THE GIPSY’S EVENING BLAZE

To me how wildly pleasing is that scene
Which doth present, in evening’s dusky hour,
A group of Gipsies, centred on the green,
In some warm nook where Boreas has no pow’r;
Where sudden starts the quivering blaze behind
Short, shrubby bushes, nibbled by the sheep,
That mostly on these short sward pastures keep;
Now lost, now seen, now bending with the wind:
And now the swarthy Sybil kneels reclin’d;
With proggling stick she still renews the blaze,
Forcing bright sparks to twinkle from the flaze.
When this I view, the all-attentive mind
Will oft exclaim (so strong the scene pervades),
―Grant me this life, thou Spirit of the Shades!‖

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LANGLEY BUSH

O LANGLEY BUSH! the shepherd’s sacred shade,
Thy hollow trunk oft gain’d a look from me;
Full many a journey o’er the heath I’ve 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 reverenc’d: even the rude clan
Of lawless gipsies, driven from stage to stage,
Pilfering the hedges of the husbandman,
Spare thee, as sacred, in thy withering age.
Both swains and gipsies seem to love thy name,
Thy spot’s a favourite with the sooty crew,
And soon thou must depend on gipsy-fame,
Thy mouldering trunk is nearly rotten through.
My last doubts murmur on the zephyr’s swell,
My last look lingers on thy boughs with pain;
To thy declining age I bid farewel,
Like old companions, ne’er to meet again.
[...] my two favorite Elm trees at the back of the hut are condemned to dye it shocks me but tis true the savage who owns them thinks they have done their best & now he wants to make use of the benefits he can get from selling them—O was this country Egypt & was I but a caliph the owner shoud loose his ears for his arrant presumption & the first wretch that buried his axe in their roots shoud hang on their branches as a terror to the rest—I have been several mornings to bid them farewell—had I £100 to spare I would buy their reprievs—but they must dye. . . .

(from a letter by Clare to his publisher John Taylor in 1821,qtd. in J. Bate, 172)

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

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Friend not inanimate - tho stocks and stones
There are and many cloathed in flesh and bones
Thou owld a lagnuage 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

Composed c. 1821  First published 1920

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EMMONSAILS HEATH IN WINTER

I love to see the old heath's withered brake
Mingle its crimpled leaves with furze and ling
While the old heron from the lonely lake
Starts slow and flaps his melancholy wing
And oddling crow in idle motions swing
On the half rotten ashtree's topmost twig
Beside whose trunk the gipsy 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 awe round fields and closed rove,
And coy bumbarels twenty in a drove
Flit down the hedgerows in the frozen plain
And hang on little twigs and start again.

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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 oblivion's host,
Like shadows in love's frenzied stifled throes:
And yet I am, and live -- like vapours toss't

Into the nothingness of scorn and noise --
   Into the living sea of waking dreams,
Where there is neither sense of life or joys,
   But the vast shipwreck of my life's esteems;
Even the dearest, that I love the best
Are strange -- nay, rather, stranger than the rest.

I long for scenes where man hath never trod
   A place where woman never smiled 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.

Dear Sir, I am in a Mad house and quite forget your name or who you are you must excuse me for I have nothing to com[m]unicate or tell of and why I am shut up I don’t know I have nothing to say so I conclude (Clare, By Himself, p. 283)

[…] they have cut off my head and picked out all the letters of the alphabet – all the vowels and all the consonants and brought them out through my ears – and then they want me to write poetry! I can’t do it (quoted in Bate, p. 524).
from DON JUAN

“Poets are born” – & so are whores – the trade is
grown universal – in these canting days
Women of fashion must of course be ladies
& whoreing is the business that still pays
Playhouses Ball rooms – there the masquerade is
[...]
Now i’n’t this canto worth a single pound
From anybodys pocket who will buy…
[...]  
So reader now the money till unlock it
& buy the book & help to fill my pocket.

[...]

Nigh Leopards Hill stand All-ns hells
The public know the same
Where lady sods & buggers dwell
To play the dirty game

A man there is a prisoner there
Locked up from week to week
[...]
Theres Doctor Bottle Imp who deals in urine
A keepr of state prisons for the queen
As great a man as is the Doge of turin
Yclept old A-ll-n – mad brained ladies curing
Some p-x-d like Flora & but seldom clean
[...]