business done  
Wi face a very setting sun  
Jogging home on dobbins back  
From helping at the clover stack  
The horse knows well nor trys to pass  
The door where for his custom glass  
He nightly from the saddle jumps  
To slake his thirst or cheer the dumps  
Leaving old dob his breath to catch  
Wi bridle hanging at the latch  
The shepherd too will often spare  
A sixpence to be merry there  
While the dog that trackd his feet  
Adown the dusty printed street  
Lies as one weary loath to roam  
Agen the door to wait him home  
While the taylors long day thirst  
Is still unquenched tho fit to burst  
Whose been at truants merry play  
From sheers and bodkin all the day  
Still soaks the tankard reeling ripe  
And scarce can stoop to light his pipe  
The labourer sitting by his door  
Happy that the day is oer  
Is stooping downwards to unloose  
His leathern baffles or his shoes  
Making ready for his rest

Quickly to be the pillows guest  
While on mothers lap wi in  
The childern each their prayers begin  
That taen from play are loath to go  
And looking round repeating slow  
Each prayer they stammer in delay  
To gain from bed a longer stay  
Goody hath set her spinning bye  
Deafend by her chattering pye  
That calls her up wi hungry rage  
To put his supper in the cage  
That done she sought a neighbours door  
A minutes time to gossip oer  
And neath her apron now tis night  
Huddles for home, her candle light  
Hid from the wind-to burn an hour  
As clouds wi threatend thunder lower  
The mastiff from his kennel free  
Is now unchaind at liberty  
In readiness to put to rout  
The thieves that night may bring about  
Thus evening deepning to a close  
Leaves toil and nature to repose

John Clare

# The Shepherds Calendar - July (2nd Version)

July the month of summers prime  
Again resumes her busy time  
Scythes tinkle in each grassy dell  
Where solitude was wont to dwell  
And meadows they are mad with noise  
Of laughing maids and shouting boys  
Making up the withering hay  
With merry hearts as light as play  
The very insects on the ground  
So nimbly bustle all around  
Among the grass or dusty soil  
They seem partakers in the toil  
The very landscape reels with life  
While mid the busy stir and strife  
Of industry the shepherd still  
Enjoys his summer dreams at will  
Bent oer his hook or listless laid  
Beneath the pastures willow shade  
Whose foliage shines so cool and grey  
Amid the sultry hues of day  
As if the mornings misty veil  
Yet lingered in their shadows pale  
Or lolling in a musing mood  
On mounds where saxon castles stood  
Upon whose deeply buried walls  
The ivyed oaks dark shadow falls  
Oft picking up with wondering gaze  
Some little thing of other days  
Saved from the wreck of time-as beads  
Or broken pots among the weeds  
Of curious shapes-and many a stone  
Of roman pavements thickly sown  
Oft hoping as he searches round  
That buried riches may be found  
Tho search as often as he will  
His hopes are dissapointed still  
And marking oft upon his seat  
The insect world beneath his feet  
In busy motion here and there

Like visitors to feast or fair  
Some climbing up the rushes stem  
Hugh steeples height or more to them  
With speed that sees no fear to drop  
Till perched upon its spirey top  
Where they awhile the view survey  
Then prune their wings and flit away  
Others journeying too and fro  
Among the grassy woods below  
Musing as if they felt and knew  
The pleasant scenes they wandered thro  
Where each bent round them seems to be  
Hugh as a jiant timber tree  
While pismires from their castles come  
In crowds to seek the litterd crumb  
Which he on purpose drops that they  
May hawl the heavy loads away  
Shaping the while their dark employs  
To his own visionary joys  
Picturing such a life as theirs  
As free from summers sweating cares  
And inly wishing that his own  
Coud meet with joys so thickly sown  
Sport seems the all that they pursue  
And play the only work they do  
The cowboy still cuts short the day  
In mingling mischief with his play  
Oft in the pond with weeds oer grown  
Hurling quick the plashing stone  
To cheat his dog who watching lies  
And instant plunges for the prize  
And tho each effort proves as vain  
He shakes his coat and dives again  
Till wearied with the fruitless play  
Then drops his tail and sneaks away  
Nor longer heeds the bawling boy  
Who seeks new sports with added joy  
And on some banks oer hanging brow  
Beats the wasps nest with a bough  
Till armys from the hole appear  
And threaten vengance in his ear  
With such determined hue and cry

As makes the bold besieger flye  
Elsewhere fresh mischief to renew  
And still his teasing sports pursue  
Pelting with excessive glee  
The squirrel on the wood land tree  
Who nimbles round from grain to grain  
And cocks his tail and peeps again  
Half pleased as if he thought the fray  
Which mischief made was meant for play  
Till scared and startled into flight  
He instant hurries out of sight  
Thus he his leisure hour employs  
And feeds on busy meddling joys  
While in the willow shaded pool  
His cattle stand their hides to cool

Loud is the summers busy song  
The smalles breeze can find a tongue  
Where insects of each tiney size  
Grow teasing with their melodys  
Till noon burns with its blistering breath  
Around and day dyes still as death  
The busy noise of man and brute  
Is on a sudden lost and mute  
The cuckoo singing as she flies  
No more to mocking boy replys  
Even the brook that leaps along  
Seems weary of its bubbling song  
And so soft its waters creep  
Tired silence sinks in sounder sleep  
The cricket on its banks is dumb  
The very flies forget to hum  
And save the waggon rocking round  
The lanscape sleeps without a sound  
The breeze is stopt the lazy bough  
Hath not a leaf that dances now  
The totter grass upon the hill  
And spiders threads are standing still  
The feathers dropt from more hens wing  
Which to the waters surface cling  
Are stedfast and as heavy seem  
As stones beneath them in the stream

Hawkweeds and Groundsells fanning downs  
Unruffled keep their seedy crowns  
And in the oven heated air  
Not one light thing is floating there  
-Save that to the earnest eye  
The restless heat seems twittering bye  
Noon swoons beneath the heat it made  
And flowers een wither in the shade  
Untill the sun slopes in the west  
Like weary traveler glad to rest  
On pillard clouds of many hues  
Then natures voice its joy renews  
And checkerd field and grassy plain  
Hum with their summer songs again  
A requiem to the days decline  
Whose setting sun beams coolly shine  
A welcome to days feeble powers  
As evening dews on thirsty flowers

Now to the pleasant pasture dells  
Where hay from closes sweetly smells  
Adown the pathways narrow lane  
The milking maiden hies again  
With scraps of ballads never dumb  
And rosey cheeks of happy bloom  
Tanned brown by summers rude embrace  
That adds new beautys to her face  
And red lips never paled with sighs  
And flowing hair and laughing eyes  
That oer full many a heart prevailed  
And swelling bosom loosly veiled  
White as the love it harbours there  
Unsullied with the taints of care  
The mower gives his labour oer  
And on his bench beside the door  
Sits down to see his childern play  
Or smokes his leisure hour away  
While from her cage the blackbird sings  
That on the wood bine arbour hings  
And all with happy joys receive  
The quiet of a summers eve



John Clare

# The Shepherd's Calendar - June

Now summer is in flower and natures hum  
Is never silent round her sultry bloom  
Insects as small as dust are never done  
Wi' glittering dance and reeling in the sun  
And green wood fly and blossom haunting bee  
Are never weary of their melody  
Round field hedge now flowers in full glory twine  
Large bindweed bells wild hop and streakd woodbine  
That lift athirst their slender throated flowers  
Agape for dew falls and for honey showers  
These round each bush in sweet disorder run  
And spread their wild hues to the sultry sun  
Where its silk netting lace on twigs and leaves  
The mottld spider at eves leisure weaves  
That every morning meet the poets eye  
Like faireys dew wet dresses hung to dry  
The wheat swells into ear and leaves below  
The may month wild flowers and their gaudy show  
Bright carlock bluecap and corn poppy red  
Which in such clouds of colors wid [e] ly spread  
That at the sun rise might to fancys eye  
Seem to reflect the many colord sky  
And leverets seat and lark and partridge nest  
It leaves a schoolboys height in snugger rest  
And oer the weeders labour overgrows  
Who now in merry groups each morning goes  
To willow skirted meads wi fork and rake  
The scented hay cocks in long rows to make  
Where their old visitors in russet brown  
The haytime butterflyes dance up and down  
And gads that teaze like wasps the timid maid  
And drive the herdboys cows to pond and shade  
Who when his dogs assistance fails to stop  
Is forcd his half made oaten pipes to drop  
And start and hallo thro the dancing heat  
To keep their gadding tumult from the wheat  
Who in their rage will dangers overlook  
And leap like hunters oer the pasture brook  
Brushing thro blossomd beans in maddening haste

And 'stroying corn they scarce can stop to taste  
Labour pursues its toil in weary mood  
And feign woud rest wi shadows in the wood  
The mowing gangs bend oer the beeded grass  
Where oft the gipseys hungry journeying ass  
Will turn its wishes from the meadow paths  
Listning the rustle of the falling swaths  
The ploughman sweats along the fallow vales  
And down the suncrackt furrow slowly trails  
Oft seeking when athirst the brooks supply  
Where brushing eager the brinks bushes bye  
For coolest water he oft brakes the rest  
Of ring dove brooding oer its idle nest  
And there as loath to leave the swaily place  
He'll stand to breath and whipe his burning face  
The shepherds idle hours are over now  
Nor longer leaves him neath the hedgrow bough  
On shadow pillowd banks and lolling stile  
Wilds looses now their summer friends awhile  
Shrill whistles barking dogs and chiding scold  
Drive bleating sheep each morn from fallow fold  
To wash pits where the willow shadows lean  
Dashing them in their fold staind coats to clean  
Then turnd on sunning sward to dry agen  
They drove them homeward to the clipping pen  
In hurdles pent where elm or sycamore  
Shut out the sun-or in some threshing floor  
There they wi scraps of songs and laugh and tale  
Lighten their anual toils while merry ale  
Goes round and gladdens old mens hearts to praise  
The thread bare customs of old farmers days  
Who while the sturting sheep wi trembling fears  
Lies neath the snipping of his harmless sheers  
Recalls full many a thing by bards unsung  
And pride forgot-that reignd when he was young  
How the hugh bowl was in the middle set  
At breakfast time as clippers yearly met  
Filld full of frumity where yearly swum  
The streaking sugar and the spotting plumb  
Which maids coud never to the table bring  
Without one rising from the merry ring  
To lend a hand who if twas taen amiss

Woud sell his kindness for a stolen kiss  
The large stone pitcher in its homly trim  
And clouded pint horn wi its copper rim  
Oer which rude healths was drank in spirits high  
From the best broach the cellar woud supply  
While sung the ancient swains in homly ryhmes  
Songs that were pictures of the good old times  
When leathern bottles held the beer nut brown  
That wakd the sun wi songs and sung him down  
Thus will the old man ancient ways bewail  
Till toiling sheers gain ground upon the tale  
And brakes it off-when from the timid sheep  
The fleece is shorn and wi a fearfull leap  
He starts-while wi a pressing hand  
His sides are printed by the tarry brand  
Shaking his naked skin wi wondering joys  
And fresh ones are tugd in by sturdy boys  
Who when theyre thrown down neath the sheering swain  
Will wipe his brow and start his tale again  
Tho fashions haughtv frown hath thrown aside  
Half the old forms simplicity supplyd  
Yet their are some prides winter deigns to spare  
Left like green ivy when the trees are bare  
And now when sheering of the flocks are done  
Some ancient customs mixd wi harmless fun  
Crowns the swains merry toils-the timid maid  
Pleasd to be praisd and yet of praise affraid  
Seeks her best flowers not those of woods and fields  
But such as every farmers garden yield  
Fine cabbage roses painted like her face  
And shining pansys trimmd in golden lace  
And tall tuft larkheels featherd thick wi flowers  
And woodbines climbing oer the door in bowers  
And London tufts of many a mottld hue  
And pale pink pea and monkshood darkly blue  
And white and purple jiliflowers that stay  
Lingering in blossom summer half away  
And single blood walls of a lucious smell  
Old fashiond flowers which huswives love so well  
And columbines stone blue or deep night brown  
Their honey-comb-like blossoms hanging down  
Each cottage gardens fond adopted child

The heaths still claim them where they yet grow wild  
Among their old wild companions summer blooms  
Furze brake and mozzling ling and golden broom  
Snap dragons gaping like to sleeping clowns  
And 'clipping pinks' (which maidens Sunday gowns  
Full often wear caught at by tozing chaps)  
Pink as the ribbons round their snowy caps  
'Bess in her bravery' too of glowing dyes  
As deep as sunsets crimson pillowd skies  
And majoram notts sweet briar and ribbon grass  
And lavender the choice of every lass  
And sprigs of lads love all familiar names  
Which every garden thro the village claims  
These the maid gathers with a coy delight  
And ties them up in readiness for night  
Giving to every swain tween love and shame  
Her 'clipping posesys' as their yearly claim  
And turning as he claims the custom kiss  
With stifled smiles half ankering after bliss  
She shrinks away and blushing calls it rude  
But turns to smile and hopes to be pursued  
While one to whom the seeming hint applied  
Follows to claim it and is not denied  
No doubt a lover for within his coat  
His nosegay owns each flower of better sort  
And when the envious mutter o'er their beer  
And nodd the secret to his neighbor near  
Raising the laugh to make the mutter known  
She blushes silent and will not disown  
And ale and songs and healths and merry ways  
Keeps up a shadow of old farmers days  
But the old bechen bowl that once supplied  
Its feast of frumity is thrown aside  
And the old freedom that was living then  
When masters made them merry with their men  
Whose coat was like his neighbors russet brown  
And whose rude speech was vulgar as his clown  
Who in the same horn drank the rest among  
And joined the chorus while a labourer sung  
All this is past-and soon may pass away  
The time torn remnant of the holiday  
As proud distinction makes a wider space

Between the genteel and the vulgar race  
Then must they fade as pride oer custom showers  
Its blighting mildew on her feeble flowers

John Clare

# The Shepherds Calendar - March

March month of 'many weathers' wildly comes  
In hail and snow and rain and threatenng hums  
And floods: while often at his cottage door  
The shepherd stands to hear the distant roar  
Loosd from the rushing mills and river locks  
Wi thundering sound and over powering shocks  
And headlong hurry thro the meadow brigs  
Brushing the leaning sallows fingering twigs  
In feathery foam and eddy hissing chase  
Rolling a storm oertaken travellers pace  
From bank to bank along the meadow leas  
Spreading and shining like to little seas  
While in the pale sunlight a watery brood  
Of swooping white birds flock about the flood  
Yet winter seems half weary of its toil  
And round the ploughman on the elting soil  
Will thread a minutes sunshine wild and warm  
Thro the raggd places of the swimming storm  
And oft the shepherd in his path will spye  
The little daisey in the wet grass lye  
That to the peeping sun enlivens gay  
Like Labour smiling on an holiday  
And where the stunt bank fronts the southern sky  
By lanes or brooks where sunbeams love to lye  
A cowslip peep will open faintly coy  
Soon seen and gatherd by a wandering boy  
A tale of spring around the distant haze  
Seems muttering pleasures wi the lengthening days  
Morn wakens mottld oft wi may day stains  
And shower drops hang the grassy sprouting plains  
And on the naked thorns of brassy hue  
Drip glistning like a summer dream of dew  
While from the hill side freshing forest drops  
As one might walk upon their thickening tops  
And buds wi young hopes promise seemly swells  
Where woodman that in wild seclusion dwells  
Wi chopping toil the coming spring decieves  
Of many dancing shadows flowers and leaves  
And in his pathway down the mossy wood

Crushes wi hasty feet full many a bud  
Of early primrose yet if timely spied  
Shelterd some old half rotten stump beside  
The sight will cheer his solitary hour  
And urge his feet to stride and save the flower  
Muffld in baffles leathern coat and gloves  
The hedger toils oft scaring rustling doves  
From out the hedgrows who in hunger browse  
The chockolate berrys on the ivy boughs  
And flocking field fares speckld like the thrush  
Picking the red awe from the sweeing bush  
That come and go on winters chilling wing  
And seem to share no sympathy wi spring  
The stooping ditcher in the water stands  
Letting the furrowd lakes from off the lands  
Or splashing cleans the pasture brooks of mud  
Where many a wild weed freshens into bud  
And sprouting from the bottom purple green  
The water cresses neath the wave is seen  
Which the old woman gladly drags to land  
Wi reaching long rake in her tottering hand  
The ploughman mawls along the doughy sloughs  
And often stop their songs to clean their ploughs  
From teasing twitch that in the spongy soil  
Clings round the colter terryfying toil  
The sower striding oer his dirty way  
Sinks anckle deep in pudgy sloughs and clay  
And oer his heavy hopper stoutly leans  
Strewing wi swinging arms the pattering beans  
Which soon as aprils milder weather gleams  
Will shoot up green between the furroed seams  
The driving boy glad when his steps can trace  
The swelling edding as a resting place  
Slings from his clotted shoes the dirt around  
And feign woud rest him on the solid ground  
And sings when he can meet the parting green  
Of rushy balks that bend the lands between  
While close behind em struts the nauntling crow  
And daws whose heads seem powderd oer wi snow  
To seek the worms-and rooks a noisey guest  
That on the wind rockd elms prepares her nest  
On the fresh furrow often drops to pull



The twitching roots and gathering sticks and wool  
Neath trees whose dead twigs litter to the wind  
And gaps where stray sheep left their coats behind  
While ground larks on a sweeing clump of rushes  
Or on the top twigs of the oddling bushes  
Chirp their 'cree creeing' note that sounds of spring  
And sky larks meet the sun wi flittering wing  
Soon as the morning opes its brightning eye  
Large clouds of sturnels blacken thro the sky  
From oizer holts about the rushy fen  
And reedshaw borders by the river Nen  
And wild geese regiments now agen repair  
To the wet bosom of broad marshes there  
In marching coloms and attention all  
Listning and following their ringleaders call  
The shepherd boy that hastens now and then  
From hail and snow beneath his sheltering den  
Of flags or file leavd sedges tyd in sheaves  
Or stubble shocks oft as his eye percieves  
Sun threads struck out wi momentery smiles  
Wi fancy thoughts his loneliness beguiles  
Thinking the struggling winter hourly bye  
As down the edges of the distant sky  
The hailstorm sweeps-and while he stops to strip  
The stooping hedgbriar of its lingering hip  
He hears the wild geese gabble oer his head  
And pleasd wi fancys in his musings bred  
He marks the figurd forms in which they flye  
And pausing follows wi a wandering eye  
Likening their curious march in curves or rows  
To every letter which his memory knows  
While far above the solitary crane  
Swings lonly to unfrozen dykes again  
Cranking a jarring mellancholy cry  
Thro the wild journey of the cheerless sky  
Full oft at early seasons mild and fair  
March bids farewell wi garlands in her hair  
Of hazzel tassles woodbines hairy sprout  
And sloe and wild plumb blossoms peeping out  
In thickset knotts of flowers preparing gay  
For aprils reign a mockery of may  
That soon will glisten on the earnest eye

Like snow white cloaths hung in the sun to drye  
The old dame often stills her burring wheel  
When the bright sun will thro the window steal  
And gleam upon her face and dancing fall  
In diamond shadows on the picturd wall  
While the white butterflye as in amaze  
Will settle on the glossy glass to gaze  
And oddling bee oft patting passing bye  
As if they care to tell her spring was nigh  
And smiling glad to see such things once more  
Up she will get and potter to the door  
And look upon the trees beneath the eves  
Sweet briar and ladslove swelling into leaves  
And damsin trees thick notting into bloom  
And goosberry blossoms on the bushes come  
And stooping down oft views her garden beds  
To see the spring flowers pricking out their heads  
And from her apron strings she'll often pull  
Her sissars out an early bunch to cull  
For flower pots on the window board to stand  
Where the old hour glass spins its thread of sand  
And maids will often mark wi laughing eye  
In elder where they hang their cloaths to drye  
The sharp eyd robin hop from grain to grain  
Singing its little summer notes again  
As a sweet pledge of Spring the little lambs  
Bleat in the varied weather round their dams  
Or hugh molehill or roman mound behind  
Like spots of snow lye shelterd from the wind  
While the old yoes bold wi paternal cares  
Looses their fears and every danger dares  
Who if the shepherds dog but turns his eye  
And stops behind a moment passing bye  
Will stamp draw back and then their threats repeat  
Urging defiance wi their stamping feet  
And stung wi cares hopes cannot reconcile  
They stamp and follow till he leaps a stile  
Or skulking from their threats betakes to flight  
And wi the master lessens out of sight  
Clowns mark the threatning rage of march pass bye  
And clouds wear thin and ragged in the sky  
While wi less sudden and more lasting smiles

The growing sun their hopes of spring beguiles  
Who often at its end remark wi pride  
Days lengthen in their visits a 'cocks stride'  
Dames clean their candlesticks and set them bye  
Glad of the makeshift light that eves supply  
The boy returning home at night from toil  
Down lane and close oer footbrig gate and style1  
Oft trembles into fear and stands to hark  
The waking fox renew his short gruff bark  
While badgers eccho their dread evening shrieks  
And to his thrilling thoughts in terror speaks  
And shepherds that wi in their hulks remain  
Night after night upon the chilly plain  
To watch the dropping lambs that at all hours  
Come in the quaking blast like early flowers  
Demanding all the shepherds care who find  
Warm hedge side spots and take them from the wind  
And round their necks in wary caution tyes  
Long shreds of rags in red or purple dyes  
Thats meant in danger as a safty spell  
Like the old yoe that wears a tinkling bell  
The sneaking foxes from his thefts to fright  
That often seizes the young lambs at night  
These when they in their nightly watchings hear  
The badgers shrieks can hardly stifile fear  
They list the noise from woodlands dark recess  
Like helpless shrieking woman in distress  
And oft as such fears fancying mystery  
Believes the dismal yelling sounds to be  
For superstition hath its thousand tales  
To people all his midnight woods and vales  
And the dread spot from whence the dismal noise  
Mars the night musings of their dark employs  
Owns its sad tale to realize their fear  
At which their hearts in boyhood achd to hear  
A maid at night by treacherous love decoyd  
Was in that shrieking wood years past destroyd  
She went twas said to meet the waiting swain  
And home and friends ne'er saw her face again  
Mid brakes and thorns that crowded round the dell  
And matting weeds that had no tongues to tell  
He murderd her alone at dead midnight

While the pale moon threw round her sickly light  
And loud shrieks left the thickets slumbers deep  
That only scard the little birds from sleep  
When the pale murderers terror frowning eye  
Told its dread errand that the maid shoud dye  
Mid thick black thorns her secret grave was made  
And there ere night the murderd girl was laid  
When no one saw the deed but god and he  
And moonlight sparkling thro the sleeping tree  
Around-the red breast might at morning steel  
There for the worm to meet his morning meal  
In fresh turnd moulds that first beheld the sun  
Nor knew the deed that dismal night had done  
Such is the tale that superstition gives  
And in her midnight memory ever lives  
That makes the boy run by wi wild affright  
And shepherds startle on their rounds at night

Now love teazd maidens from their droning wheel  
At the red hour of sunset sliving steals  
From scolding dames to meet their swains agen  
Tho water checks their visits oer the plain  
They slive where no one sees some wall behind  
Or orchard apple trees that stops the wind  
To talk about springs pleasures hoveing nigh  
And happy rambles when the roads get dry  
The insect world now sunbeams higher climb  
Oft dream of spring and wake before their time  
Blue flyes from straw stacks crawling scarce alive  
And bees peep out on slabs before the hive  
Stroaking their little legs across their wings  
And venturing short flight where the snow drop hings  
Its silver bell-and winter aconite  
Wi buttercup like flowers that shut at night  
And green leaf frilling round their cups of gold  
Like tender maiden muffld from the cold  
They sip and find their honey dreams are vain  
And feebly hasten to their hives again  
And butterflys by eager hopes undone  
Glad as a child come out to greet the sun  
Lost neath the shadow of a sudden shower  
Nor left to see tomorrows april flower .

John Clare

# The Shepherds Calendar - May

Come queen of months in company  
Wi all thy merry minstrelsy  
The restless cuckoo absent long  
And twittering swallows chimney song  
And hedge row crickets notes that run  
From every bank that fronts the sun  
And swathy bees about the grass  
That stops wi every bloom they pass  
And every minute every hour  
Keep teasing weeds that wear a flower  
And toil and childhoods humming joys  
For there is music in the noise  
The village childern mad for sport  
In school times leisure ever short  
That crick and catch the bouncing ball  
And run along the church yard wall  
Capt wi rude figured slabs whose claims  
In times bad memory hath no names  
Oft racing round the nookey church  
Or calling ecchos in the porch  
And jilting oer the weather cock  
Viewing wi jealous eyes the clock  
Oft leaping grave stones leaning hights  
Uncheckt wi mellancholy sights  
The green grass swelld in many a heap  
Where kin and friends and parents sleep  
Unthinking in their jovial cry  
That time shall come when they shall lye  
As lowly and as still as they  
While other boys above them play  
Heedless as they do now to know  
The unconcious dust that lies below  
The shepherd goes wi happy stride  
Wi moms long shadow by his side  
Down the dryd lanes neath blooming may  
That once was over shoes in clay  
While martins twitter neath his eves  
Which he at early morning leaves  
The driving boy beside his team

Will oer the may month beauty dream  
And cock his hat and turn his eye  
On flower and tree and deepning skye  
And oft bursts loud in fits of song  
And whistles as he reels along  
Crack[ing] his whip in starts of joy  
A happy dirty driving boy  
The youth who leaves his corner stool  
Betimes for neighbouring village school  
While as a mark to urge him right  
The church spires all the way in sight  
Wi cheerings from his parents given  
Starts neath the joyous smiles of heaven  
And sawns wi many an idle stand  
Wi bookbag swinging in his hand  
And gazes as he passes bye  
On every thing that meets his eye  
Young lambs seem tempting him to play  
Dancing and bleating in his way  
Wi trembling tails and pointed ears  
They follow him and loose their fears  
He smiles upon their sunny faces  
And feign woud join their happy races  
The birds that sing on bush and tree  
Seem chirping for his company  
And all in fancys idle whim  
Seem keeping holiday but him  
He lolls upon each resting stile  
To see the fields so sweetly smile  
To see the wheat grow green and long  
And list the weeders toiling song  
Or short not[e] of the changing thrush  
Above him in the white thorn bush  
That oer the leaning stile bends low  
Loaded wi mockery of snow  
Mozzld wi many a lushing thread  
Of crab tree blossoms delicate red  
He often bends wi many a wish  
Oer the brig rail to view the fish  
Go sturting by in sunny gleams  
And chucks in the eye dazld streams  
Crumbs from his pocket oft to watch

The swarming struttle come to catch  
Them where they to the bottom sile  
Sighing in fancys joy the while  
Hes cautiond not to stand so nigh  
By rosey milkmaid tripping bye  
Where he admires wi fond delight  
And longs to be there mute till night  
He often ventures thro the day  
At truant now and then to play  
Rambling about the field and plain  
Seeking larks nests in the grain  
And picking flowers and boughs of may  
To hurd awhile and throw away  
Lurking neath bushes from the sight  
Of tell tale eyes till schools noon night  
Listing each hour for church clocks hum  
To know the hour to wander home  
That parents may not think him long  
Nor dream of his rude doing wrong  
Dreading thro the night wi dreaming pain  
To meet his masters wand again  
Each hedge is loaded thick wi green  
And where the hedger late hath been  
Tender shoots begin to grow  
From the mossy stumps below  
While sheep and cow that teaze the grain  
will nip them to the root again  
They lay their bill and mittens bye  
And on to other labours hie  
While wood men still on spring intrudes  
And thins the shadow solitudes  
Wi sharpend axes felling down  
The oak trees budding into brown  
Where as they crash upon the ground  
A crowd of labourers gather round  
And mix among the shadows dark  
To rip the crackling staining bark  
From off the tree and lay when done  
The rolls in lares to meet the sun  
Depriving yearly where they come  
The green wood pecker of its home  
That early in the spring began



Far from the sight of troubling man  
And bord their round holes in each tree  
In fancys sweet security  
Till startld wi the woodmans noise  
It wakes from all its dreaming joys  
The blue bells too that thickly bloom  
Where man was never feared to come  
And smell smocks that from view retires  
Mong rustling leaves and bowing briars  
And stooping lily of the valley  
That comes wi shades and dewes to dally  
White beady drops on slender threads  
Wi broad hood leaves above their heads  
Like white robd maids in summer hours  
Neath umberellas shunning showers  
These neath the barkmens crushing treads  
Oft perish in their blooming beds  
Thus stript of boughs and bark in white  
Their trunks shine in the mellow light  
Beneath the green surviving trees  
That wave above them in the breeze  
And waking whispers slowly bends  
As if they mournd their fallen friends  
Each morning now the weeders meet  
To cut the thistle from the wheat  
And ruin in the sunny hours  
Full many wild weeds of their flowers  
Corn poppys that in crimson dwell  
Calld 'head achs' from their sickly smell  
And carlock yellow as the sun  
That oer the may fields thickly run  
And 'iron weed' content to share  
The meanest spot that spring can spare  
Een roads where danger hourly comes  
Is not wi out its purple blooms  
And leaves wi points like thistles round  
Thickset that have no strength to wound  
That shrink to childhoods eager hold  
Like hair-and with its eye of gold  
And scarlet starry points of flowers  
Pimpernel dreading nights and showers  
Oft calld 'the shepherds weather glass'

That sleep till suns have dyd the grass  
Then wakes and spreads its creeping bloom  
Till clouds or threatning shadows come  
Then close it shuts to sleep again  
Which weeders see and talk of rain  
And boys that mark them shut so soon  
will call them 'John go bed at noon  
And fumitory too a name  
That superstition holds to fame  
Whose red and purple mottled flowers  
Are cropt by maids in weeding hours  
To boil in water milk and way<sup>1</sup>  
For washes on an holiday  
To make their beauty fair and sleek  
And scour the tan from summers cheek  
And simple small forget me not  
Eyd wi a pinshead yellow spot  
I'th'<sup>2</sup> middle of its tender blue  
That gains from poets notice due  
These flowers the toil by crowds destroys  
And robs them of their lowly joys  
That met the may wi hopes as sweet  
As those her suns in gardens meet  
And oft the dame will feel inclind  
As childhoods memory comes to mind  
To turn her hook away and spare  
The blooms it lovd to gather there  
My wild field catalogue of flowers  
Grows in my ryhmes as thick as showers  
Tedious and long as they may be  
To some, they never weary me  
The wood and mead and field of grain  
I coud hunt oer and oer again  
And talk to every blossom wild  
Fond as a parent to a child  
And cull them in my childish joy  
By swarms and swarms and never cloy  
When their lank shades oer morning pearls  
Shrink from their lengths to little girls  
And like the clock hand pointing one  
Is turnd and tells the morning gone  
They leave their toils for dinners hour

Beneath some hedges bramble bower  
And season sweet their savory meals  
Wi joke and tale and merry peals  
Of ancient tunes from happy tongues  
While linnets join their fitful songs  
Perchd oer their heads in frolic play  
Among the tufts of motling may  
The young girls whisper things of love  
And from the old dames hearing move  
Oft making 'love knotts' in the shade  
Of blue green oat or wheaten blade  
And trying simple charms and spells  
That rural superstition tells  
They pull the little blossom threads  
From out the knapweeds button heads  
And put the husk wi many a smile  
In their white bosoms for awhile  
Who if they guess aright the swain  
That loves sweet fancys trys to gain  
Tis said that ere its lain an hour  
Twill blossom wi a second flower  
And from her white breasts hankerchief  
Bloom as they ne'er had lost a leaf  
When signs appear that token wet  
As they are neath the bushes met  
The girls are glad wi hopes of play  
And harping of the holiday  
A hugh blue bird will often swim  
Along the wheat when skys grow dim  
Wi clouds-slow as the gales of spring  
In motion wi dark shadowd wing  
Beneath the coming storm it sails  
And lonly chirps the wheat hid quails  
That came to live wi spring again  
And start when summer browns the grain  
They start the young girls joys afloat  
Wi 'wet my foot' its yearly note  
So fancy doth the sound explain  
And proves it oft a sign of rain  
About the moor 'mong sheep and cow  
The boy or old man wanders now  
Hunting all day wi hopful pace

Each thick sown rushy thistly place  
For plover eggs while oer them flye  
The fearful birds wi teasing cry  
Trying to lead their steps astray  
And coying him another way  
And be the weather chill or warm  
Wi brown hats truckd beneath his arm  
Holding each prize their search has won  
They plod bare headed to the sun  
Now dames oft bustle from their wheels  
Wi childern scampering at their heels  
To watch the bees that hang and swive  
In clumps about each thronging hive  
And flit and thicken in the light  
While the old dame enjoys the sight  
And raps the while their warming pans  
A spell that superstition plans  
To coax them in the garden bounds  
As if they lovd the tinkling sounds  
And oft one hears the dinning noise  
Which dames believe each swarm decoys  
Around each village day by day  
Mingling in the warmth of may  
Sweet scented herbs her skill contrives  
To rub the bramble platted hives  
Fennels thread leaves and crimpld balm  
To scent the new house of the swarm  
The thresher dull as winter days  
And lost to all that spring displays  
Still mid his barn dust forcd to stand  
Swings his frail round wi weary hand  
While oer his head shades thickly creep  
And hides the blinking owl asleep  
And bats in cobweb corners bred  
Sharing till night their murky bed  
The sunshine trickles on the floor  
Thro every crevice of the door  
And makes his barn where shadows dwell  
As irksome as a prisoners cell  
And as he seeks his daily meal  
As schoolboys from their tasks will steal  
ile often stands in fond delay

To see the daisy in his way  
And wild weeds flowering on the wall  
That will his childish sports recall  
Of all the joys that came wi spring  
The twirling top the marble ring  
The gingling halfpence hussld up  
At pitch and toss the eager stoop  
To pick up heads, the smuggeld plays  
Neath hovels upon sabbath days  
When parson he is safe from view  
And clerk sings amen in his pew  
The sitting down when school was oer  
Upon the threshold by his door  
Picking from mallows sport to please  
Each crumpld seed he calld a cheese  
And hunting from the stackyard sod  
The stinking hen banes belted pod  
By youths vain fancys sweetly fed  
Christning them his loaves of bread  
He sees while rocking down the street  
Wi weary hands and crimpling feet  
Young childern at the self same games  
And hears the self same simple names  
Still floating on each happy tongue  
Touchd wi the simple scene so strong  
Tears almost start and many a sigh  
Regrets the happiness gone bye  
And in sweet natures holiday  
His heart is sad while all is gay  
How lovly now are lanes and balks  
For toils and lovers sunday walks  
The daisey and the buttercup  
For which the laughing childern stoop  
A hundred times throughout the day  
In their rude ramping summer play  
So thickly now the pasture crowds  
In gold and silver sheeted clouds  
As if the drops in april showers  
Had woo'd the sun and swoond to flowers  
The brook resumes its summer dresses  
Purling neath grass and water cresses  
And mint and flag leaf swording high

Their blooms to the unheeding eye  
And taper bowbent hanging rushes  
And horse tail childerns bottle brushes  
And summer tracks about its brink  
Is fresh again where cattle drink  
And on its sunny bank the swain  
Stretches his idle length again  
Soon as the sun forgets the day  
The moon looks down on the lovely may  
And the little star his friend and guide  
Travelling together side by side  
And the seven stars and Charleses wain<sup>1</sup>  
Hangs smiling o'er green woods again  
The heaven rekindles all alive  
We light the may bees round the hive  
Swarm not so thick in mornings eye  
As stars do in the evening skye  
All all are nestling in their joys  
The flowers and birds and pasture boys  
The firetail, long a stranger, comes  
To his last summer haunts and homes  
To hollow tree and crevisd wall  
And in the grass the rails odd call  
That featherd spirit stops the swain  
To listen to his note again  
And school boy still in vain retraces  
The secrets of his hiding places  
In the black thorns crowded cops<sup>~e1</sup>  
Thro its varied turns and stops  
The nightingale its ditty weaves  
Hid in a multitude of leaves  
The boy stops short to hear the strain  
And 'sweet jug jug' he mocks again  
The yellow hammer builds its nest  
By banks where sun beams earliest rest  
That dries the dews from off the grass  
Shading it from all that pass  
Save the rude boy wi ferret gaze  
That hunts thro evry secret maze  
He finds its pencild eggs again  
All streakd wi lines as if a pen  
By natures freakish hand was took

To scrawl them over like a book  
And from these many mozzling marks  
The school boy names them 'writing larks'  
Bum barrels twit on bush and tree  
Scarse bigger then a bumble bee  
And in a white thorns leafy rest  
It builds its curious pudding-nest  
Wi hole beside as if a mouse  
Had built the little barrel house  
Toiling full many a lining feather  
And bits of grey tree moss together  
Amid the noisey rooky park  
Beneath the firdales branches dark  
The little golden crested wren  
Hangs up his glowing nest agen  
And sticks it to the furry leaves  
As martins theirs beneath the eaves  
The old hens leave the roost betimes  
And oer the garden pailing climbs  
To scrat the gardens fresh turnd soil  
And if unwatchd his crops to spoil  
Oft cackling from the prison yard  
To peck about the houseclose sward  
Catching at butterflys and things  
Ere they have time to try their wings  
The cattle feels the breath of may  
And kick and toss their heads in play  
The ass beneath his bags of sand  
Oft jerks the string from leaders hand  
And on the road will eager stoop  
To pick the sprouting thistle up  
Oft answering on his weary way  
Some distant neighbours sobbing bray  
Dining the ears of driving boy  
As if he felt a fit of joy  
Wi in its pinfold circle left  
Of all its company bereft  
Starvd stock no longer noising round  
Lone in the nooks of foddering ground  
Each skeleton of lingering stack  
By winters tempests beaten black  
Nodds upon props or bolt upright

Stands swarthy in the summer light  
And oer the green grass seems to lower  
Like stump of old time wasted tower  
All that in winter lookd for hay  
Spread from their batterd haunts away  
To pick the grass or lye at lare  
Beneath the mild hedge shadows there  
Sweet month that gives a welcome call  
To toil and nature and to all  
Yet one day mid thy many joys  
Is dead to all its sport and noise  
Old may day where's thy glorys gone  
All fled and left thee every one  
Thou comst to thy old haunts and homes  
Unnoticd as a stranger comes  
No flowers are pluckt to hail the now  
Nor cotter seeks a single bough  
The maids no more on thy sweet morn  
Awake their thresholds to adorn  
Wi dewey flowers-May locks new come  
And princifeathers cluttering bloom  
And blue bells from the woodland moss  
And cowslip cucking balls to toss  
Above the garlands swinging hight  
Hang in the soft eves sober light  
These maid and child did yearly pull  
By many a folded apron full  
But all is past the merry song  
Of maidens hurrying along  
To crown at eve the earliest cow  
Is gone and dead and silent now  
The laugh raisd at the mocking thorn  
Tyd to the cows tail last that morn  
The kerchief at arms length displayd  
Held up by pairs of swain and maid  
While others bolted underneath  
Bawling loud wi panting breath  
'Duck under water' as they ran  
Alls ended as they ne'er began  
While the new thing that took thy place  
Wears faded smiles upon its face  
And where enclosure has its birth



It spreads a mildew oer her mirth  
The herd no longer one by one  
Goes plodding on her morning way  
And garlands lost and sports nigh gone  
Leaves her like thee a common day  
Yet summer smiles upon thee still  
Wi natures sweet unalterd will  
And at thy births unworshipd hours  
Fills her green lap wi swarms of flowers  
To crown thee still as thou hast been  
Of spring and summer months the queen.

John Clare

# The Shepherds Calendar - November

The landscape sleeps in mist from morn till noon;  
And, if the sun looks through, 'tis with a face  
Beamless and pale and round, as if the moon,  
When done the journey of her nightly race,  
Had found him sleeping, and supplied his place.  
For days the shepherds in the fields may be,  
Nor mark a patch of sky - blindfold they trace,  
The plains, that seem without a bush or tree,  
Whistling aloud by guess, to flocks they cannot see.

The timid hare seems half its fears to lose,  
Crouching and sleeping 'neath its grassy lair,  
And scarcely startles, tho' the shepherd goes  
Close by its home, and dogs are barking there;  
The wild colt only turns around to stare  
At passer by, then knaps his hide again;  
And moody crows beside the road forbear  
To fly, tho' pelted by the passing swain;  
Thus day seems turn'd to night, and tries to wake in vain.

The owlet leaves her hiding-place at noon,  
And flaps her grey wings in the doubling light;  
The hoarse jay screams to see her out so soon,  
And small birds chirp and startle with affright;  
Much doth it scare the superstitious wight,  
Who dreams of sorry luck, and sore dismay;  
While cow-boys think the day a dream of night,  
And oft grow fearful on their lonely way,  
Fancying that ghosts may wake, and leave their graves by day.

Yet but awhile the slumbering weather flings  
Its murky prison round - then winds wake loud;  
With sudden stir the startled forest sings  
Winter's returning song - cloud races cloud,  
And the horizon throws away its shroud,  
Sweeping a stretching circle from the eye;  
Storms upon storms in quick succession crowd,  
And o'er the sameness of the purple sky  
Heaven paints, with hurried hand, wild hues of every dye.

At length it comes along the forest oaks,  
With sobbing ebbs, and uproar gathering high;  
The scared, hoarse raven on its cradle croaks,  
And stockdove-flocks in hurried terrors fly,  
While the blue hawk hangs o'er them in the sky.-  
The hedger hastens from the storm begun,  
To seek a shelter that may keep him dry;  
And foresters low bent, the wind to shun,  
Scarce hear amid the strife the poacher's muttering gun.

The ploughman hears its humming rage begin,  
And hies for shelter from his naked toil;  
Buttoning his doublet closer to his chin,  
He bends and scampers o'er the elting soil,  
While clouds above him in wild fury boil,  
And winds drive heavily the beating rain;  
He turns his back to catch his breath awhile,  
Then ekes his speed and faces it again,  
To seek the shepherd's hut beside the rushy plain.

The boy, that scareth from the spiry wheat  
The melancholy crow - in hurry weaves,  
Beneath an ivied tree, his sheltering seat,  
Of rushy flags and sedges tied in sheaves,  
Or from the field a shock of stubble thieves.  
There he doth dithering sit, and entertain  
His eyes with marking the storm-driven leaves;  
Oft spying nests where he spring eggs had ta'en,  
And wishing in his heart 'twas summer-time again.

Thus wears the month along, in checker'd moods,  
Sunshine and shadows, tempests loud, and calms;  
One hour dies silent o'er the sleepy woods,  
The next wakes loud with unexpected storms;  
A dreary nakedness the field deforms -  
Yet many a rural sound, and rural sight,  
Lives in the village still about the farms,  
Where toil's rude uproar hums from morn till night  
Noises, in which the ears of Industry delight.

At length the stir of rural labour's still,

And Industry her care awhile forgoes;  
When Winter comes in earnest to fulfil  
His yearly task, at bleak November's close,  
And stops the plough, and hides the field in snows;  
When frost locks up the stream in chill delay,  
And mellows on the hedge the jetty sloes,  
For little birds - then Toil hath time for play,  
And nought but threshers' flails awake the dreary day.

John Clare

# The Shepherd's Calendar - October

Nature now spreads around in dreary hue  
A pall to cover all that summer knew  
Yet in the poets solitary way  
Some pleasing objects for his praise delay  
Somthing that makes him pause and turn again  
As every trifle will his eye detain  
The free horse rustling through the stubble land  
And bawling herd boy with his motly band  
Of hogs and sheep and cows who feed their fill  
Oer cleard fields rambling where so ere they will  
The geese flock gabbling in the splashy fields  
And quaking ducks in pondweeds half conseald  
Or seeking worms along the homclose sward  
Right glad of freedom from the prison yard  
While every cart rut dribbles its low tide  
And every hollow splashing sports provide  
The hedger stopping gaps wi pointed bough  
Made by intruding horse and blundering cow  
The milk maid tripping on her morning way  
And fodderers oft tho early cutting hay  
Dropping the littering forkfulls from his back  
Side where the thorn fence circles round the stack  
The cotter journeying wi his noisev swine  
Along the wood side where the brambles twine  
Shaking from dinted cups the acorns brown  
And from the hedges red awes dashing down  
And nutters rustling in the yellow woods  
Scaring from their snug lairs the pheasant broods  
And squirrels secret toils oer winter dreams  
Picking the brown nuts from the yellow beams  
And hunters from the thickets avenue  
In scarlet jackets startling on the view  
Skimming a moment oer the russet plain  
Then hiding in the colord woods again  
The ploping guns sharp momentary shock  
Which eccho bustles from her cave to mock  
The sticking groups in many a ragged set  
Brushing the woods their harmless loads to get  
And gipseys camps in some snug shelterd nook

Where old lane hedges like the pasture brook  
Run crooking as they will by wood and dell  
In such lone spots these wild wood roamers dwell  
On commons where no farmers claims appear  
Nor tyrant justice rides to interfere  
Such the abodes neath hedge or spreading oak  
And but discovered by its curling smoak  
Puffing and peeping up as wills the breeze  
Between the branches of the colored trees  
Such are the pictures that October yields  
To please the poet as he walks the fields  
Oft dames in faded cloak of red or grey  
Loiters along the mornings dripping way  
Wi wicker basket on their withered arms  
Searching the hedges of home close or farms  
Where brashy elder trees to autumn fade  
Each cotters mossy hut and garden shade  
Whose glossy berries picturesquely weaves  
Their swathy bunches mid the yellow leaves  
Where the pert sparrow stains his little bill  
And tutling robin picks his meals at will  
Black ripening to the wan suns misty ray  
Here the industrious huswives wend their way  
Pulling the brittle branches careful down  
And hawking loads of berries to the town  
Wi unpretending skill yet half divine  
To press and make their elderberry wine  
That bottled up becomes a rousing charm  
To kindle winters icy bosom warm  
That wi its merry partner nut brown beer  
Makes up the peasants Christmas keeping cheer  
While nature like fair woman in decay  
Which pale consumption hourly wastes away  
Upon her waning features pale and chill  
Wears dreams of beauty that seem lovely still  
Among the heath furze still delights to dwell  
Quaking as if with cold the harvest bell  
The mushroom buttons each moist morning brings  
Like spots of snow in the green tawney rings  
And fuzz balls swelled like bladders in the grass  
Which oft the merry laughing milking lass  
Will stoop to gather in her sportive airs

And slive in mimickd fondness unawares  
To smut the brown cheek of the teasing swain  
Wi the black powder which their balls contain  
Who feigns offence at first that love may speed  
Then charms a kiss to recompence the deed  
The flying clouds urged on in swiftest pace  
Like living things as if they runned a race  
The winds that oer each coming tempest broods  
Waking like spirits in their startling moods  
Fluttering the sear leaves on the blasting lea  
That litters under every fading tree  
And pausing oft as falls the pattering rain  
Then gathering strength and twirling them again  
The startld stockdove hurried wizzing bye  
As the still hawk hangs oer him in the sky  
Crows from the oak trees qawking as they spring  
Dashing the acorns down wi beating wing  
Waking the woodlands sleep in noises low  
Pattring on crimpt brakes withering brown below  
While from their hollow nest the squirrels (pop)  
Adown the tree to pick them as they drop  
The starnel crowds that dim the muddy light  
The crows and jackdaws flapping home at night  
And puddock circling round its lazy flight  
Round the wild sweeing wood in motion slow  
Before it perches on the oaks below  
And hugh black beetles revelling alone  
In the dull evening with their heavy drone  
Buzzing from barn door straw and hovel sides  
Where fodderd cattle from the night abides  
These pictures linger thro the shortning day  
And cheer the lone bards mellancholy way  
And now and then a solitary boy  
Journeying and muttering oer his dreams of joy

John Clare

# The Shepherd's Calendar - September

Harvest awakes the morning still  
And toils rude groups the valleys fill  
Deserted is each cottage hearth  
To all life save the crickets mirth  
Each burring wheel their sabbath meets  
Nor walks a gossip in the streets  
The bench beneath its eldern bough  
Lined oer with grass is empty now  
Where blackbirds caged from out the sun  
Could whistle while their mistress spun.  
All haunt the thronged fields still to share  
The harvests lingering bounty there  
As yet no meddling boys resort  
About the streets in idle sport  
The butterflye enjoys his hour  
And flirts unchaced from flower to flower  
And humming bees that morning calls  
From out the low huts mortar walls  
Which passing boy no more controuls  
Flye undisturbed about their holes  
And sparrows in glad chirpings meet  
Unpelted in the quiet street

None but imprison'd childern now  
Are seen where dames with angry brow  
Threaten each younker to his seat  
That thro' the school door eyes the street  
Or from his horn book turns away  
To mourn for liberty and play  
Loud are the mornings early sounds  
That farm and cottage yard surrounds  
The creaking noise of opening gate  
And clanking pumps where boys await  
With idle motion to supply  
The thirst of cattle crowding bye  
The low of cows and bark of dogs  
And cackling hens and wineing hogs  
Swell high-while at the noise awoke  
Old goody seeks her milking cloak



And hastens out to milk the cow  
And fill the troughs to feed the sow  
Or seeking old hens laid astray  
Or from young chickens drives away  
The circling kite that round them flies  
Waiting the chance to seize the prize  
Hogs trye thro gates the street to gain  
And steal into the fields of grain  
From nights dull prison comes the duck  
Waddling eager thro the muck  
Squeezing thro the orchard pales  
Where mornings bounty rarely fails  
Eager gobbling as they pass  
Dew worms thro the padded grass  
Where blushing apples round and red  
Load down the boughs and pat the head  
Of longing maid that hither goes  
To hang on lines the drying cloaths  
Who views them oft with tempted eye  
And steals one as she passes bye  
Where the holly oak so tall  
Far oer tops the garden wall  
That latest blooms for bees provide  
Hived on stone benches close beside  
The bees their teasing music hum  
And threaten war to all that come  
Save the old dame whose jealous care  
Places a trapping bottle there  
Filled with mock sweets in whose disguise  
The honey loving hornet dies

Upon the dovecoats mossy slates  
The piegons coo around their mates  
Where morns sunbeams early fall  
By the barn or stable wall  
Basking hens in playfull rout  
Flap the smoaking dust about  
In the barn hole sits the cat  
Watching within the thirsty rat  
Who oft at morn its dwelling leaves  
To drink the moisture from the eves  
The redbreast with his nimble eye

Dare scarcely stop to catch the flye  
That tangled in the spiders snare  
Mourns in vain for freedom there  
The dog beside the threshold lyes  
Mocking sleep with half shut eyes  
With head crouched down upon his feet  
Till strangers pass his sunny seat  
Then quick he pricks his ears to hark  
And bustles up to growl and bark  
While boys in fear stop short their song  
And sneak on hurrys fears along  
And beggar creeping like a snail  
To make his hungry hopes prevail  
Oer the warm heart of charity  
Leaves his lame halt and hastens bye

The maid afield now leaves the farm  
With brimming bottles on her arm  
Loitering unseen in narrow lane  
To be oertook by following swain  
Who happy thus her truth to prove  
Carrys the load and talks of love  
Full soon the harvest waggons sound  
Rumbling like thunder all around  
In ceaseless speed the corn to load  
Hurrying down the dusty road  
While driving boy with eager eye  
Watches the church clock passing bye  
Whose gilt hands glitter in the sun  
To see how far the hours have run  
Right happly in the breathless day  
To see it wearing fast away  
Yet now and then a sudden shower  
Will bring to toil a resting hour  
When under sheltering shocks a crowd  
Of merry voices mingle loud  
Wearing the short lived boon along  
With vulgar tale and merry song  
Draining with leisures laughing eye  
Each welcome bubbling bottle drye  
Till peeping suns dry up the rain  
Then off they start to toil again

Anon the fields are wearing clear  
And glad sounds hum in labours ear  
When childern halo 'here they come  
And run to meet the harvest home  
Stuck thick with boughs and thronged with boys  
Who mingle loud a merry noise  
Glad that the harvests end is nigh  
And weary labour nearly bye  
Where when they meet the stack thronged yard  
Cross bunns or pence their shouts reward

Then comes the harvest supper night  
Which rustics welcome with delight  
When merry game and tiresome tale  
And songs increasing with the ale  
Their mingled uproar interpose  
To crown the harvests happy close  
While rural mirth that there abides  
Laughs till she almost cracks her sides

Now harvests busy hum declines  
And labour half its help resigns  
Boys glad at heart to play return  
The shepherds to their peace sojourn  
Rush-bosomed solitudes among  
Which busy toil disturbed so long  
The gossip happy all is oer  
Visits again her neighbours door  
For scandals idle tales to dwell  
Which harvest had no time to tell  
And on each bench at even tide  
Which trailing vine leaves nearly hide  
And free from all its sultry strife  
Enjoy once more their idle life  
A few whom waning toil reprieves  
Thread the forests sea of leaves  
Where the pheasant loves to hide  
And the darkest glooms abide  
Beneath the old oaks mossd and grey  
Whose shadows seem as old as they  
Where time hath many seasons won

Since aught beneath them saw the sun.  
Within these brambly solitudes  
The ragged noisy boy intrudes  
To gather nuts that ripe and brown  
As soon as shook will patter down  
Thus harvest ends its busy reign  
And leaves the fields their peace again  
Where autumns shadows idly muse  
And tinge the trees with many hues  
Amid whose scenes I'm feign to dwell  
And sing of what I love so well  
But hollow winds and tumbling floods  
And humming showers and moaning woods  
All startle into sudden strife  
And wake a mighty lay to life  
Making amid their strains divine  
All songs in vain so mean as mine

John Clare

# The Shepherd's Tree

Huge elm, with rifted trunk all notched and scarred,  
Like to a warrior's destiny! I love  
To stretch me often on thy shadowed sward,  
And hear the laugh of summer leaves above;  
Or on thy buttressed roots to sit, and lean  
In careless attitude, and there reflect  
On times and deeds and darings that have been -  
Old castaways, now swallowed in neglect, -  
While thou art towering in thy strength of heart,  
Stirring the soul to vain imaginings  
In which life's sordid being hath no part.  
The wind of that eternal ditty sings,  
Humming of future things, that burn the mind  
To leave some fragment of itself behind.

John Clare

# The Skylark

The rolls and harrows lie at rest beside  
The battered road; and spreading far and wide  
Above the russet clods, the corn is seen  
Sprouting its spiry points of tender green,  
Where squats the hare, to terrors wide awake,  
Like some brown clod the harrows failed to break.  
Opening their golden caskets to the sun,  
The buttercups make schoolboys eager run,  
To see who shall be first to pluck the prize -  
Up from their hurry, see, the skylark flies,  
And o'er her half-formed nest, with happy wings  
Winnows the air, till in the cloud she sings,  
Then hangs a dust-spot in the sunny skies,  
And drops, and drops, till in her nest she lies,  
Which they unheeded passed - not dreaming then  
That birds which flew so high would drop agen  
To nests upon the ground, which anything  
May come at to destroy. Had they the wing  
Like such a bird, themselves would be too proud,  
And build on nothing but a passing cloud!  
As free from danger as the heavens are free  
From pain and toil, there would they build and be,  
And sail about the world to scenes unheard  
Of and unseen - Oh, were they but a bird!  
So think they, while they listen to its song,  
And smile and fancy and so pass along;  
While its low nest, moist with the dews of morn,  
Lies safely, with the leveret, in the corn.

John Clare

# The Sleep Of Spring

O for that sweet, untroubled rest  
That poets oft have sung!--  
The babe upon its mother's breast,  
The bird upon its young,  
The heart asleep without a pain--  
When shall I know that sleep again?

When shall I be as I have been  
Upon my mother's breast  
Sweet Nature's garb of verdant green  
To woo to perfect rest--  
Love in the meadow, field, and glen,  
And in my native wilds again?

The sheep within the fallow field,  
The herd upon the green,  
The larks that in the thistle shield,  
And pipe from morn to e'en--  
O for the pasture, fields, and fen!  
When shall I see such rest again?

I love the weeds along the fen,  
More sweet than garden flowers,  
For freedom haunts the humble glen  
That blest my happiest hours.  
Here prison injures health and me:  
I love sweet freedom and the free.

The crows upon the swelling hills,  
The cows upon the lea,  
Sheep feeding by the pasture rills,  
Are ever dear to me,  
Because sweet freedom is their mate,  
While I am lone and desolate.

I loved the winds when I was young,  
When life was dear to me;  
I loved the song which Nature sung,  
Endearing liberty;

I loved the wood, the vale, the stream,  
For there my boyhood used to dream.

There even toil itself was play;  
Twas pleasure e'en to weep;  
Twas joy to think of dreams by day,  
The beautiful of sleep.  
When shall I see the wood and plain,  
And dream those happy dreams again?

John Clare



# The Soldier

Home furthest off grows dearer from the way;  
And when the army in the Indias lay  
Friends' letters coming from his native place  
Were like old neighbours with their country face.  
And every opportunity that came  
Opened the sheet to gaze upon the name  
Of that loved village where he left his sheep  
For more contented peaceful folk to keep;  
And friendly faces absent many a year  
Would from such letters in his mind appear.  
And when his pockets, chafing through the case,  
Wore it quite out ere others took the place,  
Right loath to be of company bereft  
He kept the fragments while a bit was left.

John Clare

# The Stranger

When trouble haunts me, need I sigh?  
No, rather smile away despair;  
For those have been more sad than I,  
With burthens more than I could bear;  
Aye, gone rejoicing under care  
Where I had sunk in black despair.

When pain disturbs my peace and rest,  
Am I a hopeless grief to keep,  
When some have slept on torture's breast  
And smiled as in the sweetest sleep,  
Aye, peace on thorns, in faith forgiven,  
And pillowed on the hope of heaven?

Though low and poor and broken down,  
Am I to think myself distress?  
No, rather laugh where others frown  
And think my being truly blest;  
For others I can daily see  
More worthy riches worse than me.

Aye, once a stranger blest the earth  
Who never caused a heart to mourn,  
Whose very voice gave sorrow mirth--  
And how did earth his worth return?  
It spurned him from its lowliest lot,  
The meanest station owned him not;

An outcast thrown in sorrow's way,  
A fugitive that knew no sin,  
Yet in lone places forced to stray--  
Men would not take the stranger in.  
Yet peace, though much himself he mourned,  
Was all to others he returned.

\* \* \* \* \*

His presence was a peace to all,  
He bade the sorrowful rejoice.

Pain turned to pleasure at his call,  
Health lived and issued from his voice.  
He healed the sick and sent abroad  
The dumb rejoicing in the Lord.

The blind met daylight in his eye,  
The joys of everlasting day;  
The sick found health in his reply;  
The cripple threw his crutch away.  
Yet he with troubles did remain  
And suffered poverty and pain.

Yet none could say of wrong he did,  
And scorn was ever standing by;  
Accusers by their conscience chid,  
When proof was sought, made no reply.  
Yet without sin he suffered more  
Than ever sinners did before.

John Clare

# The Swallow

Pretty swallow, once again  
Come and pass me in the rain.  
Pretty swallow, why so shy?  
Pass again my window by.

The horsepond where he dips his wings,  
The wet day prints it full of rings.  
The raindrops on his [ ] track  
Lodge like pearls upon his back.

Then again he dips his wing  
In the wrinkles of the spring,  
Then oer the rushes flies again,  
And pearls roll off his back like rain.

Pretty little swallow, fly  
Village doors and windows by,  
Whisking oer the garden pales  
Where the blackbird finds the snails;

Whewing by the ladslove tree  
For something only seen by thee;  
Pearls that on the red rose hing  
Fall off shaken by thy wing.

On that low thatched cottage stop,  
In the sooty chimney pop,  
Where thy wife and family  
Every evening wait for thee.

John Clare

# The Thrush's Nest

Within a thick and spreading hawthorn bush  
That overhung a molehill large and round,  
I heard from morn to morn a merry thrush  
Sing hymns to sunrise, and I drank the sound  
With joy; and often, an intruding guest,  
I watched her secret toil from day to day -  
How true she warped the moss to form a nest,  
And modelled it within with wood and clay;  
And by and by, like heath-bells gilt with dew,  
There lay her shining eggs, as bright as flowers,  
Ink-spotted over shells of greeny blue;  
And there I witnessed, in the sunny hours,  
A brood of nature's minstrels chirp and fly,  
Glad as the sunshine and the laughing sky.

John Clare

# The Tramp

He eats (a moment's stoppage to his song)  
The stolen turnip as he goes along;  
And hops along and heeds with careless eye  
The passing crowded stage coach reeling bye.  
He talks to none but wends his silent way,  
And finds a hovel at the close of day,  
Or under any hedge his house is made.  
He has no calling and he owns no trade.  
An old smoaked blanket arches oer his head,  
A whisp of straw or stubble makes his bed.  
He knows a lawless law that claims no kin  
But meet and plunder on and feel no sin--  
No matter where they go or where they dwell  
They dally with the winds and laugh at hell.

John Clare

# The Universal Epitaph

No flattering praises daub my stone,  
My frailties and my faults to hide;  
My faults and failings all are known—  
I liv'd in sin—in sin I died.

And oh! condemn me not, I pray,  
You who my sad confession view;  
But ask your soul, if it can say,  
That I'm a viler man than you.

John Clare

# The Vanities Of Life

Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.--\_Solomon\_

What are life's joys and gains?  
What pleasures crowd its ways,  
That man should take such pains  
To seek them all his days?  
Sift this untoward strife  
On which thy mind is bent:  
See if this chaff of life  
Is worth the trouble spent.

Is pride thy heart's desire?  
Is power thy climbing aim?  
Is love thy folly's fire?  
Is wealth thy restless game?  
Pride, power, love, wealth, and all  
Time's touchstone shall destroy,  
And, like base coin, prove all  
Vain substitutes for joy.

Dost think that pride exalts  
Thyself in other's eyes,  
And hides thy folly's faults,  
Which reason will despise?  
Dost strut, and turn, and stride,  
Like walking weathercocks?  
The shadow by thy side  
Becomes thy ape, and mocks.

Dost think that power's disguise  
Can make thee mighty seem?  
It may in folly's eyes,  
But not in worth's esteem,  
When all that thou canst ask,  
And all that she can give,  
Is but a paltry mask  
Which tyrants wear and live.

Go, let thy fancies range



And ramble where they may;  
View power in every change,  
And what is the display?  
--The country magistrate,  
The meanest shade in power,  
To rulers of the state,  
The meteors of an hour.

View all, and mark the end  
Of every proud extreme,  
Where flattery turns a friend,  
And counterfeits esteem;  
Where worth is aped in show,  
That doth her name purloin,  
Like toys of golden glow  
That's sold for copper coin.

Ambition's haughty nod  
With fancies may deceive,  
Nay, tell thee thou'rt a god,  
And wilt thou such believe?  
Go, bid the seas be dry;  
Go, hold earth like a ball,  
Or throw thy fancies by,  
For God can do it all.

Dost thou possess the dower  
Of laws to spare or kill?  
Call it not heavenly power  
When but a tyrant's will.  
Know what a God will do,  
And know thyself a fool,  
Nor, tyrant-like, pursue  
Where He alone should rule.

O put away thy pride,  
Or be ashamed of power  
That cannot turn aside  
The breeze that waves a flower.  
Or bid the clouds be still:  
Though shadows, they can brave  
Thy poor power mocking will:

Then make not man a slave.

Dost think, when wealth is won,  
Thy heart has its desire?  
Hold ice up to the sun,  
And wax before the fire;  
Nor triumph o'er the reign  
Which they so soon resign;  
In this world's ways they gain,  
Insurance safe as thine.

Dost think life's peace secure  
In house and in land?  
Go, read the fairy lure  
To twist a cord in sand;  
Lodge stones upon the sky,  
Hold water in a sieve,  
Nor give such tales the lie,  
And still thine own believe.

Whoso with riches deals,  
And thinks peace bought and sold,  
Will find them slipping eels,  
That slide the firmest hold:  
Though sweet as sleep with health  
Thy lulling luck may be,  
Pride may o'erstride thy wealth,  
And check prosperity.

Dost think that beauty's power  
Life sweetest pleasure gives?  
Go, pluck the summer flower,  
And see how long it lives:  
Behold, the rays glide on  
Along the summer plain  
Ere thou canst say 'they're gone,'  
And measure beauty's reign.

Look on the brightest eye,  
Nor teach it to be proud;  
View but the clearest sky,  
And thou shalt find a cloud;

Nor call each face ye meet  
An angel's, cause it's fair,  
But look beneath your feet,  
And think of what they are.

Who thinks that love doth live  
In beauty's tempting show,  
Shall find his hopes ungive,  
And melt in reason's thaw.  
Who thinks that pleasure lies  
In every fairy bower,  
Shall oft, to his surprise,  
Find poison in the flower.

Dost lawless passions grasp?  
Judge not thou deal'st in joy:  
Its flowers but hide the asp,  
Thy revels to destroy.  
Who trusts an harlot's smile,  
And by her wiles are led,  
Plays, with a sword the while  
Hung dropping oer his head.

Dost doubt my warning song?  
Then doubt the sun gives light,  
Doubt truth to teach thee wrong,  
And wrong alone as right;  
And live as lives the knave,  
Intrigue's deceiving guest;  
Be tyrant, or be slave,  
As suits thy ends the best.

Or pause amid thy toils  
For visions won and lost,  
And count the fancied spoils,  
If eer they quit the cost:  
And if they still possess  
Thy mind, as worthy things,  
Plat straws with bedlam Bess,  
And call them diamond rings.

Thy folly's past advice,

Thy heart's already won,  
Thy fall's above all price,  
So go, and be undone;  
For all who thus prefer  
The seeming great for small  
Shall make wine vinegar,  
And sweetest honey gall.

Wouldst heed the truths I sing,  
To profit wherewithal,  
Clip folly's wanton wing,  
And keep her within call.  
I've little else to give,  
What thou canst easy try;  
The lesson how to live  
Is but to learn to die.

John Clare

# The Vixen

Among the taller wood with ivy hung,  
The old fox plays and dances round her young.  
She snuffs and barks if any passes by  
And swings her tail and turns prepared to fly.  
The horseman hurries by, she bolts to see,  
And turns agen, from danger never free.  
If any stands she runs among the poles  
And barks and snaps and drive them in the holes.  
The shepherd sees them and the boy goes by  
And gets a stick and progs the hole to try.  
They get all still and lie in safety sure,  
And out again when everything's secure,  
And start and snap at blackbirds bouncing by  
To fight and catch the great white butterfly.

John Clare

# The Winter's Come

Sweet chestnuts brown like soling leather turn;  
The larch trees, like the colour of the Sun;  
That paled sky in the Autumn seemed to burn,  
What a strange scene before us now does run--  
Red, brown, and yellow, russet, black, and dun;  
White thorn, wild cherry, and the poplar bare;  
The sycamore all withered in the sun.  
No leaves are now upon the birch tree there:  
All now is stript to the cold wintry air.

See, not one tree but what has lost its leaves--  
And yet the landscape wears a pleasing hue.  
The winter chill on his cold bed receives  
Foliage which once hung oer the waters blue.  
Naked and bare the leafless trees repose.  
Blue-headed titmouse now seeks maggots rare,  
Sluggish and dull the leaf-strewn river flows;  
That is not green, which was so through the year  
Dark chill November draweth to a close.

Tis Winter, and I love to read indoors,  
When the Moon hangs her crescent up on high;  
While on the window shutters the wind roars,  
And storms like furies pass remorseless by.  
How pleasant on a feather bed to lie,  
Or, sitting by the fire, in fancy soar  
With Dante or with Milton to regions high,  
Or read fresh volumes we've not seen before,  
Or oer old Burton's Melancholy pore.

John Clare

# The Winter's Spring

The winter comes; I walk alone,  
I want no bird to sing;  
To those who keep their hearts their own  
The winter is the spring.  
No flowers to please--no bees to hum--  
The coming spring's already come.

I never want the Christmas rose  
To come before its time;  
The seasons, each as God bestows,  
Are simple and sublime.  
I love to see the snowstorm hing;  
'Tis but the winter garb of spring.

I never want the grass to bloom:  
The snowstorm's best in white.  
I love to see the tempest come  
And love its piercing light.  
The dazzled eyes that love to cling  
O'er snow-white meadows sees the spring.

I love the snow, the crumpling snow  
That hangs on everything,  
It covers everything below  
Like white dove's brooding wing,  
A landscape to the aching sight,  
A vast expanse of dazzling light.

It is the foliage of the woods  
That winters bring--the dress,  
White Easter of the year in bud,  
That makes the winter Spring.  
The frost and snow his posies bring,  
Nature's white spurts of the spring.

John Clare

# The Wood-Cutter's Night Song

Welcome, red and roundy sun,  
Dropping lowly in the west;  
Now my hard day's work is done,  
I'm as happy as the best.

Joyful are the thoughts of home,  
Now I'm ready for my chair,  
So, till morrow-morning's come,  
Bill and mittens, lie ye there!

Though to leave your pretty song,  
Little birds, it gives me pain,  
Yet to-morrow is not long,  
Then I'm with you all again.

If I stop, and stand about,  
Well I know how things will be,  
Judy will be looking out  
Every now-and-then for me.

So fare ye well! and hold your tongues,  
Sing no more until I come;  
They're not worthy of your songs  
That never care to drop a crumb.

All day long I love the oaks,  
But, at nights, yon little cot,  
Where I see the chimney smokes,  
Is by far the prettiest spot.

Wife and children all are there,  
To revive with pleasant looks,  
Table ready set, and chair,  
Supper hanging on the hooks.

Soon as ever I get in,  
When my faggot down I fling,  
Little prattlers they begin  
Teasing me to talk and sing.



Welcome, red and roundy sun,  
Dropping lowly in the west;  
Now my hard day's work is done,  
I'm as happy as the best.

Joyful are the thoughts of home,  
Now I'm ready for my chair,  
So, till morrow-morning's come,  
Bill and mittens, lie ye there!

John Clare

# The Yellowhammer

When shall I see the white-thorn leaves agen,  
And yellowhammers gathering the dry bents  
By the dyke side, on stilly moor or fen,  
Feathered with love and nature's good intents?  
Rude is the tent this architect invents,  
Rural the place, with cart ruts by dyke side.  
Dead grass, horse hair, and downy-headed bents  
Tied to dead thistles--she doth well provide,  
Close to a hill of ants where cowslips bloom  
And shed oer meadows far their sweet perfume.  
In early spring, when winds blow chilly cold,  
The yellowhammer, trailing grass, will come  
To fix a place and choose an early home,  
With yellow breast and head of solid gold.

John Clare

# Thou Flower Of Summer

When in summer thou walkest  
In the meads by the river,  
And to thyself talkest,  
Dost thou think of one ever--  
A lost and a lorn one  
That adores thee and loves thee?  
And when happy morn's gone,  
And nature's calm moves thee,  
Leaving thee to thy sleep like an angel at rest,  
Does the one who adores thee still live in thy breast?

Does nature eer give thee  
Love's past happy vision,  
And wrap thee and leave thee  
In fancies elysian?  
Thy beauty I clung to,  
As leaves to the tree;  
When thou fair and young too  
Looked lightly on me,  
Till love came upon thee like the sun to the west  
And shed its perfuming and bloom on thy breast.

John Clare

## To A Fallen Elm

Old Elm that murmured in our chimney top  
The sweetest anthem autumn ever made  
And into mellow whispering calms would drop  
When showers fell on thy many coloured shade  
And when dark tempests mimic thunder made  
While darkness came as it would strangle light  
With the black tempest of a winter night  
That rocked thee like a cradle to thy root  
How did I love to hear the winds upbraid  
Thy strength without while all within was mute  
It seasoned comfort to our hearts desire  
We felt thy kind protection like a friend  
And pitched our chairs up closer to the fire  
Enjoying comforts that was was never penned

Old favourite tree thoust seen times changes lower  
But change till now did never come to thee  
For time beheld thee as his sacred dower  
And nature claimed thee her domestic tree  
Storms came and shook thee with aliving power  
Yet stedfast to thy home thy roots hath been  
Summers of thirst parched round thy homely bower  
Till earth grew iron - still thy leaves was green  
The children sought thee in thy summer shade  
And made their play house rings of sticks and stone  
The mavis sang and felt himself alone  
While in they leaves his early nest was made  
And I did feel his happiness mine own  
Nought heeding that our friendship was betrayed

Friend not inanimate- tho stocks and stones  
There are and many cloathed in flesh and bones  
Thou ownd a Inaguage by which hearts are stirred  
Deeper than by the attribute of words  
Thine spoke a feeling known in every tongue  
Language of pity and the force of wrong  
What cant assumes what hypocrites may dare  
Speaks home to truth and shows it what they are

I see a picture that thy fate displays  
And learn a lesson from thy destiny  
Self interest saw thee stand in freedoms ways  
So thy old shadow must a tyrant be  
Thoust heard the knave abusing those in power  
Bawl freedom loud and then oppress the free  
Thoust sheltered hypocrites in many an hour  
That when in power would never shelter thee  
Thoust heard the knave supply his canting powers  
With wrongs illusions when he wanted friends  
That bawled for shelter when he lived in showers  
And when clouds vanished made thy shade ammends  
With axe at root he felled thee to the ground  
And barked of freedom - O I hate that sound

It grows the cant terms of enslaving tools  
To wrong another by the name of right  
It grows a liscence with oer bearing fools  
To cheat plain honesty by force of might  
Thus came enclosure- ruin was her guide  
But freedoms clapping hands enjoyed the sight  
Tho comforts cottage soon was thrust aside  
And workhouse prisons raised upon the scite  
Een natures dwelling far away from men  
The common heath became the spoilers prey  
The rabbit had not where to make his den  
And labours only cow was drove away  
No matter- wrong was right and right was wrong  
And freedoms brawl was sanction to the song

Such was thy ruin music making Elm  
The rights of freedom was to injure thine  
As thou wert served so would they overwhelm  
In freedoms name the little so would they over whelm  
And these are knaves that brawl for better laws  
And cant of tyranny in stronger powers  
Who glut their vile unsatiated maws  
And freedoms birthright from the weak devours

John Clare

# To Anna Three Years Old

My Anna, summer laughs in mirth,  
And we will of the party be,  
And leave the crickets in the hearth  
For green fields' merry minstrelsy.

I see thee now with little hand  
Catch at each object passing bye,  
The happiest thing in all the land  
Except the bee and butterfly.

\* \* \* \* \*

And limpid brook that leaps along,  
Gilt with the summer's burnished gleam,  
Will stop thy little tale or song  
To gaze upon its crimping stream.

Thou'lt leave my hand with eager speed  
The new discovered things to see--  
The old pond with its water weed  
And danger-daring willow tree,  
Who leans an ancient invalid  
Oer spots where deepest waters be.

In sudden shout and wild surprise  
I hear thy simple wonderment,  
As new things meet thy childish eyes  
And wake some innocent intent;

As bird or bee or butterfly  
Bounds through the crowd of merry leaves  
And starts the rapture of thine eye  
To run for what it neer achieves.

But thou art on the bed of pain,  
So tells each poor forsaken toy.  
Ah, could I see that happy hour  
When these shall be thy heart's employ,  
And see thee toddle oer the plain,

And stoop for flowers, and shout for joy.

John Clare

## To John Clare

Well, honest John, how fare you now at home?  
The spring is come, and birds are building nests;  
The old cock-robin to the sty is come,  
With olive feathers and its ruddy breast;  
And the old cock, with wattles and red comb,  
Struts with the hens, and seems to like some best,  
Then crows, and looks about for little crumbs,  
Swept out by little folks an hour ago;  
The pigs sleep in the sty; the bookman comes--  
The little boy lets home-close nesting go,  
And pockets tops and taws, where daisies blow,  
To look at the new number just laid down,  
With lots of pictures, and good stories too,  
And Jack the Giant-killer's high renown.

John Clare



# To John Milton

\_'From his honoured friend, William Davenant'\_

Poet of mighty power, I fain  
Would court the muse that honoured thee,  
And, like Elisha's spirit, gain  
A part of thy intensity;  
And share the mantle which she flung  
Around thee, when thy lyre was strung.

Though faction's scorn at first did shun  
With coldness thy inspired song,  
Though clouds of malice passed thy sun,  
They could not hide it long;  
Its brightness soon exhaled away  
Dank night, and gained eternal day.

The critics' wrath did darkly frown  
Upon thy muse's mighty lay;  
But blasts that break the blossom down  
Do only stir the bay;  
And thine shall flourish, green and long,  
With the eternity of song.

Thy genius saw, in quiet mood,  
Gilt fashion's follies pass thee by,  
And, like the monarch of the wood,  
Towered oer it to the sky,  
Where thou couldst sing of other spheres,  
And feel the fame of future years.

Though bitter sneers and stinging scorns  
Did throng the muse's dangerous way,  
Thy powers were past such little thorns,  
They gave thee no dismay;  
The scoffer's insult passed thee by,  
Thou smild'st and mad'st him no reply.

Envy will gnaw its heart away  
To see thy genius gather root;

And as its flowers their sweets display  
Scorn's malice shall be mute;  
Hornets that summer warmed to fly,  
Shall at the death of summer die.

Though friendly praise hath but its hour.  
And little praise with thee hath been;  
The bay may lose its summer flower,  
But still its leaves are green;  
And thine, whose buds are on the shoot,  
Shall only fade to change to fruit.

Fame lives not in the breath of words,  
In public praises' hue and cry;  
The music of these summer birds  
Is silent in a winter sky,  
When thine shall live and flourish on,  
O'er wrecks where crowds of fames are gone.

The ivy shuns the city wall,  
When busy clamorous crowds intrude,  
And climbs the desolated hall  
In silent solitude;  
The time-worn arch, the fallen dome,  
Are roots for its eternal home.

The bard his glory neer receives  
Where summer's common flowers are seen,  
But winter finds it when she leaves  
The laurel only green;  
And time from that eternal tree,  
Shall weave a wreath to honour thee;

A sunny wreath for poets meet,  
From Helicon's immortal soil,  
Where sacred Time with pilgrim feet  
Walks forth to worship, not to spoil,  
A wreath which Fame creates and bears,  
And deathless genius only heirs.

Nought but thy ashes shall expire;  
Thy genius, at thy obsequies,

Shall kindle up its living fire  
And light the muse's skies;  
Ay, it shall rise, and shine, and be  
A sun in song's posterity.

John Clare

## To Mary

I sleep with thee, and wake with thee,  
And yet thou art not there;  
I fill my arms with thoughts of thee,  
And press the common air.  
Thy eyes are gazing upon mine,  
When thou art out of sight;  
My lips are always touching thine,  
At morning, noon, and night.

I think and speak of other things  
To keep my mind at rest:  
But still to thee my memory clings  
Like love in woman's breast.  
I hide it from the world's wide eye,  
And think and speak contrary;  
But soft the wind comes from the sky,  
And whispers tales of Mary.

The night wind whispers in my ear,  
The moon shines in my face;  
A burden still of chilling fear  
I find in every place.  
The breeze is whispering in the bush,  
And the dew falls from the tree,  
All sighing on, and will not hush,  
Some pleasant tales of thee.

John Clare

# To Napoleon

The heroes of the present and the past  
Were puny, vague, and nothingness to thee:  
Thou didst a span grasp mighty to the last,  
And strain for glory when thy die was cast.  
That little island, on the Atlantic sea,  
Was but a dust-spot in a lake: thy mind  
Swept space as shoreless as eternity.  
Thy giant powers outstript this gaudy age  
Of heroes; and, as looking at the sun,  
So gazing on thy greatness, made men blind  
To merits, that had adoration won  
In olden times. The world was on thy page  
Of victories but a comma. Fame could find  
No parallel, thy greatness to presage.

John Clare

# Turkeys

The turkeys wade the close to catch the bees  
In the old border full of maple trees  
And often lay away and breed and come  
And bring a brood of chelping chickens home.  
The turkey gobbles loud and drops his rag  
And struts and sprunts his tail and then lets drag  
His wing on ground and makes a huzzing noise,  
Nauntles at passer-bye and drives the boys  
And bounces up and flies at passer-bye.  
The old dog snaps and grins nor ventures nigh.  
He gobbles loud and drives the boys from play;  
They throw their sticks and kick and run away.

John Clare

# What Is Life?

And what is Life? An hour-glass on the run,  
A mist retreating from the morning sun,  
A busy, bustling, still-repeated dream.  
Its length? A minute's pause, a moment's thought.  
And Happiness? A bubble on the stream,  
That in the act of seizing shrinks to nought.

And what is Hope? The puffing gale of morn,  
That of its charms divests the dewy lawn,  
And robs each flow'ret of its gem -and dies;  
A cobweb, hiding disappointment's thorn,  
Which stings more keenly through the thin disguise.

And what is Death? Is still the cause unfound?  
That dark mysterious name of horrid sound?  
A long and lingering sleep the weary crave.  
And Peace? Where can its happiness abound?  
Nowhere at all, save heaven and the grave.

Then what is Life? When stripped of its disguise,  
A thing to be desired it cannot be;  
Since everything that meets our foolish eyes  
Gives proof sufficient of its vanity.  
'Tis but a trial all must undergo,  
To teach unthankful mortals how to prize  
That happiness vain man's denied to know,  
Until he's called to claim it in the skies.

John Clare

# Where She Told Her Love

I saw her crop a rose  
Right early in the day,  
And I went to kiss the place  
Where she broke the rose away  
And I saw the patten rings  
Where she o'er the stile had gone,  
And I love all other things  
Her bright eyes look upon.  
If she looks upon the hedge or up the leafing tree,  
The whitethorn or the brown oak are made dearer things to me.

I have a pleasant hill  
Which I sit upon for hours,  
Where she cropt some sprigs of thyme  
And other little flowers;  
And she muttered as she did it  
As does beauty in a dream,  
And I loved her when she hid it  
On her breast, so like to cream,  
Near the brown mole on her neck that to me a diamond shone;  
Then my eye was like to fire, and my heart was like to stone.

There is a small green place  
Where cowslips early curled,  
Which on Sabbath day I traced,  
The dearest in the world.  
A little oak spreads o'er it,  
And throws a shadow round,  
A green sward close before it,  
The greenest ever found:  
There is not a woodland nigh nor is there a green grove,  
Yet stood the fair maid nigh me and told me all her love.

John Clare



# Wild Bees

These children of the sun which summer brings  
As pastoral minstrels in her merry train  
Pipe rustic ballads upon busy wings  
And glad the cotters' quiet toils again.  
The white-nosed bee that bores its little hole  
In mortared walls and pipes its symphonies,  
And never absent couzen, black as coal,  
That Indian-like bepaints its little thighs,  
With white and red bedight for holiday,  
Right earlily a-morn do pipe and play  
And with their legs stroke slumber from their eyes.  
And aye so fond they of their singing seem  
That in their holes abed at close of day  
They still keep piping in their honey dreams,  
And larger ones that thrum on ruder pipe  
Round the sweet smelling closen and rich woods  
Where tawny white and red flush clover buds  
Shine bonnily and bean fields blossom ripe,  
Shed dainty perfumes and give honey food  
To these sweet poets of the summer fields;  
Me much delighting as I stroll along  
The narrow path that hay laid meadow yields,  
Catching the windings of their wandering song.  
The black and yellow bumble first on wing  
To buzz among the sallow's early flowers,  
Hiding its nest in holes from fickle spring  
Who stints his rambles with her frequent showers;  
And one that may for wiser piper pass,  
In livery dress half sables and half red,  
Who laps a moss ball in the meadow grass  
And hoards her stores when April showers have fled;  
And russet commoner who knows the face  
Of every blossom that the meadow brings,  
Starting the traveller to a quicker pace  
By threatening round his head in many rings:  
These sweeten summer in their happy glee  
By giving for her honey melody.



# Winter Walk

The holly bush, a sober lump of green,  
Shines through the leafless shrubs all brown and grey,  
And smiles at winter be it eer so keen  
With all the leafy luxury of May.  
And O it is delicious, when the day  
In winter's loaded garment keenly blows  
And turns her back on sudden falling snows,  
To go where gravel pathways creep between  
Arches of evergreen that scarce let through  
A single feather of the driving storm;  
And in the bitterest day that ever blew  
The walk will find some places still and warm  
Where dead leaves rustle sweet and give alarm  
To little birds that flirt and start away.

John Clare

## Wood Rides

Who hath not felt the influence that so calms  
The weary mind in summers sultry hours  
When wandering thickest woods beneath the arms  
Of ancient oaks and brushing nameless flowers  
That verge the little ride who hath not made  
A minutes waste of time and sat him down  
Upon a pleasant swell to gaze awhile  
On crowding ferns bluebells and hazel leaves  
And showers of lady smocks so called by toil  
When boys sprout gathering sit on stulps and weave  
Garlands while barkmen pill the fallen tree  
- Then mid the green variety to start  
Who hath (not) met that mood from turmoil free  
And felt a placid joy refreshed at heart

John Clare

# Written In Northampton County Asylum

I am! yet what I am who cares, or knows?  
My friends forsake me like a memory lost.  
I am the self-consumer of my woes;  
They rise and vanish, an oblivious host,  
Shadows of life, whose very soul is lost.  
And yet I am—I live—though I am toss'd

Into the nothingness of scorn and noise,  
Into the living sea of waking dream,  
Where there is neither sense of life, nor joys,  
But the huge shipwreck of my own esteem  
And all that's dear. Even those I loved the best  
Are strange—nay, they are stranger than the rest.

I long for scenes where man has never trod—  
For scenes where woman never smiled or wept—  
There to abide with my Creator, God,  
And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept,  
Full of high thoughts, unborn. So let me lie,—  
The grass below; above, the vaulted sky.

John Clare

# Young Lambs

The spring is coming by a many signs;  
The trays are up, the hedges broken down,  
That fenced the haystack, and the remnant shines  
Like some old antique fragment weathered brown.  
And where suns peep, in every sheltered place,  
The little early buttercups unfold  
A glittering star or two--till many trace  
The edges of the blackthorn clumps in gold.  
And then a little lamb bolts up behind  
The hill and wags his tail to meet the yoe,  
And then another, sheltered from the wind,  
Lies all his length as dead--and lets me go  
Close by and never stirs but baking lies,  
With legs stretched out as though he could not rise.

John Clare