

**John Clare**

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***Langley Bush***

O Langley bush the shepherds sacred shade  
Thy hollow trunk oft gaid a look from me  
Full many a journey oer the heath Ive made  
For such like curious things I love to see  
What truth the story of the swain allows  
That tells of honours which thy young days knew  
Of 'langley court' being kept beneath thy boughs  
I cannot tell—thus much I know is true  
That thou art reverencd even the rude clan  
Of lawless gipseys drove from stage to stage  
Pilfering the hedges of the husband man  
Leave thee as sacred in thy withering age  
Both swains & gipseys seem to love thy name  
Thy spots a favourite wi the smutty crew  
& soon thou must depend on gipsy fame  
Thy muldering trunk is nearly rotten thro  
My last doubts murmuring on the zepthers swell  
My last looks linger on thy boughs wi pain  
To thy declining age I bid farwell  
Like old companions neer to meet again

***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 that kind protection like a friend  
And edged our chairs up closer to the fire  
Enjoying comfort that was never penned

Old favourite tree thoust seen times changes lower  
Bur 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 a living power  
Yet steadfast 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 play house rings of sticks 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 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 which 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  
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 wrongs 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 that sound

It grows the cant term of enslaving tools  
To wrong another by the name of right  
It grows a licence with oer bearing fools  
To cheat plain honesty by force of might  
Thus came enclosure - ruin was its 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 that is mine  
And there 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

### ***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 springs 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 horizons 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 labours rights and left the poor a slave  
And memorys 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 alls 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 poets visions of lifes early day  
Mulberry-bushes where the boy would run  
To fill his hands with fruit are grubbed and done  
And hedgerow briars – flower lovers overjoyed  
Came and got flower pots - these are all destroyed  
And skybound 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 taen as vain  
When right roads traced his journeys and again -  
Nay on a broken tree hed sit awhile  
To see the mores and fields and meadows smile  
Sometimes with cowslaps smothered - then all white  
With daisies - then the summers splendid sight  
Of cornfields crimson oer the “headach” bloomd  
Like splendid armys for the battle plumed  
He gazed upon them with wild fancys eye  
As fallen landscapes from an evening sky  
These paths are stopt - the rude philistines 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 laws enclosure came  
And dreams of plunder in such rebel schemes  
Have found too truly that they were but dreams

From: <http://www.johnclare.info/>

### ***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.