Life and Remains of John Clare

John Clare

1873

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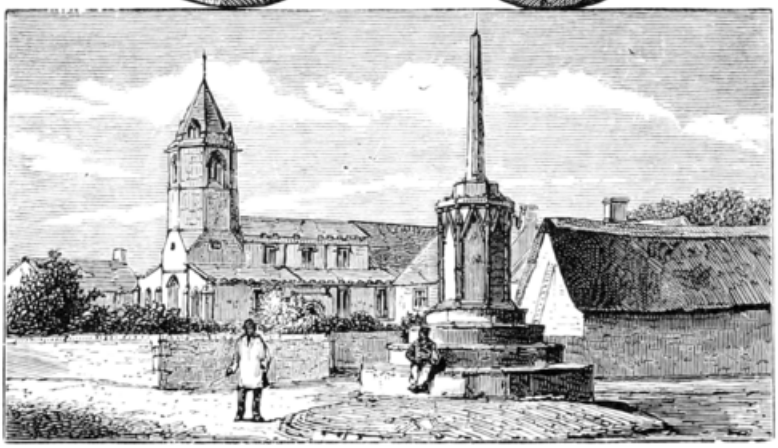

JOHN CLARE.

LIFE AND REMAINS

OF

JOHN CLARE,

THE

"NORTHAMPTONSHIRE PEASANT POET."

By J. L. Cherry.

> And he sat him down in a lonely place,
> And chanted a melody loud and sweet."
>
> Tennyson.

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DEDICATION.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY

THE LORD-LIEUTENANT OF IRELAND.

MY LORD:

Among the papers which John Clare, the "Peasant Poet" of our county, left behind him, was one in which he desired that the Editor of his "Remains" should dedicate them "to Earl Spencer, with the author's last wishes." That memorandum was written in the year 1825, when the poet was anticipating, to use his own words, a speedy entrance into "the dark porch of eternity, whence none returns to tell the tale of his reception."

These melancholy forebodings were not realized, for although in a few years Clare became dead to the world, he lived on in seclusion to a patriarchal age. Meanwhile, the Earl Spencer to whom he desired that his "Remains" should be dedicated passed away, and the title descended first to your lordship's uncle, then to your lordship's father, and lastly to your lordship. But through all these years the Earls Spencer were the steadfast and generous friends of the unhappy Poet, nor did your lordship's bounty cease with his life, but was continued to his widow.

In dedicating this volume to your lordship, as I now do, I am complying with the spirit and almost with the very letter of poor Clare's injunction.

I am, with unfeigned respect,

Your lordship's most obedient servant,

THE EDITOR.

INTRODUCTION.

The Editor begs the reader to believe that he undertook the compilation of this volume with diffidence and trepidation, lest by any defect of judgment he might do aught to diminish the reputation which John Clare has always enjoyed with the lovers of pastoral poetry. He trusts that the shortcomings of an unskilful workman will be forgotten in admiration of the gems for which he has been required to find a setting.

Shortly after Clare's death his literary "Remains" came into the possession of Mr. Taylor, of Northampton. The MSS. included several hundreds of hitherto unpublished poems, more than a thousand letters addressed to Clare by his friends and contemporaries, (among them, Charles Lamb, James Montgomery, Bloomfield, Sir Chas. A. Elton, Hood, Cary, Allan Cunningham, Mrs. Emmerson, Lord Radstock, &c.,) a Diary, pocket books in which Clare had jotted down

passing thoughts and fancies in prose and verse, a small collection of curious Old Ballads which he says he wrote down on hearing them sung by his father and mother, and numerous other valuable and interesting documents.

This volume has been compiled mainly from these manuscripts. The contents are divided into five sections, namely:—I. Life and Letters. II. Asylum Poems. III. Miscellaneous Poems. IV. Prose Fragments. V. Old Ballads.

For much of the information relating to the Poet's earlier years the Editor is indebted to Mr. Martin's "Life of Clare," and the narratives of his youthful struggles and sufferings which appeared in the "Quarterly Review" and other periodicals at the time of the publication of his first volume. From that time the correspondence already mentioned became the basis of the biographical sketch, and was of the greatest value. In the few pages which relate to Clare's residence at Northampton, the Editor was enabled to write principally from personal knowledge. It is almost incumbent upon him to add, that in several important particulars he dissents from Mr. Martin, but he will not engage in the ungracious task of criticizing a work to which he is under an obligation.[1]

While an inmate of the Northampton County Lunatic Asylum, Clare wrote more than five hundred poems. These were carefully preserved by Mr. W. F. Knight, of Birmingham, a gentleman who for many years held a

responsible office in that institution, and was a kind-hearted friend of the unhappy bard. From this pile of manuscripts the Editor has selected those which appear under the title of Asylum Poems. The selection was a pleasing, mournful task. Again and again it happened that a poem would open with a bright, musical stanza giving promise of a finished work not unworthy of Clare's genius at its best. This would be followed by others in which, to quote a line from the "Village Minstrel," were

"Half-vacant thoughts and rhymes of careless form."

Then came deeper obscurity, and at last incoherent nonsense. Of those which are printed, scarcely one was found in a state in which it could be submitted to the public without more or less of revision and correction.

The Miscellaneous Poems are chiefly fugitive pieces collected from magazines and annuals. One or two, referred to in the correspondence with James Montgomery, have been reprinted from the "Rural Muse," and there are a few which, like the Asylum Poems, have not been published before. "Maying; or, Love and Flowers," to which the Editor presumes specially to direct attention, is one of these.

The Prose Fragments are of minor literary importance, but they help to a knowledge and an understanding of the man. The Old Ballads have an interest of their own, apart from their association with Clare. The majority are no doubt what

they purport to be, but in two or three instances Clare's hand is discernible.

J. L. C.

Havelock-place, Hanley,

December, 1872.

1. ↑ The Editor bas pleasure in acknowledging the kindness of Miss James, of Theddingworth, and Miss Powell, of Thame. The former lady obligingly sent him the manuscript of a lecture on "Dryden and Clare" by her brother, the late Rev. T. James, of Theddingworth, and the latter several letters written by Clare to Mr. Octavius Gilchrist.

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GLOSSARY.

Bedlam cowslip, the paigle, or larger kind of cowslip.
Bents, tall, coarse, rushy stems of grass.
Blea, high, exposed.
Bleb, a bubble, a small drop.
Clock-a-clay, the ladybird.
Daffies, daffodils.
Dithering, trembling, shivering.
Hing, preterite of hang.
Ladysmock, the great bindweed.
Pink, the chaffinch.
Pooty, the girdled snail shell.
Ramping, coarse and large.
Rawky, misty, foggy.
Rig, the ridge of a roof.
Sueing, a murmuring, melancholy sound.
Swaly, wasteful.
Sweltered, over-heated by the sun.

Twitchy, made of twitch grass.
Water-blob, the marsh marigold.

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Life and Letters.

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LIFE, LETTERS, ETC.

JOHN CLARE, Son of Parker and Ann Clare, commonly called "the Northamptonshire Peasant Poet," was born at Helpstone, near Peterborough, on the 13th of July, 1793. The lowliness of his lot lends some countenance to the saying of "Melancholy" Burton, that, "poverty is the Muses' patrimony." He was the elder of twins, and was so small an infant that his mother used to say of him that "John might have been put into a pint pot." Privation and toil disabled his father at a comparatively early age, and he became a pauper, receiving from the parish an allowance of five shillings a week. His mother was of feeble constitution and was afflicted with dropsy. Clare inherited the low vitality of his parents, and until he reached middle age was subject to depressing ailments which more than once threatened his life, but after that time the failure of his mental powers

caused him to be placed in circumstances favourable to bodily health, and in his old age he presented the ontward aspect of a sturdy yeoman.

Having endowed Clare with high poetic sensibility, Nature capriciously placed him amid scenes but little calculated to call forth rapturous praises of her charms. "Helpstonc," wrote an old friend of the poet, lately deceased, "lies between six and seven miles N. N. W. of Peterborough, on the Syston and Peterborough branch of the Midland Railway, the station being about half a mile from the town. A not unpicturesque country lies about it, though its beauty is somewhat of the Dutch character-far-stretching distances, level meadows, intersected with grey willows and sedgy dikes, frequent spires, substantial watermills, and farm houses of white stone, and cottages of white stone also. Southward, a belt of wood, with a gentle rise beyond, redeems it from absolute flatness. Entering the town by the road from the east you come to a cross, standing in the midst of four ways. * * * Before you, and to the left, stretches the town, consisting of wide streets or roadways, with irregular buildings on either side, interspersed with gardens now lovely with profuse blooms of laburnum and lilac. * * * The cottage in which John Clare was born is in the main street running south. The views of it which illustrate his poems are not very accurate. They represent it as standing alone, when it is in fact, and evidently always has been, a cluster of two if not of three tenements. There are three occupations now. It

is on the west side of the street, and is thatched. In the illustration to the second volume of "The Village Minstrel" (1821), an open stream runs before the door which is crossed by a plank. Modern sanitary regulations have done away with this, if it ever existed, and was not a fancy of the artist. * * * Clare, whose local attachments were intense, bewails in indignant verse the demolition of the Green:—

Ye injur'd fields, ye once were gay,
When Nature's hand displayed
Long waving rows of willows grey
And clumps of hawthorn shade;
But now, alas! your hawthorn bowers
All desolate we see!
The spoiler's axe their shade devours,
And cuts down every tree.
Not trees alone have owned their force,
Whole woods beneath them bowed,
They turned the winding rivulet's course,
And all thy pastures plough'd."[1]

Clare also wrote in the "Village Minstrel" in the following candid and artless strain,—"a sort of defiant parody on the Highland poets"—of the natural features of his native place:—

Swamps of wild rush-beds and sloughs' squashy traces,

Grounds of rough fallows with thistle and weed,
Flats and low valleys of kingcups and daisies,
Sweetest of subjects are ye for my reed:
Ye commons left free in the rude rags of nature,
Ye brown heaths beclothed in furze as ye be,
My wild eye in rapture adores every feature,
Ye are dear as this heart in my bosom to me.

O native endearments! I would not forsake ye,
I would not forsake ye for sweetest of scenes:
For sweetest of gardens that Nature could make me
I would not forsake ye, dear valleys and greens:
Though Nature ne'er dropped ye a cloud-resting mountain,
Nor waterfalls tumble their music so free,
Had Nature denied ye a bush, tree, or fountain,
Ye still had been loved as an Eden by me,

And long, my dear valleys, long, long may ye flourish,
Though rush-beds and thistles make most of your pride!
May showers never fail the green's daisies to nourish,
Nor suns dry the fountain that rills by its side!
Your skies may be gloomy, and misty your mornings,
Your flat swampy valleys unwholesome may be,
Still, refuse of Nature, without her adornings
Ye are dear as this heart in my bosom to me!

That the poet's attachment to his native place was deep-rooted and unaffected was proved by the difficulty which he found in tearing himself from it in after years, and it is more than probable that the violence which, for the sake of others, he then did to his sensitive nature aggravated his constitutional melancholy and contributed to the ultimate overthrow of his reason.

Clare's opportunities for learning the elements of knowledge were in keeping with his humble station. Parker Clare, out of his miserable and fluctuating earnings as a day labourer, paid for his child's schooling until he was seven years of age, when he was set to watch sheep and geese on the village heath. Here he made the acquaintance of "Granny Bains," of whom Mr. Martin, quoting, doubtless, from Clare's mannscript autobiography, says: Having spent almost her whole life out of doors, in heat and cold, storm and rain, she had come to be intimately acquainted with all the signs. foreboding change of weather, and was looked upon by her acquaintances as a perfect oracle. She had also a most retentive memory, and being of a joyous nature, with a bodily frame that never knew illness, had learnt every verse or melody that was sung within her hearing, until her mind became a very storehouse of songs. To John, old Granny Bains soon took a great liking, he being a devout listener, ready to sit at her feet for hours and hours while she was warbling her little ditties, alternately merry and plaintive. * * * But though often disturbed in the enjoyment of these delightful recitations, they nevertheless

sank deep into John Clare's mind, until he found himself repeating all day long the songs he had heard, and even in his dreams kept humming-

> There sat three ravens upon a tree,
> Heigh down, derry O!
> There sat two ravens upon a tree,
> As deep in love as he and she.

It was thus that the admiration of poetry first awoke in Parker Clare's son, roused by the songs of Granny Bains, the cowherd of Helpstone."

From watching cows and geese, the boy was in due course promoted to the rank of team-leader, and was also set to assist his father in the threshing barn. "John," his father used to say, "was weak but willing," and the good man made his son a flail proportioned to his strength. Exposure in the ill-drained fields round. Helpstone brought on an attack of tertiary ague, from which the boy had scarcely rallied when he was again sent into the fields. Favourable weather having set in he recovered his health, and was able that summer to make occasionally a few pence by working overtime.. These savings were religiously devoted to schooling, and in the following winter, he being then in his tenth year, he attended an evening school at the neighbouring village of Glinton. John soon became a favourite of the master, Mr. James Merrishaw, and was allowed the run of his little library. His passion for learning

rapidly developed itself, and he eagerly devoured every book that came in his way, his reading ranging from "Robinson Crusoe" to "Bonnycastle's Arithmetic" and "Ward's Algebra." He refers to this in later life when he thus speaks of the "Village Minstrel :”–

> And oft, with books, spare hours he would beguile,
> And blunder oft with joy round Crusoe's lonely isle.

John pursued his studies for two or three winters under the guidance of the good-natured Merrishaw, and at the end of that time an unsuccessful effort was made to obtain for him a situation as clerk in the office of a solicitor at Wisbeach. After this failure he returned contentedly to the fields, and about this time found a new friend in the son of a small farmer named Turnill. The two youths read together, Turnill assisting Clare with books and writing materials. He now began to "snatch a fearful joy" by scribbling on scraps of paper his unpolished rhymes. f6 When he was fourteen or fifteen," to use his mother's own words, "he would show me a piece of paper, printed sometimes on one side and scrawled all over on the other, and he would say, Mother, this is worth silver and gold, and I used to say to him, Ay, boy, it looks as if it wur,' but I thought he was only wasting his time." John deposited a bundle of these fragments in a chink in the cottage wall, whence "they were duly and daily subtracted by his mother to boil the morning's kettle," but we do not find that he was greatly disturbed by the loss, for being sympathetically asked on one occasion whether he

had not kept copies of his earliest poems he replied that he bad not, and that they were very likely good for nothing.

While he was yet in his early youth an important and, in some respects, a favourable change took place in the nature of his daily occupation. "Among the few well-to-do inhabitants of Helpstone was a person named Francis Gregory, who owned a small public-house, under the sign of the Blue Bell, and rented besides a few acres of land. Francis Gregory, a most kind and amiable man, was unmarried, and kept house with his old mother, a female servant, and a lad, the latter half groom and half gardener. This situation, a yearly hiring, being vacant, it was offered to John, and eagerly accepted, on the understanding that he should have sufficient time of his own to continue his studies. It was a promise abundantly kept, for John Clare had never more leisure, and perhaps was never happier in his life than during the year that he stayed at the Blue Bell. Mr. Francis Gregory, suffering under constant illness, treated the pale little boy, who was always hanging over his books, more like a son than a servant, and this feeling was fully shared by Mr. Gregory's mother. John's chief labours were to attend to a horse and a couple of cows, and occasionally to do some light work in the garden or the potatoe field; and as these occupations seldom filled more than part of the day or the week, he had all the rest of the time to himself. A characteristic part of Clare's nature began to reveal itself now. While he had little leisure to himself, and much hard work, he was not averse to the society of

friends and companions, either, as in the case of Turnill, for study, or, as with others, for recreation; but as soon as he found himself to a certain extent his own master he forsook the company of his former acquaintances, and began to lead a sort of hermit's life. He took long strolls into the woods, along the meres, and to other lonely places, and got into the habit of remaining whole hours at some favourite spot, lying flat on the ground with his face towards the sky. The flickering shadows of the sun, the rustling of the leaves on the trees, the sailing of the fitful clouds over the horizon, and the golden blaze of the sun at morn and eventide were to him spectacles of which his eye never tired, with which his heart never got satiated." (*Martin.*)

The age at which Clare's poetic fancies first wrought themselves into verse cannot be definitely fixed. We know from his steadfast friend and first editor, the late Mr. John Taylor, publisher to the London University, that his fondness for poetry found expression before even he had learnt to read. He was tired one day with looking at the pictures in a volume of poems, which he used to say he thought was Pomfret's, when his father read him one piece in the book to amuse him. This thrilled him with a delight of which he often afterwards spoke, but though he distinctly recollected the vivid pleasure which the recital gave him he could never recall either the incidents or the language.

It may almost be taken for granted that so soon as Clare could write he began to rhyme. The Editor of this volume

has before him the book in which the boy set down his arithmetical and geometrical exercises while a pupil of Mr. Merrishaw, and in this book are scribbled in pencil a few undecipherable lines commencing, "Good morning to ye, ballad-singing thrush." He was thirteen. years old when an incident occurred which gave a powerful impulse to his dawning genius. A companion had shown him Thomson's "Seasons," and he was seized with an irrepressible desire to possess a copy. He ascertained that the book might be bought at Stamford for eighteenpence, and he entreated his father to give him the money. The poor man pleaded all too truthfully his poverty, but his mother, by great exertions, contrived to scrape together sevenpence, and the deficiency was made. up by loans from friends in the village. Next Sunday, John rose long before the dawn and walked to Stamford, a distance of seven miles, to buy a copy of the "Seasons," ignorant or forgetful of the fact that business was suspended on that day. After waiting for three or four hours before the shop to which he had been directed, he learnt from a passer-by that it would not be re-opened until the following morning, and he returned to Helpstone with a heavy heart. Next day he repeated his journey and bore off the much-coveted volume in triumph. He read as he walked back to Helpstone, but meeting with many interruptions clambered over the wall surrounding Burghley Park, and throwing himself on the grass read the volume through twice over before rising. It was a fine spring morning, and under the influence of the poems, the singing of birds, and the bright sunshine, he composed "The Morning Walk."

This was soon followed by "The Evening Walk," and some other minor pieces.

At the age of sixteen, if we may trust the account given by his early friend Mr. Octavius Gilchrist, in the "London Magazine" for January, 1820, Clare composed the following sonnet "To a Primrose"—

> Welcome, pale primrose, starting up between
> Dead matted leaves of oak and ash, that strew
> The every lawn, the wood, and spinney through,
> 'Mid creeping moss and ivy's darker green!
> How much thy presence beautifies the ground!
> How sweet thy modest, unaffected pride
> Glows on the sunny bank and wood's warm side!
> And where thy fairy flowers in groups are found
> The schoolboy roams enchantedly along,
> Plucking the fairest with a rude delight,
> While the meek shepherd stops his simple song,
> To gaze a moment on the pleasing sight,
> O'erjoyed to see the flowers that truly bring
> The welcome news of sweet returning Spring,

As we have traced the poet's history down to his sixteenth year, the next incident of importance may be anticipated: of course he fell in love, and the object of his first and purest affection was Mary Joyce, daughter of a farmer at Glinton. Little is known of this episode excepting that the maiden was very beautiful, that after a few months of blissful

intercourse their frequent meetings came to the knowledge of Mary's father, who sternly forbad their continuance, and that although "Patty," Clare's future wife, was the theme of some pretty verses, Mary Joyce was always Clare's ideal of love and beauty, and when thirty years afterwards, he lost his reason, among the first indications of the approaching calamity was his declaration that Mary, who had then long been in her grave, had passed his window. While under the influence of this delusion he wrote the poem entitled "First Love's Recollections," of which the following are the first two stanzas:—

First love will with the heart remain
When all its hopes are bye,
As frail rose-blossoms still retain
Their fragrance when they die;
And joy's first dreams will haunt the mind
With shades from whence they sprung,
As summer leaves the stems behind
On which spring's blossoms hung.

Mary! I dare not call thee dear,
I've lost that right so long;
Yet once again I vex thine ear
With memory's idle song.
Had time and change not blotted out
The love of former days,
Thou wert the last that I should doubt
Of pleasing with my praise.

Clare's engagement at the Blue Bell having terminated, a stone mason of Market Deeping offered to teach him his craft on payment of a premium which, though a very moderate sum, was far beyond the means of Parker Clare. A shoemaker in the village next offered to take him as an apprentice, on condition that Clare found his own tools, but the youth's aversion to the trade was too great to be overcome. After that his father applied to the head gardener at Burghley Park, who engaged Clare on the terms of a three years' apprenticeship, with eight shillings per week for the first year and an advance of one shilling per week in each succeeding year. The engagement was considered by Clare's father and mother to be a very fortunate and promising one, but it proved to be in a high degree prejudicial to his welfare. He was thrown into the society of a set of coarse-minded, intemperate fellows who insisted on his accompanying them in their frequent and forbidden visits to public houses in the neighbourhood.. Mr. Martin informs us that it was the custom at Burghley to lock up at

night all the workmen and apprentices employed under the head gardener, to prevent them from robbing the orchards, and that they regularly made their escape through a window. On several occasions Clare was overcome by drink and slept in the open air, with consequences to his delicate frame which may easily. be imagined.

It would appear that the head gardener set the example of habitual drunkenness to his subordinates, and that he was, moreover, of brutal disposition, which will account for the circumstance of the flight of Clare from Burleigh Park, after he had been there nearly a year. Accompanied by a fellow-apprentice he walked to Grant- ham, a distance of twenty-two miles, and thence to Newark, where the youths obtained employment under a nurseryman. But Clare very shortly became homesick, and he returned to his parents in a state of complete destitution.

The most lamentable consequence of the roystering life which Clare led with the gardeners at Burleigh was, that he acquired a fondness for strong drink with which he had to struggle, not always successfully, for years. That he did struggle manfully is evident from his correspondence, and at length, acting upon the advice of Dr. Darling, a London physician, who for a long time generously prescribed for him without fee or reward beyond the poet's grateful thanks, he abstained altogether. It will be seen hereafter that in all probability Dr. Darling's advice was given upon the supposition that Clare was able to procure a sufficient

supply of nourishing food, when unhappily he was almost literally starving himself, in order that his family might not go hungry.

On returning from Nottinghamshire Clare took again to the work of a farm labourer, and the poetic fervour which had abated in the uncongenial society of Burghley once more inanifested itself. After taking infinite pains to that end, he had the satisfaction of convincing his father and mother that his poetry was of somewhat greater merit than the half-penny ballads sold at the village feast; but his neighbours could not bring them- selves to approve John's course of life, and they adopted various disagreeable modes of showing that they thought he was a mightily presumptuous fellow. His shy manners and his habit of talking to himself as he walked led some to set him down as a lunatic; others ridiculed his enthusiasm, or darkly whispered suspicions of unhallowed intercourse with evil spirits. This treatment, operating upon a sensitive mind and a body debilitated both by labour and scanty and unwholesome food, had the natural effect of robbing him of hope and buoyancy of spirits. In a fit of desperation he enlisted in the militia, and with other Helpstone youths was marched off to Oundle, a small town lying between Peterborough and Northampton. [2] He remained at Oundle for a few weeks, at the end of which time the regiment was disbanded and Clare returned to Helpstone, carrying with him "Paradise Lost" and the "Tempest," which he had bought at a broker's shop in

Oundle. This brings us down to 1812, when Clare was nineteen years old.

Little is known of Clare's manner of life for the next four or five years, excepting that he continued to work as a farm labourer whenever work could be found, that he tried camp life with some gipsies, and speedily had his romantic ideas of its attractiveness rudely dispelled, that he had a love passage or two with girls of the village, and that he accumulated a large number of poems of varying degrees of excellence.

In 1817 he obtained employment as a lime burner at Bridge Casterton, in the neighbouring county of Rutland, where he earned about ten shillings per week. The labour was very severe, but Clare was contented, and during his stay at Bridge Casterton several of the best among his earlier poems were produced. It was probably this period of his life which he had in his mind when he said-

> I found the poems in the fields,
> And only wrote them down.

In the course of this year 1817 Clare fell in love with Martha Turner, the daughter of a cottage farmer living at a place called Walkberd Lodge, and this is the maiden who after the lapse of three or four years became his wife. "She was a fair girl of eighteen, slender, with regular features, and pretty blue eyes." Clare entered into this new

engagement with passionate ardour, but the courtship ultimately took a more prosaic turn, and having once done so, there was little in the worthy but illiterate and matter-of-fact "Patty" to elevate the connection into the region of poetry. In his correspondence Clare more than once hints at want of sympathy on the part of those of his own household, and at one time domestic differences, for which there is reason to think he was mainly responsible, and which occurred when he was mentally in a very morbid condition, caused him to contemplate suicide. It is due, however, to the memory of "Patty" to say that Clare's latest volume of poems ("The Rural Muse," 1835) contains an address "To P * *" which is honourable to the constancy of both parties. It is as follows:—

Fair was thy bloom when first I met
Thy summer's maiden-blossom:
And thou art fair and lovely yet,
And dearer to my bosom.
O thou wert once a wilding flower,
All garden flowers excelling,
And still I bless the happy hour
That led me to thy dwelling.

Though nursed by field, and brook, and wood,
And wild in every feature,
Spring ne'er unsealed a fairer bud,
Nor found a blossom sweeter.
Of all the flowers the spring hath met,
And it has met with many,
Thou art to me the fairest yet,
And loveliest of any.

Though ripening summers round thee bring
Buds to thy swelling bosom,
That wait the cheering smiles of spring
To ripen into blossom,
These buds shall added blessings be,
To make our loves sincerer,
For as their flowers resemble thee
They'll make thy memory dearer.

And though thy bloom shall pass away,
By winter overtaken,
Thoughts of the past will charms display,
And many joys awaken.
When time shall every sweet remove,
And blight thee on my bosom,
Let beauty fade!—to me, my love,
Thou'lt ne'er be out of blossom!

Although Clare's engagement to Martha Turner added to his perplexities, it was really the immediate moving cause of his determination to be up and doing. He resolved at length to publish a collection of his poems, and consulted Mr. Henson, a printer, of Market Deeping, on the subject. Mr. Henson offered to print three hundred copies of a prospectus for a sovereign, but he firmly declined the invitation of the poet to draw up that document. Clare resolutely set to work to save the money for the printer, and soon succeeded; but then there was the difficulty with regard to the composition of the address to the public. He could write poetry; that he knew; he had done so already, and he felt plenty more within; but prose he had never yet attempted, and the task was a really grievous one. This is his own account of his trouble, given in the introduction to the "Village Minstrel "I have often dropped down five or six times, to plan an address. In one of these musings my poor thoughts lost themselves in rhyme. Taking a view, as I sat beneath the shelter of a woodland ledge, of my parents' distresses at home, of my labouring so hard and so vainly to get out of debt, and of my still added perplexi- ties of ill-timed love, striving to remedy all to no purpose, I burst out into an exclamation of distress, What is life?" and instantly recollecting that such a subject would be a good one for a poem, I hastily scratted down the two first verses of it, as it stands, and continued my journey to work." When he got to the limekiln he could not work for thinking of the address which he had to write, "so I sat me down on a lime scuttle," he says, "and out with my pencil, and when I had finished I

started off for Stamford with it." There he posted the address to Mr. Henson. It ran as follows:- Proposals for publishing by subscription a Collection of Original Trifles on Mis- cellaneous Subjects, Religious and Moral, in verse, by John Clare, of Helpstone. The public are requested to observe that the Trifles humbly offered for their candid perusal can lay no claim to cloquence of composition: whoever thinks so will be deceived, the greater part of then being juvenile productions, and those of later date offsprings of those leisure intervals which the short remittance from hard and manual labour sparingly afforded to compose them. It is to be hoped that the humble situation which distinguishes their author will be some excuse in their favour, and serve to make an atonement for the many inaccuracies and imperfections that will he found in them. The least touch from the iron hand of Criticism is able to crush them to nothing, and sink them at once to utter oblivion. May they be allowed to live their little day and give satisfaction to those who may choose to honour them with a perusal, they will gain the end for which they were designed and the author's wishes will be gratified. Meeting with this encouragement it will induce him to publish a similiar collection of which this is offered as a specimen." The specimen was the "Sonnet to the Setting Sun," in which a comparison is drawn between sunset and the death of a Christian.

The address was too artless-too honest, and the people of the Fens, taking Clare at his word, subscribed. for exactly

seven copies! The state of excitement, caused by mingled hopes and fears, in which Clare was at this time may be seen from the following extract from a letter to Mr. Henson - Good God! How great are my expectations! What hopes do I cherish! As great as the unfortunate Chatterton's were, on his first entrance into London, which is now pictured in my mind. And, undoubedly, like him I may be building castles in the air, but time will prove it. Please to do all in your power to procure subscribers, as your address will be looked upon better than that of a clown. When 100 are got you may print it, if you please; so do your best."

But now fresh troubles came upon Clare in rapid succession. He quarrelled with Patty and was forbidden the house by her parents. He was discharged by his master on the probably well-grounded plea that he was writing poetry and distributing his address when he ought to be at work, and he was soon without a penny in the world. He returned to Helpstone and tried to get employment as a day labourer, but failed, the farmers, who had heard of the publishing project, considering that he did not know his place." In this extremity he was compelled to apply for and accept relief from the parish. This was in the autumn of 1818, and Clare was twenty-five years old.

Henson declined to begin the printing of the book unless Clare advanced the sum of £15, and this being impossible the negotiation fell through. Clare shortly. afterwards, with the two-fold object of finding employ- ment and obtaining

relief from mental distraction by change of scene, was on the point of setting out for Yorkshire, when a copy of his prospectus fell under the notice of Mr. Edward Drury, a bookseller, of Stamford. Mr. Drury called upon Clare at his own home, and with difficulty induced him to show him a few of his manuscript poems. Having read, among others, "My love, thou art a nosegay sweet," he was unable to conceal his gratification, and told Clare, to the poor poet's intense delight, that if he would procure the return of the poems in the possession of Mr. Henson he would publish a volume and give Clare the profits after deduct- ing expenses.

On this footing the poet became intimate with Mr. Drury, who frequently entertained him at his house. His letters to Clare are cordial, and disclose an honest desire to be of service to him, on which account it is the more to be regretted that, owing to a dispute which afterwards took place between Mr. Drury and Mr. Taylor, Clare's London publisher, Clare rather un- graciously separated himself from his early friend. He was clearly indebted to Mr. Drury in the first instance for the opportunity of emerging from obscurity into public notice, and also for introductions to Mr. Taylor and Mr. Octavius Gilchrist, both men of influence in literary circles, and both of whom took an active and genuine interest in the young poet. Mr. Taylor, as has been already stated, became his editor and publisher, and remained his faithful friend until after Clare had been lost to public view within the walls of a lunatic asylum.

Towards the end of 1819 Clare met Mr. Taylor at the house of Mr. Gilchrist, in Stamford, and the latter gentleman gave the following account of the interview in a patronizing and not very judicious article which appeared. in the London Magazine" for January, 1820: "Mr. Taylor had seen Clare, for the first time, in the morning, and he doubted much if our invitation would be ac- cepted by the rustic poet, who had now just returned. from his daily labour, shy, and reserved, and disarrayed as he was. In a few minutes, however, Clare announced his arrival by a hesitating knock at the door. between a single and a double rap'-and immediately upon his introduction he dropped into a chair. Nothing could exceed the meekness, and simplicity, and diffidence with which be answered the various enquiries concerning his life and habits, which we mingled with subjects calculated or designed to put him much at his ease.

* * * Of music he expressed himself passionately foud, and had learnt to play a little on the violin, in the humble hope of obtaining a trifle at the annual feasts in the neighbourhood, and at Christmas.

* * * The tear stole silently down the cheek of the rustic poct as one of our little party sang Auld Robin Gray.'" Mr. Martin gives a somewhat different account of this interview. He states that the poet took decidedly too much wine, and that while under its influence he wrote some doggerel verses which Mr. Gilchrist had the cruelty to print in the article intended formally to introduce Clare to the notice of the English public. Mr. Gilchrist was an accomplished and warm-hearted man, and it was by his

desire that Hilton, the Royal Academican painted Clare's portrait for exhibition in London, but he presunied too much upon his social superiority, and his judgment was at fault in supposing that the poet was all meekness and diffidence. On one occasion he took him sharply to task for associating with a Nonconformist minister, and Clare warınly resented this interference and for a time absented himself from Mr. Gilchrist's house. A reconciliation, however, soon took place, and the poet and the learned grocer of Stamford were fast friends until the death of the latter in 1823.

Clare's first volume was brought out by Taylor and Hessey in January, 1820. It was entitled "Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery," and contained an introduction from the pen of Mr. Taylor. In this preface the peculiarities of Clare's genius were described with force and propriety, his perseverance in the face of great discouragements was commended, and the sympathy and support of the public were invited in the following passage "No poet of our country has shown greater ability under circumstances so hostile to its development. And all this is found here without any of those distressing and revolting alloys which too often debase the native. worth of genius, and make him who was gifted with powers to command admiration live to be the object of contempt or pity. The lower the condition of its possessor the more unfavourable, generally, has been the effect of genius on his life. That this has not been the case with Clare may, perhaps, be imputed to the absolute

depression of his fortune. * * * When we hear the consciousness of possessing talent, and the natural irritability of the poetic temperament, pleaded in extenuation of the follies and vices of men in high life, let it be accounted no mcan praise to such a man as Clare that with all the excitements of their sensibility in his station he has preserved a fair character amid dangers which presumption did not create and difliculties which discretion could not avoid. In the real troubles of life, when they are not brought on by the misconduct of the individual, a strong mind acquires the power of righting itself after each attack, and this philosophy, not to call it by a better name, Clare possesses. If the expectations of a better life, which he cannot help indulging, should all be disappointed by the coldness with which this volume may be received, he can

'put up with distress, and be content.'

In one of his letters he says, 'If my hopes don't succeed the hazard is not of much consequence: if I fall, I am advanced at no great distance from my low condition: if I sink for want of friends my old friend Necessity is ready to help me as before. It was never my fortune as yet to meet advancement from friendship: my fate has ever been hard labour among the most vulgar and lowest conditions of men, and very small is the pittance hard labour allows me, though I always toiled even beyond my strength to obtain it. To see a man of talent struggling under great adversity with such a spirit must surely excite in every generous heart the

wish to befriend him. But if it be otherwise, and he should be doomed to remediless misery,

'Why, let the stricken deer go weep,
The hart ungalled play,
For some must watch, while some sleep,~
Thus runs the world away.'

Towards the end of January, 1820, the Rev. Mr. Holland, of Northborough, the minister already referred to, called upon Clare with the joyful news that his poems had been published, and that the volume was a great success. Next day a messenger arrived from Stamford with an invitation to the poet to meet Mr. Drury and Mr. Gilchrist. They confirmed the favourable report made by Mr. Holland, and at length Clare had an opportunity of seeing the book which had caused him so many anxious days and sleepless nights. He made no attempt to conceal the honest pride he felt ou receiving the con- gratulations of his friends, and acknowledged his obliga- tion to Mr. Taylor for the editorial pains he had taken to prepare his manuscripts for the press, but he was deeply mortified at the tone of the "Introduction," in which Mr. Taylor dwelt, perhaps unconsciously, on Clare's poverty as constituting his chief claim to public notice.

The success of the "Poems" could scarcely be over- stated. The eager curiosity of the public led to the first edition being exhausted in a few days, and a second was promptly

announced. "The Gentleman's Magazine," the "New Monthly Magazine," the "Eclectic Review," the "Anti-Jacobin Review," the "London Magazine,' and many other periodicals, welcomed the new poet with generous laudation. Following these came the "Quar- terly Review," then under the editorship of the trenchant Gifford. To the astonishment of the reading public, the "Quarterly," which abont this time "killed poor Keats, admitted a genial article on the rustic bard, and gave him the following excellent advice:-"We counsel— we entreat him to continue something of his present occupations, to attach himself to a few in the sincerity of whose friendship he can confide, and to suffer no temptations of the idle and the dissolute to seduce him from the quiet scenes of his youth (scenes so congenial to his taste) to the hollow and heartless society of cities, to the haunts of men who would court and flatter him while his name was new, and who, when they had contributed to distract his attention and impair his health, would cast him off unceremoniously to seek some other novelty. Of his again encountering the difficulties and privations he lately experienced there is no danger. Report speaks of honourable and noble friends already secured with the aid of these, the cultivation of his own excellent talents, and a meek but firm reliance on that good Power by whom these were bestowed, he may, without presumption, anticipate a rich reward in the future for the evils endured in the morning of his life." The estimate formed by the writer of the liberality of Clare's patrons was exaggerated, and instead of there being no danger of his ever again having to

encounter difficulties and privations he was scarcely ever free from them until the crowning privation had placed him beyond their influence.

The "Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery" were about seventy in number, including twenty-one The volume opened with an apostrophe to Helpstone, in the manner of Goldsmith, and among the longer pieces were "The Fate of Amy," "Address to Plenty, in Winter," "Summer Morning," "Summer Morning," "Summer Evening," and "Crazy Nell." The minor pieces in- cluded the sonnet “To the Primrose," already quoted, "My love, thou art a Nosegay sweet," and "What is Life a reflective poem produced under circumstances with which the reader has been made acquainted. The two compositions last named are inserted here as examples of Clare's style at this early period of his career:—

MY LOVE, THOU ART A NOSEGAY SWEET.

My love, thou art a nosegay sweet,
My sweetest flower I'll prove thee,
And pleased I pin thee to my breast,
And dearly do I love thee.

And when, my nosegay, thou shalt fade,
As sweet a flower thou'lt prove thee;
And as thou witherest on my breast,
For beauty past I'll love thee.

And when, my nosegay, thou shalt die,
And heaven's flower shalt prove thee,
My hopes shall follow to the sky,
And everlasting love thee.

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.

What are vain hopes?—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?
No where at all, save heaven, and the grave.

Then what is Life?—When stripp'd of its disguise,
A thing to be desir'd 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.

The following lines in the "Address to Plenty" have always been admired for their Doric strength and simplicity, and the vivid realism of the scene which they depict:—

Toiling in the naked fields,
Where no bush a shelter yields,
Needy Labour dithering stands,
Beats and blows his numbing hands,
And upon the crumping snows
Stamps, in vain, to warm his toes.
Leaves are fled, that once had power
To resist a summer shower;
And the wind so piercing blows,

Winnowing small the drifting snows.

Clare used at first, without hesitation, the provin- cialisms of his native county, but afterwards, as his mind matured, he saw the propriety of adopting the suggestions which Charles Lamb and other friends made to him on this subject, and his style gradually became more polished, until in the "Rural Muse" scarcely any provincialisms were employed, and the glossary of the earlier volumes was therefore unnecessary,

The article in the "Quarterly" was, with the exception, perhaps, of the concluding paragraph, just quoted, from the pen of Clare's friend and neighbour, Mr. Gilchrist, who wrote to Clare on the subject in the following jocular strain "What's to be done now, Measter? Here's a letter from William Gifford saying I promised him an article on one John Clare, for the "Quarterly Review. Did I do any such thing? More- over, he says he has promised Lord Radstock, and if I know him, as he thinks I do, I know that the Lord will persecute him to the end. This does not move me much. But he adds, Do not fail me, dear Gil., for I count upon you. Tell your simple tale, and it may do the young bard good. Think you so? Then it must be set about. But how to weave the old web anew-how to hoist the same rope again and again-how to continue the interest to a twice-told tale? Have you committed any arsons or murders that you have not yet revealed to me? If you have, out with 'em straight, that I may turn 'em to account before you are hanged; and as you

will not come here to confess, I must hunt you up at Helpstone; so look to it, John Clare, for ere it be long, and before you expect me, I shall be about your eggs and bacon. I have had my critical cap on these two days, and the cat-o'-nine-tails in my hands, and soundly I'll flog you for your sundry sins, John Clare, John Clare! Given under my hand the tenth of the fourth month, anno Domini 1820."

Following close upon the complimentary criticisms in the principal monthlies, the condescension of the "Quarterly completed the little triumph, and Clare's verses became the fashion of the hour. One of his poems was set to music by Mr. Henry Corri, and sung by Madame Vestris at Covent Garden. Complimentary letters, frequently in rhyme, flowed in upon him, presents of books were brought by nearly every coach,[3] and influential friends set about devising plans (of which more presently,) to rescue him from poverty and enable him to devote at all events a portion of his time to the Muscs. On the other hand, visitors from idle curiosity were far more nunicrous than was agreeable, and be was pestered with applications for autographs and poems for ladies' albums, with patronage and advice from total strangers, with tracts from well-meaning clergymen, and with invitations to lionizing parties. One of these communications was in its way a unique production, and for the entertainment of the reader a portion of it is here introduced:—

"The darksome daughter of Chaos has now enveloped our hemisphere (which a short time since was enubilous of clouds) in the grossest blackness. The drowsy god reigns predominantly, and the obstreperous world is wrapped in profound silence. No sounds gliding throngh the ambient air salute my attentive auricles, save the frightful notes which at different intervals issue from that common marauder of nocturnal peace—the lonesome, rain-dwelling owl. Wearied rustics, exhausted by the toils of the day, are enjoying a sweet and tranquil repose. No direful visions appal their happy souls, nor terrific ghosts of quondam hours stand arrayed before them. Every sense is lost in the oblivious stream. Even those who on the light, fantastic toe lately tripped through the tangled dance of mirth have sunk into the arms of

> Tired Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep.
> Meditation, avaunt!

Respected (tho' unknown) Sir,—Out of the abundant store of your immutable condescension graciously deign to pardon the bold assurance and presumptuous liberty of an animated mass of undistinguished dust, whose fragile composition is most miraculously composed of congenial atoms so promiscuously concentred as to personify in an abstracted degree the beauteous form of man, to convey by proxy to your brilliant opthalmic organs the sincere thanks of a mild, gentle, and grateful heart for the delightful amusement I have experienced and the instruction I have

reaped by reading your excellent poems, in (several of) which you have exquisitely given dame nature her natural form, and delineated her in colours so admirable that on the perusal of them I was led to exclaim with extacy Clare everywhere excells in the descriptive. But your literary prowess is too circuitously authenticated to admit of any punctilious commendation from my debilitated pen, and under its umbrageous recess, serenely segregated, from the inalapert and hypochon- driachal vapours of myopic critics (as I am no acromatic philosopher) I trust every solecism contained in this autographical epistle will find a salvable retirement. Tho' no Solitaire, I am irreversibly resolved to be on this occasion heteroclitical. I will not insult your good sense by lamenting the exigencies of the present times, as doubtless it always dictates to you to be (whilst travelling through the mazy labyrinth of joy and sorrow) humble. in the lucent days of prosperity and omnific in the tenebricous moments of adversity." And so on, for several pages, concluding with an invitation to meet a few congenial spirits at dinner. It is not on record that the poet accepted the invitation.

Clare's claim to the title of poet having beeu established, his noble neighbours at Milton and Burghley invited him to visit them. At Milton Park he was graciously received by Earl Fitzwilliam and Lord and Lady Milton, after he had dined with the servants. A long conversation on his health, means, expectations, and principles was held, and he was dismissed with a very handsome present an earnest of

greater favours to come. The visit to the Marquis of Exeter was equally gratifying. His lordship made himself acquainted with the state of the poet's affairs, and having read a number of onpublished effusions which Clare had taken with him, told. him that it was his intention to allow him an annuity of fifteen pounds for life. The delight of the poor bard may be imagined without difficulty, for now he doubted not be could reconcile Patty's parents to the long hoped-for marriage, and deliver his mistress from anxieties which had for some time made life almost intolerable, He dined in the servants' hall. About the same time Clare also visited by invitation General Birch Reynardson, of Holywell Park-a visit full of romance, as narrated by Mr. Martin, a beautiful young lady, governess to the General's children, having to all appearances fallen desperately in love with the poct at first sight. The only unromantic incident of the day was the customary dinner at the servants' table. Clare's biographer, with excusable warmth, says that his local patrons, however much they might differ on other subjects, held that the true place of a poet was among footmen and kitchen maids. But it should not be forgotten that the noblemen named were life-long friends of Clare and his family, and it would be unjust to reflect upon their memory because the relations of "the hearty and generous Oxford," the Duke and Duchess of Queensbury, and Lord Bolingbroke with the polite and scholarly Prior, Gay, and Pope were not immediately established between. the Marquis of Exeter or Earl Fitzwilliam and the gifted but unltered rustic who had toiled in their fields. Clare's proud

spirit was almost always restive under the burden of patronage, especially if bestowed on account of his poverty, but we may feel sure that he did not expect to dine with these noblemen, that no indignity was intended in sending him to the common hall, and that it did not occur to him that he ought to feel insulted.

Clare was married to Martha Turner at Great Casterton Church on the 16th of March, 1820, and for a time Mrs. Clare remained at her father's house. She afterwards joined her husband at the house of his parents. in Helpstone, his "own old home of homes," as he fondly called the lowly cottage in one of his most pathetic poems, and there they all remained, with the offspring of the marriage, until the removal to Northborough in 1832. Flushed with his recent good fortune, Clare distributed bride cake among his friends, and received from all hearty good wishes for his future. happiness.

Early in the same month, and before his marriage, Clare accepted the invitation of his publishers, Messrs. Taylor and Hessey, to pay them a visit in Town. He was accompanied by Mr. Gilchrist, and remained for a week, making his home at his publishers' house in Fleet street. With great difficulty Mr. Taylor persuaded him to meet a party of friends and admirers at dinner. It was impossible for him to overcome with one effort his natural shyness, but the cordial manner in which he was welcomed by Mr. Taylor's guests put him comparatively at his case, for he was made

to feel that the labourer was forgotten in the poet and that he was regarded as an equal. The host placed him at dinner next to Admiral Lord Radstock, an intimate friend of Mrs. Emmerson, a lady whose name will frequently occur in the course of this memoir. His lordship had taken great interest in Clare from the first appearance of his poems, and had already made him several presents of books. By mingled tact and kindness he got from the poet an account of his life, his struggles, his hopes, his fears, and his prospects. Clare's share in the conversation made so deep an impression upon Lord. Radstock that he conceived for him an attachment approaching to affection, and never ceased to exert all the influence of his position and high character in favour of his protégé. The Editor has before him many letters addressed to Clare by his excellent friend, but is restrained, by a wish expressed in one of the number, from publishing any portion of them. The request does not, however, apply to the inscriptions in books which Lord Radstock presented to Clare, and as the intimacy had a very important influence on the poet's career, those who are sufficiently interested in the subject to read these pages will not look upon the following passages as a superfluity-In a work by Thomas Erskine on the Christian Evidences his lordship wrote:-" The kindest and most valuable present that Admiral Lord Radstock cou'd possibly make to his dear & affectionate friend, John Clare. God grant that he may make the proper use of it!" In a copy of Owen Feltham's "Resolves:"*The Bible excepted, I consider Owen Feltham's 'Resolves' and Boyle's Occasional Reflections to be two as good books as

were ever usber'd into the world, with a view to direct the heart and keep it in its right place; consequently, to render us happy in this life and lay a reasonable foundation for the salvation of our souls through Jesus Christ our only Mediator and Redeemer. It was, therefore, under this conviction that I not long since presented you with both these truly valuable books, earnestly hoping, trusting, and, let me add, not doubting that you will make that use of them which is intended by your ever truly and affectionate friend, Kadstock." In a copy of Mason's "Self-Knowledge":"I give this little pocket companion to my friend John Clare, not with a view to improve his heart, for that, I believe, would. be no easy task, but in order to enable him to acquire a more perfect knowledge of his own character, and likewise to give him a close peep into human nature." In a copy of Hannah More's "Spirit of Prayer "-" My very dear Clare,-If this excellent little book, and the others which accompany it, do not speak sufficiently for themselves, it would be in vain to think of offering you any further earthly inducement to study them and seek the truth. The grace of God can alone do this, and Heaven grant that this may not be wanting! So prays your truly sincere and affectionate Radstock." Similar inscriptions accompanied a copy of Watson's "Apology for the Bible," Bishop Wilson's "Maxims of Piety and Christianity," and other works of a corresponding character.

Soon after his arrival in London Lord Radstock took Clare to see Mrs. Emmerson, who had already been in

correspondence with him, and thus commenced a friendship the ardour and constancy of which knew no abatement until poor Clare was no longer able to hold rational intercourse with his fellow-creatures. Mrs. Emmerson was the wife of Mr. Thomas Emmerson, of Berners- street, Oxford-street, and afterwards of Stratford-place. She was a lady in easy circumstances, and occupied a good social position.[4] Being of refined and elegant tastes, and singularly generous disposition, she associated herself with young aspirants for fame in poetry, painting, and sculpture, and to the utmost of her power en- deavoured to procure for them public notice and patron- age. She was herself a frequent writer of graceful verses, and her letters disclose a sensitive, poetic mind, a habit of self-denial when the happiness of her friends was concerned, and a delicate physical organization liable to prostrating attacks of various nervous disorders. Clare preserved nearly three hundred of her letters, the dates ranging from February, 1820, to July, 1837, or an average of one letter in about every three weeks; and the Editor, having read the whole of them, feels constrained, a different version of the relationship baving been given, to state his conviction that no poor struggling genius was ever blessed with a tenderer or a truer fricud. No man of feeling could rise from the perusal of them with- out the deepest respect and admiration for the writer. The style is effusive, and the language in which the lady writes of Clare's poetry is occasionally eulogistic to the point of extravagance, and was to that extent injudicious; but all blemishes are forgotten in the presence of overwhelming

evidences of pure and disinterested friendship. Although by no means insensible to the reception given to her own verses, Clare's literary reputa. tion lay much nearer to her heart. She firmly believed that he was a great genius, and she insisted upon all her friends believing so too, and buying his books. She very soon began to feel an interest in his domestic affairs, and to send him valuable presents. She was godmother to his second child, which was named after her, Eliza Louisa, and for years the coach brought regularly, a day or two before Christmas, two sovereigns "to pay for little Eliza's schooling," another sovereign for the Christmas dinner, and a waistcoat-piece and two India silk necker-chiefs "for my dear Clare" with many kind wishes "for all in his humble cot." At another time Patty's eyes were gladdened by the present of a dozen silver teaspoons and a pair of sugar tongs. These were followed by a silver seal, engraved for Clare in Paris and mounted in ivory, while under the pretext that he must find postage expensive she several times sent bin a sovereign "under the wax." At one time she would appear to have given him sufficient clothing to equip the entire family, and when in 1832 Clare made his venture as a cottage farmer his thoughtful friend gave him £10 with which to buy a cow, stipulating only (for the kind-hearted little woman. inust be sentimental) that it should be christened "May." After that, she strove hard to obtain for one of his boys admission to Christ's Hospital, and in conjunction with Mr. Taylor discharged a heavy account sent in by a local medical practitioner.

But in higher matters than these the genuineness of Mrs. Emmerson's friendship for Clare was demonstrated. The poet poured into her listening and patient ear the story of every trial and every annoyance which fell to his lot, not concealing from his friend those mental sufferings which were caused solely by his own indis- cretion and folly, Under these latter circumstances she rebuked him with affectionate solicitude and fidelity. In perplexities arising out of matters of business she gave him the best advice in her power, and when her know- ledge of affairs failed her appealed to her husband, who was always ready to do anything for "dear Johnny," as Clare came to be called in Stratford-place. When he complained of being distressed by wild fancies and haunted by gloomy forebodings, as he did many years before his reason gave way, she first rallied him, though often herself suffering acutely, and then entreated him to dispel his melancholy by communing afresh with Nature and by meditations on the Divine greatness and goodness.

Within a few weeks of the appearance of "Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery," a private sub- scription was set on foot by Lord Radstock for the benefit of Clare and his family. Messrs. Taylor aud Hessey headed the list with the handsome donation of £100. Earl Fitzwilliam followed with a corresponding amount; The Duke of Bedford and the Duke of Devonshire gave £20 each; Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg (afterwards King of the Belgians), the Duke of North- umberland, the Earl of

Cardigan, Lord John Russell, Sir Thomas Baring, Lord Kenyon, and several other noblemen and gentlemen, £10 each, making with nu- merous smaller subscriptions a total of £420 12 0. This sum was invested, in the name of trustees, in Navy Five per Cents., and yielded, until the conversion of that security to a lower denomination, about £20 a year.

About the same time the attention of Earl Spencer was called to Clare's circumstances by Mr. J. S. Bell, a Stamford surgeon, and his lordship signified to Mr. Bell his intention to settle upon the poet an annuity of £10 for life. These various benefactions, with the Marquis of Exeter's annuity of £15, put Clare in the possession of 45 a-year, and his friends were profuse. in their congratulations on his good fortune. As he had now a fixed income greater than that he had ever derived from labour, it was thought that by occasional farm work and by the profit resulting from the sale of bis poems he would be relieved from anxiety about domestic affairs, and be enabled to devote at least one half of his time to the cultivation of his poetic faculties. The expectation appears to have been a reasonable one, but as will be seen hereafter it was only imperfectly realized.

The first volume of poems passed rapidly through three editions, and a fourth was printed. Several of Clare's influential friends took exception to a few passages in the first issue on the ground that they were rather too outspoken in their rusticity, and Lord Radstock strongly urged the

omission in subsequent editions of several lines which he characterized as "Radical slang." Mr. Taylor contested both points for some time, but Lord Radstock threatened to disown Clare if he declined to oblige his patrons, and the poet at length made the desired concessions. The following were the passages over which his lordship exercised censorship:-

> Accursed Wealth! o'erbounding human laws,
> Of every evil thou remain'st the cause.
>
> * * * *
>
> Sweet rest and peace, ye dear, departed charms,
> Which industry once cherished in her arms,
> When ease and plenty, known but now to few,
> Were known to all, and labour had its due.
>
> * * * *
>
> The rough, rude ploughman, off his fallow-grounds,
> (That necessary tool of wealth and pride)—

Being strengly urged thereto by Mr. Taylor, Clare sent to London a large bundle of manuscripts with permission to his editor to make a selection therefrom for a new work. The correspondence connected with this project extended over several months, and in the autumn of 1821 the "Village Minstrel and other Poems" made its appear- ance in two volumes, with a portrait after Hilton and a view of the poet's cottage. In the course of the corres- pondence there occurs the following passage, which has au interest of its own, in a letter from Mr. Taylor:- "Keats, you know, broke a blood-

vessel, and luas been very ill. He is now recovering, and it is necessary for bis getting through the winter that he should go to Italy. Rome is the place recommended. You are now a richer man than poor K., and how much more fortunate ! We have some trouble to get through 500 copies of his work, though it is highly spoken of in the periodical works, but what is most against him it has been thought necessary in the leading review, the "Quarterly," to damn his fame. on account of his political opinions. In them, I say, who could act in so cruel a way to a young man of undoubted genius." And again (March 26, 1821):— The life of poor Keats is ended at last he died at the age of twenty-five. He used to say he should eflect nothing which he would rest his fame upon until he was thirty, and all hopes are over at twenty-five. But he has left enough, though he did not think so, and if his bio- grapher cannot do him justice the advocate is in fault, and not the cause. Poor fellow! Perhaps your feeling will produce some lines to his memory. One of the very few poets of this day is gone. Let another beware of Stam- ford. wish you may keep to your resolution of shunning that place, for it will do you immense injury if you do not. You know what I would say. Farewell." There is little doubt that by the closing hint Mr. Taylor desired to put Clare on his guard against the indiscreet hospitality of well-to-do friends at Stamford.

While the Village Minstrel was in course of preparation the "London Magazine" passed into the possession of Messrs. Taylor & Hessey, and they at once. invited Clare to

contribute, offering payment at the rate of one guinea per page, with the right to re-publish at any time on the original terms of half profits. Clare accepted the offer, and as he contributed almost regularly for some time, a substantial addition was made to his income. Among Clare's fellow-contributors in 1821 were Charles Lamb and De Quincey, the former with "Essays of Elia," and the latter with "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater."

Two thousand copies of the Village Minstrel " were printed, and by the beginning of December 800. had been sold. This was a very modified success, but a number of circumstances combined to make the season an unfavourable one for the publication of such a work. That the poetry of the "Village Minstrel" is far superior both in conception and execution to much contained in Clare's first book was undisputed, and indeed it may be said at once that every successive work which he published was an improvement upon its predecessor, until in the "Rural Muse" a vigour of conception and polish of diction are displayed which the most ardent admirers of Clare in his younger days- (Mrs. Emmerson always excepted, who believed him to be at least Shakespeare's equal)-would not have ventured to predict. The "Village Minstrel" was so named after the principal poem, which contains one hundred and nineteen Spenserian stanzas, and is to a considerable extent autobiographical. It was composed in 1819, at which time Clare was wretchedly poor, and this will no doubt account for the repining tone of a few of the

verses. It abounds, however, in poetical beauties, of which the following stanzas may be taken as examples:—

O who can tell the sweets of May-day's morn,
To waken rapture in a feeling mind,
When the gilt East unveils her dappled dawn,
And the gay wood-lark has its nest resigned,
As slow the sun creeps up the hill behind;
Moon reddening round, and daylight's spotless hue,
As seemingly with rose and lily lined;
While all the prospect round beams fair to view,
Like a sweet Spring flower with its unsullied dew.

Ah, often, brushing through the dripping grass,
Has he been seen to catch this early charm,
List'ning to the "love song" of the healthy lass
Passing with milk-pail on her well-turned arm,
Or meeting objects from the rousing farm—
The jingling plough-teams driving down the steep
Waggon and cart, and shepherd dog's alarm,
Raising the bleatings of unfolding sheep,
As o'er the mountain top the red sun 'gins to peep.

The first volume contains also a poem entitled “William and Robin," of which Mr. Taylor says in his "Introduction:"—"The pastoral, 'William and Robin,' one of

Clare's earliest efforts, exhibits a degree of refinement and elegant sensibility which many persons can hardly believe a poor uneducated clown could have possessed: the delicacy of one of the lovers towards the object of his attachment is as perfectly inborn and unaffected as if he were a Philip Sidney."

Among the minor pieces of the "Village Minstrel" are the following, which are given as additional illustrations—the first of Clare's descriptive and the latter of his amatory manner:—

The Evening Hours.

The sultry day it wears away,
And o'er the distant leas
The mist again, in purple stain,
Falls moist on flower and trees:
His home to find, the weary hind
Glad leaves his carts and ploughs;
While maidens fair, with bosoms bare,
Go coolly to their cows.

The red round sun his work has done,
And dropp'd into his bed;
And sweetly shin'd the oaks behind
His curtains fringed with red:
And step by step the night has crept,
And day, as loth, retires;
But clouds, more dark, night's entrance mark,
Till day's last spark expires.

Pride of the vales, the nightingales
Now charm the oaken grove;
And lond and long, with amorous tongue,
They try to please their love:
And where the rose reviving blows
Upon the swelter'd bower,
I'll take my seat, my love to meet,
And wait th' appointed hour.

And like the bird, whose joy is heard
Now he his love can join,
Who hails so loud the even's shroud,
I'll wait as glad for mine:
As weary bees o'er parched leas
Now meet reviving flowers,
So on her breast I'll sink to rest,
And bless the evening hours.

I LOVE THEE, SWEET MARY.

I love thee, sweet Mary, but love thee in fear;
Were I but the morning breeze, healthful and airy,
As thou goest a-walking I'd breathe in thine ear,
And whisper and sigh, how I love thee, my Mary!

I wish but to touch thee, but wish it in vain;
Wert thou but a streamlet, a-winding so clearly,
And I little globules of soft dropping rain,
How fond would I press thy white bosom, my Mary!

I would steal a kiss, but I dare not presume;
Wert thou but a rose in thy garden, sweet fairy,
And I a bold bee for to rifle its bloom,
A whole Summer's day would I kiss thee, my Mary!

I long to be with thee, but cannot tell how;
Wert thou but the elder that grows by thy dairy,
And I the blest woodbine to twine on the bough,
I'd embrace thee and cling to thee ever, my Mary!

Mr. Taylor called at Helpstone in October, 1821, on his way from Retford to London, and published, in the "London Magazine" for the following month, an interesting and

genial account of his visit to Clare. While at Helpstone be urged Clare to accept an oft-repeated invitation to come to London and prolong his stay to a few weeks, but about this time the poet, always yearning after independence, became possessed with a longing to acquire a small freehold of about seven acres, which belonged to friends of his own who had mortgaged it to the amount of £200, and being unable to meet the interest thereupon were threatened with a foreclosure. The owners offered the property to Clare, who at once applied to his friends in London to sell out sufficient of the funded property to enable him to acquire it. His disappointment and mortification appear to have been very keen on learning that the funded property was vested in trustees who were restricted to paying the interest to him.

This resource having failed him, he offered to sell his writings to his publishers for five years for £2co. To this proposal Mr. Taylor replied on the 4th of February, 1822 "It will not be honourable in us to buy the interest in your poems for five years for £200. It may be worth more than that, which would be an injury to you, and a discredit to us; or less, which would be a loss to us. Besides, if the original mortgage was for £200, it is not that sum which would redeem it now. Many expenses have been created by these money-lenders, all which must be satisfied before the writings would be given up. It is meddling with a wasp's nest to interfere rashly. I am happy that Lord Milton has taken the writings, to look them over. He may be able to do some good, and to keep your friends the Billingses in their

little estate, but I fear it is not possible for you to do it without incurring fresh risks, and encountering such dangers from the want of sufficient legal advice as would be more than you would get through." Clare had set his heart upon accomplishing this little scheme; his failure to compass it weighed upon his mind, and for a time he sought an alleviation of his unhappiness in the society of the Blue Bell and among hilarious friends at Stamford.

Clare paid a second visit to London in May, 1822, and was again hospitably entertained by his publishers, at whose house he met several literary men of note, whose friendship he afterwards enjoyed for years. Among these were Charles Lamb, Thomas llood, H. F. Cary, Allan Cunningham, George Darley, and others; but his most frequent companion in town would appear to have been Rippingille, the painter, to whom he was introduced. ai the house of Mrs. Emmerson. Clare was assured by that lady that he would find Mr. Rippingille an excellent and discreet young man, but there is reason to suspect that "friend Rip," as he was called by his intimates, had carefully concealed some of his foibles. from Mrs. Emmerson, for he and Clare had several not very creditable drinking bouts, and were not particular in the class of entertainments which they patronized.

After Clare had returned to Helpstone and Rippingille to Bristol, where he lived for several years, the latter

repeatedly urged his poet-friend to visit him, and this is the way in which the amusing rattlepate wrote:—

"My dear Johnny Clare,—I am perfectly sure that I sha'nt be able to write one word of sense, or spin out one decent thought. If the old Devil and the most romping of his imps had been dancing, and jostling, and running stark mad amongst the delicate threads and fibres of my brain, it could not be in a worse condition, but I am resolved to write in spite of the Devil, my stars, and want of brains, for all of which I have most excellent precedents and examples, and sound orthodox authority, so here goes. To-night; but what is to-night? 'Twas last night, my dear Johnny. I was up till past five this morning, during which time I was stupid enough to imbibe certain potions of porter, punch, moselle, and madeira, that have been all day long uniting their forces in fermenting and fuming, and bubbling and humming.

* * * Are you coming, Clare, or are you going to remain until all the fine weather is gone, and then come and see nothing? Or do you mean to come at all Now is your time, if you do. You will just be in time for the fair, which begins on the 1st of September and lasts ten days. And most glorious fun it is, I can tell you. Crowds, tribes, shoals, and natives of all sorts! I looked at the standings the other night, and thought of you. Will he come, said I? D—n the fellow! Nothing can move him. There he sticks, and there he will stick. Will none but a draggle-tailed muse suit him?

His evening devotions and matins
Both addressed to a muse that wears pattens:
A poet that kneels in the bogs,
Where his muse can't go out without clogs,
Or stir without crushing the frogs!

—Old Play.

Where toads die of vapours and hip,
And tadpoles of ague and pip.

—Old Play.

Give 'em all, my dear Johnny, the slip,
And at once take to Bristol a trip.
By G—, you should come, and you must.
Do you mean I should finish your bust?
If you don't, stay away and be cussed!

My muse is taken a little qualmish, therefore pray excuse her. She is a well-meaning jade, and if it was not for the wild treatment she received last night would, I have no doubt, have given you a very polite invitation, but I fear, Johnny, nothing will move you. Your heart is as hard as an overseer's. I dined at Elton's two days ago. We talked about you, wondered if you would come, feared not, regretted it, and the loss of the fine weather, and the fine scenery, and the other fine things: in fine, we lamented finely. Come and cheer our hearts. Bring Patty and all the little bardettes, if you will. We will find room for them somewhere. I have read only my introductory lecture yet, so that you may hear 'em or read 'em all, if you like. Having thrown my bread upon the waters, where I hope it will be found after many

days, I take my leave, my dear Clare, in the full hope I shall see you by the 1st of September. Write to me by return, saying what day you will be here.

"Yours for ever and after,

"E. V. RIPPINGILLE.'

Clare visited Charles Lamb, and received from him the following characteristic letter after his return to Helpstone: —

"India House, 31st Aug., 1822.

"Dear Clare,—I thank you heartily for your present. I am an inveterate old Londoner, but while I am among your choice collections I scem to be native to them and free of the country. The quantity of your observation has astonished me. What have most pleased me have been 'Recollections after a Ramble,' and those 'Grongar Hill' kind of pieces in eight-syllable lines, my favourite measure, such as 'Cowper Hill' and 'Solitude.' In some of your story-telling ballads the provincial phrases sometimes startle me. I think you are too profuse with them. In poetry, *slang* of every kind is to be avoided. There is a rustick Cockneyism as little pleasing as ours of London. Transplant Arcadia to Helpstone. The true rustic style, the Arcadian English, I think is to be found in Shenstone. Would his 'Schoolmistress,' the prettiest of

poems, have been better if he had used quite the Goody's own language? Now and then a home rusticism is fresh and startling, but where nothing is gained in expression it is out of tenor. It may make folks smile and stare, but the ungenial coalition of barbarous with refined phrases will prevent you in the end from being so generally tasted as you deserve to be. Excuse my freedom, and take the same liberty with my *puns.*

"I send you two little volumes of my spare hours. They are of all sorts. There's a Methodist hymn for Sundays, and a farce for Saturday night. Pray give them a place on your shelf, and accept a little volume of which I have duplicate, that I may return in equal number to your welcome present.

"I think I am indebted to you for a sonnet in the 'London for August.

"Since I saw you I have been in France and have eaten frogs. The nicest little rabbity things you ever tasted. Do look about for them. Make Mrs. Clare pick off the bind quarters; boil them plain with parsley and butter. The fore quarters are not so good. She may let them hop off by themselves.

Yours sincerely,

"CHAS. LAMB."

During his second visit to London, Clare became for a few days the guest of Mr. Cary, at Chiswick. Here, it is said, he wrote several amorous sonnets in praise of Cary's wife, and presented them to the lady, who passed them on to her husband. The learned translator of Dante requested an explanation, which Clare at once gave. The circumstance that Cary corresponded with Clare for at least ten years afterwards will enable the reader to form his own estimate of the importance of the incident. Among Cary's letters were the following:-

"Chiswick, London,

Jany, 3rd, 1822.

Many happy years to you, dear Clare.

"Do not think because I have not written to you sooner that I have forgot you. I often think of you in that walk we took here together, and which I take almost every day, generally alone, sometimes musing of absent friends and at others putting into English those old French verses which I dare say sometimes occasion you to cry Pish-(I hope you vent your displeasure in such innocent terms)-when turning over the pages of the magazine. I was much pleased with a native strain of yours, signed, I remember, 'Percy Green.' Mr. Taylor can tell you that I enquired with much earnestness after the author of it (it was the first with that signature), not knowing it to be yours, and what pleasure it

gave me to find it was so. I am glad to find a new Shepherd's Calendar advertised with your name. You will no doubt bring before us many objects in Nature that we have often seen in her but never before in books, and that in verse of a very musical construction. There are two things, I mean description of natural objects taken from the life, and a sweet melodious versification, that particularly please me in poetry; and these two you can command if you choose. Of sentiment I do not reck so much. Your admiration of poets I felt most strongly earlier in life, and have still a good deal of it left, but time deadens that as well as many of our other pleasantest feelings. Still, I had rather pass my time in such company than in any other, and the poetical part of my library is increasing above all proportion above the rest. This you may think a strange confession for me in my way of life to make, but whatever one feels strongly impelled to, provided it be not wrong in itself and can administer any benefit or pleasure to others, I am inclined to think is the task allotted to one, and thus I quiet my conscience about the matter. I did'nt intend to make you my father confessor when I set out, but now it is done I hope you will grant me absolution.

"Believe me, dear Clare,

"Ever sincerely yours,

"H. F. CARY."

"Chiswick, April 12th, 1823.

"Dear Clare,- * * *

"Chiswick, April 12th, 1823. "Have you visited the haunts of poor Cowper which you were invited to see? And if so, what accord- ance did you find between the places and his descriptions of them? What a glory it is for poetry that it can make any piece of trumpery an object of curiosity and interest! I had the pleasure of meeting last week with Mr. Words- worth. He is no piece of trumpery, but has all the appearance of being that noblest work, an honest man. I think I scarcely ever met with any one eminent for genius who had not also something very amiable and engaging in his manners and character. In Mr. Words- worth I found much frankness and fervour. The first impression his countenance gave me was one which I did not receive from Chantrey's bust of him that of his being a very benevolent man. Have you seen Barry Cornwall's new volume? He is one of the best writers of blank verse we have, but I think blauk verse is not much in favour with you. The rhyme that is now in fashion ruus rather too wild to please me. It seems to want pruning and nailing up. A sonnet, like a rose tree may be allowed to grow straggling, but a long poem should be trained into some order. * * * I hope you and your family have got well through this hard winter. Mrs. Cary, who has hitherto almost. uniformly enjoyed good

health, has suffered much from it. She and the rest of my family join in kind remem- brances to you with, dear Clare,

"Yours sincerely,

"H. F. CARY."

"Chiswick, London, February 19th, 1825.

"My dear Clare,

"I have been reproaching myself some time for not answering your last letter sooner, and as I am telling my congregation this Lent that it is no use to reproach oneself for one's sins if one does not amend them, I will mend this. I will freely own I should not have felt the same compunction if you had been in health and spirits, but when I find you so grievously complaining of the want of both, I cannot leave you any longer without such poor comfort as a line or two from me can give. I wish I were a doctor, and a skilful one, for your sake. I mean a doctor of medicine. For though I were a doctor of divinity I doubt I could recommend to you no better prescription in that way than I can as plain Mister. Nay, it is one that any old woman in your parish could hit upon as readily as myself, and that is, patience and submission to a Will that is higher and wiser than our own. How often have I stood in need of it myself, and with what difficulty have I swallowed it, and how hard

have I found it to keep on my stomach! May you, my friend, have better success! If you do not want it in one way you are sure to have occasion for it before long in some other. If you should be raised up from this sickness, as I trust you will, do not suppose but that you will have something else to try you. This, you will say, is not a very cheering prospect, but remember these lines in Crowe's poem, which you so justly admire:

> "T is meet we jostle with the world, content,
> If by our Sovereigu Master we be found
> At last not profitless.

What follows, I fear neither you nor I have philosophy enough to add with sincerity-

> For worldly meed,
> Given or withheld, I deem of it alîke.

I will read the memoir of yourself which you purpose sending me, and not fail to tell you if I think you have spoken of others with more acrimony than you ought. There is no occasion for sending me with it your new publication. I shall get it as I have those before. I hope the last chapter of your memoir, if brought up to the present it me, will record your children's having got safely over the small pox, of which you express apprehensions in your last letter. We have got well through the winter hitherto. For want of better em- ployment I have been teaching my youngest boy Dicky

to write. Perhaps you will think me not over well qualified for so importaut an office, but I assure you when I have two parallel lines ruled at proper distances I can produce something like a copy. To teach others is no bad way to learn one's self. In spite of the floggings which I had at school, 1 could never learn that grammar for which you have so great an aversion, thoroughly, till I began to instruct my own son in it, but then I made a wonderful progress. I should not succeed so well in collecting ferns. A physician once recommended to me the study of botany for the good of my health, but he had published an edition of Linnæus. Another prescribed to me port wine, but, poor man, he soon fell a martyr to his own system. In such matters common sense and one's own inclination are the best guides. Mrs. C. and your other acquaintances here remember you kindly. I am, dear Clare, with best wishes for yourself and family,

"Your affectionate friend,

"H. F. CARY."

"British Museum, April 13th, 1830.

"Dear Clare, I have waited some time to answer your letter, in hopes of being able to give you the infor- mation you require; but the information does not come, and I will wait no longer. I have not seen either Lamb or Wainwright since

last summer, when the former spent one day with me here, and another day we all three met at the house of the latter, who now resides in a place he has inherited from a relative at Turnham Green. Lamb is settled at Endfield, about seven miles from London, with his sister, who I fear is in a very indifferent state of health; so his friends see very little of him. * * * In this grand age of utility, I suppose it will soon be discovered that a piece of canvas is more advantageously employed as the door of a safe, where it will secure a joint of meat from the flies, than if it was covered with the finest hues that Titian or Rubens could lay upon it, and a piece of paper better disposed of in keeping the same meat from being burnt while it is roasting, than in preserving the idle fancies of a poet. No matter if it is so we must swim with the stream. You can employ yourself in cultivating your cabbages and in handling the hay fork, and I not quite so pleasantly in making catalogues of books. We will not be out of fashion, but show our- selves as useful as the rest of the world. In the mean- time we may smile at what is going forward, entertain ourselves with our own whims in private, and expect that the tide some day may turn. My family, whom you are so kind as to enquire about, are all well, and all following the order of the day, except one, who has set himself to perverting canvas from its proper use by smearing it over with certain colours, fair indeed to look upon, but quite void of utility. I ought indeed to have made another exception, which is, that they are multiplying much faster than Mr. Malthus would approve. Cowper says somewhere of those who make the world older

than the Bible accounts of it, that they have found out that He who made it and revealed its age to Moses was mistaken in the date. May it not be said of the auti-populationers that they virtually accuse him of as great ignorance in the command to multiply and replenish the earth? Well, you and I, Clare, have kept to this text. May we observe all the rest as well! which is so good a conclusion for a parson that I will say no more than that I am ever

"Yours truly,

"H. F. CARY.

"Mrs. C. is at Chiswick, but I can assure you of her good wishes."

"Dear Clare,— * * * You ask me for literary news. I have very little of a kind likely to interest you. Have you seen in the Edinburgh Review' au account of some poems by Elliot, a Sheffield workman? In his rhymes on the Corn Trade are not words that burn, but words that scald. In his Love there is a story told in a very affecting manner. In short they are the only new things I have been struck with for some time, and that before I knew who the writer was. I heard lately that our friend Mr. Lamb was very well, and his sister just recovered from one of those illnesses which she is often afflicted with. I have just sent to the press a

translation of an old Greek poet. I do not expect he will please you much, as he treats of little but charioteering, boxing, running, and some old heathenish stories. But I will send you a copy, not requiring you to read it. Mrs. C., if she were at my elbow, would, I am sure, desire to be kindly remembered to you.

Believe me, dear Clare,

"Sincerely yours,

"H. F. CARY.

"British Museum, Octr. 30th, 1832."

Clare remained in London for several weeks, at the end of which time he was suddenly recalled to Helpstone by alarming reports of the state of his wife's health. It is to be feared that in more respects than one this second visit to the metropolis had an unhealthy influence upon the poet's mind and habits. At this time he appears to have made very little effort to resist the pressing hospitality of his friends, and to have complied only too readily with the convivial customs of the time. He returned to Helpstone moody and discontented, and in his letters to Mrs. Emmerson he complained fretfully of the hardship of his lot in being compelled to spend his days without any literary companionship whatsoever. About this time. that lady wrote

to him two letters, which as illustrations of the style of her correspondence are here given :-

"20, Stratford Place, 17th June, 122.

My very dear Clare,-

"Your letter reached me this morning, and from the nature of its contents it leaves me nothing to express in reply but my sincere regrets that any necessity should have occurred to hasten your departure from London without our again seeing each other. I wish, my dear friend, you had expressed more fully the real cause of this sudden measure, for you leave me with many painful fears upon my mind for the safety of your dear wife, who I hope, ere this, has blessed you with a little namesake, and that she is doing well with the dear babe. I have also my own fears about yourself, your own health, your state of mind, your worldly interests, &c., but perhaps I am wrong to indulge in all these anxieties. Mr. Emmerson and myself had looked for days past with great solicitude for your return to us, and we had planned many little schemes for our mutual enjoyment while you were with us, but these, with many other matters with which my mind and heart were full, are now at an end, and God only knows when, or if ever, we may meet again; but of this be assured, as long as my friendship and correspondence are of value to you, you may com- mand

them. In our, alas, too short interviews we had some interesting conversations. These will not be forgotten by me, and I will hope on your return to your own dear cot you will take the earliest opportunity to write to your friend 'Emma. Tell her all that affects your happiness, and may you, my dear Clare, when restored to the calm delights of retirement, experience also the restoration of mental peace and every domestic blessing! Mr. E. desires his kindest regards to you, and his sincere regrets you could not spend a few days with him ere you quitted London. Our noble and dear friend [Lord Radstock] will also feel much disappointment at not seeing you again. This is not what we had hoped for and expected from your visit to Town. Yet let me not reproach you with unkindness, though I feel much, very much, at this moment. Mr. Rippingille spent last evening with us and took his final leave. He goes off for Bristol this afternoon. I have sent your silk handkerchief, with another for you, my dear Clare, as a trifling remembrance of your very sincere and attached friend,

"ELIZA L. EMMERSON.

"P. S. Please let me know as soon as you reach home of your safe arrival, and if the little stranger has entered this world of woe, and if she bears the name of E. L. Lord R, has just left me, and sends his kind regards, and regrets at not having the opportunity to see you in Portland-place. Farewell.

"'EMMA.'"

"Stratford Place, 26th June, 1822.

My very dear Friend,--If it is necessary to make au apology for writing to you again so soon, the only one. I shall attempt to make is that of offering you my sincere congratulations upon the birth of your sweet girl, Eliza Louisa, if I did not misunderstand you when you were in Town, and the certainty of which I wish to know in your next letter; also, if I may be allowed to stand godmother to my little namesake, and likewise if you have accepted the kind offer of Lord R. to become her noble godfather. You mention your dear wife in language that alarms and distresses me much for her safety. I hope in God, for your sake, and for the sake of your dear children, that all danger is over, and that she is now in a fair way to be speedily restored to you. Pardon me, my dear Clare, when I entreat you to do all in your power to comfort ant compose her mind under her present delicate situation. Recollect if she is now a faded flower she has become so under your influence, and well may you be loth to lose the object who has shed her brightest hues on you, and who in giving birth to your sweet offspring may chance to fade almost to nothingness herself. But this should serve to bind your affections still stronger to her. For- give me for talking thus to you, my dear Clare. I have no other motive than your

domestic happiness, which I anxiously pray may be undisturbed by any event. lament to learn by your letter that to stifle recollections of the past, &c., you should have fled to such resources on your journey home. Now you become the sufferer by such means. Why not exert your philosophy, instead of seeking that which serves to destroy your health and peace? You know, my dear Clare, that you are injuring yourself in the deepest sense by such habits. For God's sake, then, for your own dear children's sake, arm yourself with a determination, a fortitude, which would do honour to your excellent heart and good understanding, to fly from such a mode of consolation as from a poison that will quickly destroy you. Remember poor Burns! Let the solemn and affectionate warnings of your friend 'Emma' dissuade you, my dear Clare, from habits of incbriety. Independent of the loss of your health and mental powers, your moral character will be seriously injured by such means. You will charge me with preaching a sermon, I fear, and will be inclined to com- mit my good wishes to the flames, but you must not bate me for my counsel. I can readily suppose how the 'good Quaker would be shocked at your 'disguise,' and I heartily regret the event, altho' I honour your liberality and candour in telling me of it. I have not heard from our friend Rippingille, but expect to do so daily. When I write to him I will make known your wishes to corres- pond with him.

* * * You tell me you ‘have many things to say to me in future about your journey, &c., &c.' Pray do not be long, my dear Clare, ere you make such communications, with all else that concerns you, for I shall be most anxious

to hear good accounts of your dear wife and the sweet babe. Mr. E. desires me to say everything that is kind to you for him, as does our noble and dear friend. Heaven bless you, my dear Clare.

"Ever sincerely yours,

"'EMMA.'"

In 1823, Clare suffered from a long and serious illness; brought on, in all probability, by an insufficiency of food, and by mental anxiety caused by his inability to free himself from the importunity of creditors. During his illness he was visited by Mr. Taylor, who had come down to Stamford to attend the funeral of Mr. Gil- christ, and Mr. Taylor, shocked at the poet's appearance, procured for him at once the services of the principal physician in Peterborough.

Clare had also an excellent and warm-hearted friend in Mrs. Marsh, wife of the Bishop of Peterborough, who corresponded with him frequently, in a familiar and almost motherly manner, from 1821 to 1837. When Clare complained of indisposition, a messenger would be dispatched from "The Palace," with medicines or plais- ters, camphor lozenges, or "a pound of our own tea," with sensible advice as to personal habits and diet. At another

time hot-house grapes are sent, or the messenger bears toys for the children, or a magnifying glass to assist Clare in his observations in entomolgy, or books, or "three numbers of Cobbett's penny trash, which Mr. Clare may keep." One day Mrs. Marsh writes--" To show you how I wish to cheer you I am sending you cakes, as one does to children: they are harmless, so pray enjoy them, and write to tell me how you are." Engravings of the new chain piur are sent from Brighton, and on one occasion (in 1829) a steel pen was enclosed in a letter, as a great curiosity. Clare was on several occasions a visitor at the Bishop's Palace, and in July, 1831, Mrs. Marsh. wrote the following note, which confirms the impression received from the perusal of other letters, that about that time Clarc's mind had been much exercised with respect to his soul's health - My dear Mr. Clare,-I must take my leave, and in doing so must add that in thinking of you. it is my greatest comfort to know that you fix your trust where our only and never-failing trust rests." Lady Milton also frequently sent her humble neighbour presents suitable to his invalid condition.

Clare had not entirely recovered from this illness, when in May, 1824. he once more accepted the invita- tion of his publishers to visit London, They were desirous that he should have the benefit of the advice of Dr. Darling, the kind-hearted physician already men- tioned. On seeing him in Fleet-street Dr. Darling ordered that he should be kept perfectly free from excitement of all kinds, but at the end of two or three weeks lie was permitted to meet a literary party

composed chiefly of contributors to the "London Magazine." Among the guests were Coleridge, Lamb, De Quincey, Hazlitt, and Allan Cunningham. In the manuscript memoir to which reference has already been made, Clare noted down his impressions of Coleridge and others, and they are embodied in Mr. Martin's account of this visit. He was a frequent visitor to Mrs. Emmerson, and a few days before he left London was once more thrown into the society of Rippingille, who declared that he had left. Bristol solely for the purpose of meeting his friend. Clare, obeying implicitly the injunctions of Dr. Darling, declined all invitations to revelry, and therefore the com- panionship was less prejudicial to his health and spirits. than on the occasion of his former visit. At his publishers', Clare made the acquaintance of Mr. (after- wards Sir Charles) Elton, brother-in-law of Hallam, the historian, and uncle to the subject of "In Memoriam." Mr. Elton, who was a friend and patron of Rippingille, was much pleased with Clare, and while he was yet in London sent him from Clifton the following metrical epistle, which afterwards appeared in the "London Magazine." It contains several interesting touches of portraiture:—

So loth, friend John, to quit the town!
'T was in the dales thou won'st renown;
I would not, John, for half a crown,
Have left thee there,
Taking my lonely journey down

To rural air.

The pavement flat of endless street
Is all unsuited to thy feet,
The fog-wet smoke is all unmeet
For such as thou,
Who thought'st the meadow verdure sweet,
But think'st not now.

"Time's hoarse unfeather'd nightingales"[5]
Inspire not like the birds of vales:
I know their haunts in river dales,
On many a tree,
And they reserve their sweetest tales,
John Clare, for thee.

I would not have thee come to sing
Long odes to that eternal spring
On which young bards their changes ring,
With buds and flowers:
I look for many a better thing
Than brooks and bowers.

'T is true thou paintest to the eye
The straw-thatched roof with elm trees high,
But thou hast wisdom to descry
What lurks below—
The springing tear, the melting sigh,
The check's heart-glow.

The poets all, alive and dead,
Up, Clare, and drive them from thy head!
Forget whatever thou hast read
Of phrase or rhyme,
For he must lead and not be led
Who lives through time.

What thou hast been the world may see,
But guess not what thou still may'st be:
Some in thy lines a Goldsmith see,
Or Dyer's tone:
They praise thy worst; the best of thee
Is still unknown.

Some grievously suspect thee, Clare:
They want to know thy form of prayer:
Thou dost not cant, and so they stare,
And hint free-thinking:
They bid thee of the devil beware,
And vote thee sinking.

With smile sedate and patient eye,
Thou mark'st the zealots pass thee by
To rave and raise a hue and cry
Against each other:
Thou see'st a Father up on high;
In man a brother.

I would not have a mind like thine
Its artless childhood tastes resign,
Jostle in mobs, or sup and dine
Its powers away,
And after noisy pleasures pine
Some distant day.

And, John, though you may mildly scoff,
That hard, afflicting churchyard cough
Gives pretty plain advice, "Be off,
While yet you can,"
It is not time yet, John, to doff
Your outward man.

Drugs! can the balm of Gilead yield
Health like the cowslip-yellow'd field?
Come, sail down Avon and be heal'd,
Thou Cockney Clare.
My recipe is soon reveal'd—
Sun, sea, and air.

What glue has fastened thus thy brains
To kennel odours and brick lanes?
Or is it intellect detains?
For, faith, I'll own
The provinces must take some pains
To match the town.

Does *Agnus* [1] fling his crotchets wild—
"In wit a man," in heart a child?
Has *Lepus'* [2] sense thine ear beguiled
With easy strain?
Or hast thou nodded blithe, and smiled
At *Janus'* [3] vein?

Does *Nalla,* [4] that mild giant, bow
His dark and melancholy brow?
Or are his lips distending now
With roaring glee
That tells the heart is in a glow—
The spirit free?

Or does the *Opium-eater* [5] quell
Thy wondering sprite with witching spell?
Read'st thou the dreams of murkiest hell
In that mild mien?
Or dost thou doubt yet fear to tell
Such e'er have been?

And while around thy board the wine
Lights up the glancing eyeballs' shine,
Seest thou in elbow'd thought recline
The *Poet true* [6]
Who in "Colonna" seems divine
To me and you?

But, Clare, the birds will soon be flown:
Our Cambridge wit resumes his gown:
Our *English Petrarch* [7] trundles down
To Devon's valley:
Why, when our Maga 's out of town,
Stand shilly-shally?

The table-talk of London still
Shall serve for chat by rock and rill,
And you again may have your fill
Of season'd mirth,
But not if spade your chamber drill
Six feet in earth.

Come, then! Thou never saw'st an oak
Much bigger than a waggon spoke:
Thou only could'st the Muse invoke
On treeless fen:
Then come and aim a higher stroke,
My man of men.

The wheel and oar, by gurgling steam,
Shall waft thee down the wood-brow'd stream,
And the red channel's broadening gleam
Dilate thy gaze,
And thou shalt conjure up a theme
For future lays.

And thou shalt have a jocund cup
To wind thy spirits gently up—
A stoup of hock or claret cup
Once in a way,
And we 'll take notes from *Mistress Gupp* [8]
That same glad day.

And *Rip Van Winkle* [9] shall awake
From his loved idlesse for thy sake,
In earnest stretch himself, and take
Pallet on thumb,
Nor now his brains for subjects rake—
John Clare is come!

His touch will, hue by hue, combine
Thy thoughtful eyes, that steady shine,
The temples of Shakesperian line,
The quiet smile,
The sense and shrewdness which are thine,
Withouten guile.

The following key accompanied the letter on its publication:-

1. *Agnus*—Charles Lamb.
2. *Lepus*—Julius Hare, author of "Guesses at Truth."
3. *Janus*—The writer in the "London Magazine" who signed himself Janus Weathercock.
4. *Nalla*—Allan Cunningham.
5. *Opium-eater*—De Quincey, author of "The Confessions of an English Opium-eater."
6. *The Poet true*—The writer who assumes the name of Barry Cornwall.
7. *The English Petrarch*—The Rev. Mr. Strong, translator of Italian sonnets.
8. *Mistress Gupp*—A lady immortalized by her invention to keep muffins warm on the lid of the tea-urn.
9. *Rip Van Winkle*—E. V. Rippingille, painter of the "Country Post Office," the "Portrait of a Bird," &c.

The friendship of Allan Cunningham was always highly prized by Clare, and shortly after his return from London he sent him an autograph of Bloomfield, the receipt of which Cunningham acknowledged in the following letter:—

"27, Belgrave-place, 23rd September, 1824.

"Dear Clare,—I thank you much for Bloomfield's note, and as much for your own kind letter. I agree with you in the praise you have given to his verse. That he has living life about his productions there can be little doubt, He trusts too much to Nature and to truth to be a fleet- ing favourite, and he will be long in the highway where Fame dispenses her favours. I have often felt indignant at the insulting way his name has been introduced both by critics and poets. To scorn bim because of the humility of his origin is ridiculous anywhere, and most of all here, where so many of our gentles and nobles. have come from the clods of the valley. Learned men make many mistakes about the value of learning. I conceive it is chiefly valuable to a man's genius in enabling him to wield his energies with greater readiness. or with better effect. But learning, though a polisher and a refiner, is not the creator. It may be the mould out of which genius stamps its coin, but it is not the gold itself. * * * I am glad to hear that you are a little better. Keep up your heart and sing only when you feel the internal impulse, and you will add something to our poetry more lasting than any of the peasant bards of old England have done yet.

"I remain, dear Clare, your very faithful friend,

"ALLAN CUNNINGHAM."

George Darley, another member of the "London" brotherhood, conceived a sincere regard for Clare, and frequently wrote to him. He was author of several dramı-atic poems, and of numerous works on mathematics, and was besides a candidate for the Professorship of English Literature at the founding of the London University. The following are among the more entertaining of the letters which he addressed to the poet :-

"Friday, March 2-27,

5, Upper Eaton-st, Grosvenor-place.

"My dear Clare,--You see in what a brotherly way I commence my letter: not with the frigid Sir,' as if I were addressing one of a totally unkindred clay, one of the drossy children of earth, with whom I have no relationship, and feel I could never have any familiarity. * * * Have you ever felt that the presence of a man without feeling made you a fool? I am always dumb, or pusillanimous, or (if I speak) ridicu- lous, in the company of such a person. I love a reasoner, and do not by any means wish to be flashing lightning, cloud-riding, or playing with stars. But a marble-hearted companion, who, if you should by chance give way to an impetuous fancy, or an extravagant imagination, looks at you with a dead fish's eye, and asks you to write the name under your picture-I

would as soon ride in a post chaise with a lunatic, or sleep with a corse. Never let me see the sign of such a man over an alehouse! It would fright me away sooner than the report of a mad dog or a scolding landlady, I would as soon enter the house if it hung out a pestle and mortar. The fear of a drug in my posset would not repel me so inevitably as the horror with which I should contemplate the frost-bitten face of a portrait such as I have described. But perhaps with all your feeling you will think my heart somewhat less. sound than a ripe medlar, if it be so unhealthily sensitive as what I have said appears to indicate. There is, I grant, as in all other things, a mean which ought to be observed. Recollect, however, I am not an Englishman. [Darley was an Irishman.] I should have auswered your letter long since, without waiting for your poenis, in order to say something handsome upon them, but have been so occupied with a myriad of affairs that I have scarcely had a moment to sleep in. It is now long, long past mid- night, and all is as silent around my habitation as if it were in the midst of a forest, or the plague had depopu- lated London. After a day's hard labour at mathematical operations and corrections I sit down to write to you these hasty and, I fear, almost unreadable lines. Will you excuse them for the promise of something better when I have more leisure to be point-device? Your opinion of my geometry was very grateful, chiefly as it confirmed my own-that there has been a great deal too much baby-making of the English people by those who pretend to instruct them in science. These persons write upon the Goody-two-shoes plan, and seem to look

upon their readers as infants who have not yet done drivelling. To improve the reason is quite beside their purpose; they merely design to titillate the fancy or provide talking matter for village oracles. In not one of their systems do I perceive a regular progression of reasoning whereby the mind may be led, from truth to truth, to knowledge, as we ride step by step up to a fair temple on a goodly hill of prospect. They jumble together heaps of facts, the most wonder-striking they can get, which may indeed be said to confound the imagination by their variety; but there is no ratiocinative dependence between them, nor are they referred to demonstrative principles, which would render people knowledgible, as well as knowing, of them. Each is a syllabus indeed, but not a science. It tells many things but teaches, none. There is little merit due to me for perceiving this error, and none for avoiding it. * * * Algebra is the only true arithmetic. The latter is founded on the former in almost all its rules, and one is just as easily learned as the other. * * * If arithmetic be to be taught rationally it must be taught algebraically. With half the pains that a learner takes to make himself master of the rule of three and fractions, he would acquire as much algebra as would render every rule in arithmetic as easy as chalking to an inn-keeper. I am apt to speak in the King Cambyses' vein, but you understand what I wish to convey. As to the continuation of the " Lives of the Poets," it is a work sadly wanting, but I am not the person to supply the desideratum, even were my power equal to the deed. Criticisin is abomination in my sight. It is

fit only for the headsmen and hangmen of literature, fellows who live by the agonies and death of others. You will say this is not the criticism you mean, and that there is a different species (the only genuine and estimable species) which has an eye to beauty rather than defect, and which delights in glorifying true poetry rather than debating it. Aye, but have you ever considered how much harder it is to praise than to censure piquantly? I should ever be running into the contemptuous or abusive style, as I did in the "Letters to Dramatists." Besides, even in the best of poets, Shakspeare and Milton, how much is there justly condemnable? Ou the inferior luminaries. I should have to be continually pointing out spots and blemishes. In short, as a vocation I detest criticism. It is a species of fratricide with me, for I never can help cutting, slashing, pinking, and carbonado- ing a most unnatural office for one of the brotherhood, one who presumes to enrol himself among those whom he conspires with the Jeffreys and Jerdans to mangle and destroy. It is a Cain-like profession, and I deserve to be branded, and condemned to wander houseless over the world, if ever I indulge the murderous propensity to criticism. I was sorry to hear from Taylor yesterday that you were not in good health. What can be the matter with you, so healthfully situated and employed? Me- thinks you should live the life of an oak-tree or a sturdy elm, that groans in a storm, but only for pleasure. Do you meditate too much or sit too immovably? * * * * *
Poetry, I mean the composition of it, does not always sweeten the mind as much as the reading of it. There is

always an anxiety, a fervour, an impatience, a vaingloriousness attending it which untrau- quillizes even in the sweetest-seeming moods of the poet. Like the bee, he is restless and uneasy even in collecting his sweets.

* * *

"Farewell, my dear Clare, and when you have leisure and inclination write to me again.

* * * *

"Sincerely yours,

"GEORGE DARLEY."

"London, 5 Upper Eaton-st., Grosvenor-place,

"March 14th, 1829.

"My dear Clare,-You have been reproaching me, I dare say, for my long neglect of your last letter, but you might have saved yourself that trouble, as my own conscience has scourged me repeatedly these two months about it. The truth is I have been a good deal harassed in several ways, and now sit down, in the midst of a headache, to write, when I can hardly tell which end of my pen is paper-wards. I will attempt, however, to return your questions legible if not intelligible answers. There have been so many

Pleasures' of so-and-so that I should almost counsel you against baptizing your poem on Spring the ‘Pleasures of anything. Besides, when a poem is so designated it is almost assuredly prejudged as deficient in action (about which you appear solicitous). The Pleasures of Spring, from you, identified as you are with descriptive poesy, would almost without doubt sound in the public ear as an announcement of a series of literary scene paintings. Beautiful as these may be, and certainly would be from your pencil, there is a deadness about them which tends to chill the reader: he must be animated with something of a livelier prospect, or, as Hamlet says of Polonius, he sleeps. It may be affirmed without hesitation that, however independent of description a drama may be, no descriptive poem is independent of something like dramatic spirit to give it interest with human beings. How dull a thing would even the great descriptive poem of the Creation be without Adam and Eve, their history and hapless fall, to enliven it! But I cannot see why you should not infuse a dramatic spirit into your poem on Spring, which is only the development of the living principle in Nature. See how full of life those descriptive scenes in the 'Mid- summer Night's Dream' and the Winter's Tale' are. Characters may describe the beauties or qualities of Spring just as well as the author, and nothing prevents a story going through the season, so as to gather up flowers and point out every beautiful feature in the landscape on its way. Thomson has a little of this, but not enough. Imagine his Lavinia spread out into a longer story, incidents and descriptions perpetually relieving each other!

Imagine this, and you have a model for your poem. Allan Ramsay's Gentle Shepherd' would be still better, only that his poem is cast into actual drainatic characters. Besides, though with plenty of feeling and a good deal of homestead poetry, he wants imagination, elegance, and a certain scorn of mere earth, which is essential to the constitution of a true poet. You want none of these, but you want his vivacity, character, and action: I mean to say you have not as yet exhibited these qualities. The hooks with which you have fished for praise in the occan of literature have not been garnished with live bait, and none of us can get a bite without it. How few read *Comus' who have the 'Corsair by heart! Why? Because the former, which is almost dark with the excessive bright of its own glory, is deficient in human passions and emotions, while the latter possesses these although little else.

"Your sincere friend and brother poct,

"GEORGE DARLEY."

It was on the occasion of his third visit to London that Dr. Darling exacted from Clare the promise, already referred to, that he would observe the strictest moderation in driuking, and if possible abstain altogether. kept his word, but his domestic difficulties remaining unabated he suffered much, not only from physical weak- ness but from melancholy

forebodings which were destined to be only too completely realized. He made many ineffectual attempts to obtain employment in the neigh- bourhood of Helpstone, and it is especially to be regretted that his applications, first to the Marquis of Exeter's steward and then to Earl Fitzwilliam's, for the situation of gardener were unsuccessful, because the employment. would have been congenial to his tastes, and the wages, added to his annuities, would have been to him a competence.

During the years 1824-25 Clare kept a diary, which, for those who desire to know the man as well as the poet, is full of interest, on account of the side-lights which it throws upon his character, and also upon his pursuits during this period of involuntary leisure. The following extracts are selected :-

September 7, 1824.-I have read "Foxe's Book of Martyrs and finished it to-day, and the sum of my opinion is, that tyranny and cruelty appear to be the inseparable companions of religious power, and the aphorism is not far from truth that says "all priests are the same."

September 11. Wrote an essay to-day on the sexual system of plants, and began one on the fungus tribe. and on mildew, blight, &c., intended for "A Natural History of Helpstone," in a series of letters to Hessey, who will publish it when finished. Received a kind letter from C. A. Elton.

September 12. Finished another page of my life. I have read the first chapter of Genesis, the beginning of which is very fine, but the sacred historian took a great deal upon credit for this world when he imagined that God created the sun, moon, and stars, those mysterious hosts of heaven, for no other purpose than its use. It is a harmless and universal propensity to magnify consequences that pertain to ourselves, and it would be a foolish thing to test Scripture upon these groundless assertions, for it contains the best poetry and the best morality in the world.

September 19. Read snatches of several poets and the Song of Solomon: thought the supposed allusions in that luscious poem to our Saviour very overstrained, far-fetched, and conjectural. It appears to me an Eastern love poem, and nothing further, but an over-heated religious fancy is strong enough to fancy anything. I think the Bible is not illustrated by that supposition : though it is a very beautiful poem it seems nothing like a prophetic one, as it is represented to be.

September 22. Very ill, and did nothing but ponder over a future existence, and often brought up the lines to my memory said to have been uttered by an unfortunate nobleman when on the brink of it, ready to take the plunge—

> In doubt I lived, in doubt I die,
> Nor shrink the dark abyss to try,

But undismayed I meet eternity."

The first line is natural enough, but the rest is a rash courage in such a situation.

September 23. A wet day: did nothing but nurse. my illness: could not have walked out had it been fine. Very disturbed in conscience about the troubles of being forced to endure life and die by inches, and the anguish of leaving my children, and the dark porch of eternity, whence none return to tell the tale of their reception.

September 24.-Tried to walk out and could not : have read nothing this week, my mind almost over- weighting me with its upbraidings and miseries: my children very ill, night and morning, with a fever, makes me disconsolate, and yet how happy must be the death of a child! It bears its sufferings with an innocent patience that maketh man ashamed, and with it the future is nothing but returning to sleep, with the thought, no doubt, of waking to be with its playthings again.

September 29.—Took a walk in the fields: saw an old wood stile taken away from a familiar spot which it had occupied all my life. The posts were overgrown with ivy, and it seemed akin to nature and the spot where it stood, as though it had taken it on lease for an undis- turbed existence. It hurt me to see it was gone, for my affections claim a friendship with such things; but nothing is lasting in this world. Last

year Langley Bush was destroyed-an old white-thorn that had stood for more than a century, full of fame. The gipsies, shepherds, and herdsmen all had their tales of its history, and it will be long ere its memory is forgotten.

October 8.-Very ill to-day and very unhappy. My three children are all unwell. Had a dismal dream of being in hell this is the third time I have had such a dream. As I am more than ever convinced that I cannot recover I will make a memorandum of my temporal concerns, for next to the spiritual they ought to be attended to for the sake of those left behind. I will insert them in No. 5 in the Appendix.

October 9.- Patty has been to Stamford, and brought me a letter from Ned Drury, who came from Lincoln to the mayor's feast on Thursday. It revives old recollec- tions. Poor fellow he is an odd one, but still my recollections are inclined in his favour. What a long way to come to the mayor's feast! I would not go one mile after it to hear the din of knives and forks, and to see a throng of blank faces about me, chattering and stuffing, "that boast no more expression than a muffin."

October 12. Began to teach a poor lame boy the common rules of arithmetic, and find him very apt and willing to learn.

October 16.-Wrote two more pages of my life find it not so easy as I at first imagined, as I am anxious to give an

undisguised narrative of facts, good and bad. In the last sketch which I wrote for Taylor I had little vanities about me to gloss over failings which I shall now take care to lay bare, and readers, if they ever are published, to comment upon as they please. In my last four years I shall give my likes and dislikes of friends and acquaintances as free as I do of myself.

December 25-Christmas Day: gathered a handful of daisies in full bloom; saw a woodbine and dogrose in the woods putting out in full leaf, and a primrose root full of ripe flowers. What a day this used to be when I was a boy! How eager I used to be to attend the church to see it stuck with evergreens (emblems of eternity), and the cottage windows, and the picture ballads on the wall, all stuck with ivy, holly, box, and yew! Such feelings are past, and “all this world is proud of."

January 7, 1825.-Bought some cakes of colours with the intention of trying to make sketches of curious snail horns, butterflies, moths, sphinxes, wild flowers, and whatever my wanderings may meet with that are not too common.

January 19. Just completed the 9th chapter of my life. Corrected the poem on the "Vanities of the World," which I have written in imitation of the old poets, on whom I mean to father it, and send it to Montgomery's paper "The Iris," or the "Literary Chronicle, under that character.

February 26. Received a letter in rhyme from a John Pooley, who ran me tenpence further in debt, as I had not money to pay the postage.

March 6. Parish officers are modern savages, as the following fact will testify" Crowland Abbey.-Certain surveyors have lately dug up several foundation stones of the Abbey, and also a great quantity of stone coffins, for the purpose of repairing the parish roads."-Stamford Mercury.

March 9.—I had a very odd dream last night, and take it as an ill omen, for I don't expect that the book will meet a better fate. I thought I had one of the proofs of the new poems from London, and after looking at it awhile it shrank through my hands like sand, and crumbled into dust. The birds were singing in Oxey Wood at six o'clock this evening as loud and various as in May.

March 31 Artis and Henderson came to see me, and we went to see the Roman station agen Oxey Wood, which he says is plainly Roman.

April 16. Took a walk in the fields, bird-nesting and botanizing, and had like to have been taken up as a poacher in Hilly Wood, by a meddlesome, conceited gamekeeper belonging to Sir John Trollope. He swore that he had seen me in the act, more than once, of shooting game, when I never shot even so much as a sparrow in my life. What

terrifying rascals these wood. keepers and gamekeepers are! They make a prison. of the forest, and are its gaolers.

April 18.-Resumed my letters on Natural History in good earnest, and intend to get them finished with this year, if I can get out into the fields, for I will insert nothing but what has come under my notice.

May 13 Met with an extraordinary incident to-day, while walking in Openwood. I popt unawares on an old fox and her four young cubs that were playing about. She saw me, and instantly approached towards me growl- ing like an angry dog. I had no stick, and tried all I could to fright her by imitating the bark of a fox-hound, which only irritated her the more, and if I had not retreated a few paces back she would have seized me: when I set up an haloo she started.

May 25 I watched a bluecap or blue titmouse feeding her young, whose nest was in a wall close to an orchard. She got caterpillars out of the blossoms of the apple trees and leaves of the plum. She fetched 120 caterpillars in half an hour. Now suppose she only feeds. them four times a day, a quarter of an hour each time, she fetched no less than 480 caterpillars.

May 28. Found the old frog in my garden that has been there four years. I know it by a mark which it received from my spade four years ago. I thought it would die of the wound, so I turned it up on a bed of flowers at the end of

the garden, which is thickly covered with ferns and bluebells. I am glad to see it has recovered.

June 3.-Finished planting my auriculas: went a- botanizing after ferns and orchises, and caught a cold in the wet grass, which has made me as bad as ever. Got the tune of "Highland Mary" from Wisdom Smith, a gipsy, and pricked another sweet tune without name as he fiddled it.

June 4. Saw three fellows at the end of Royce Wood, who I found were laying out the plan for an iron railway from Manchester to London. It is to cross over Round Oak spring by Royce Wood corner for Woodcroft Castle. I little thought that fresh intrusions would interrupt and spoil my solitudes. After the enclosure they will despoil a boggy place that is famous for orchises at Royce Wood end.

June 23. Wrote to Mrs. Emmerson and sent a letter to "Hone's Every-day Book," with a poem which I fathered on Andrew Marvell.

July 12.-Went to-day to see Artis: found him busy over his antiquities and fossils. He told me a curious thing about the manner in which the golden-crested wren builds her nest he says it is the only English bird that suspends its nest, which it hangs on three twigs of the fir brauch, and it glues the eggs at the bottom of the nest, with the gum out of the tree, to keep them from being thrown out by the wind, which often turns them upside down without injury.

August 21.-Received a letter from Mr. Emmerson which tells me that Lord Radstock died yesterday. He was the best friend I have met with. Though he possessed too much simple-heartedness to be a fashionable friend or hypocrite, yet it often led him to take hypocrites for honest friends and to take an honest man for a hypocrite.

September 11. Went to meet Mr. and Mrs. Emmerson at the New Inn at Deeping, and spent three days with them.

From "No. 5 in the Appendix."I will set down before I forget it a memorandum to say that I desire Mrs. Emmerson will do just as she pleases with any MSS. of mine which she may have in her possession, to publish them or not as she chooses; but I desire that any living names mentioned in my letters may be filled up by * * and all objectionable passages omitted- a wish which I hope will be invariably complied with by all. I also intend to make Mr. Emmerson one of the new executors in my new will. I wish to lie on the north side of the churchyard, about the middle of the ground, where the morning and evening sun can linger the long- est on my grave. I wish to have a rough unhewn stone, something in the form of a mile stone, [sketched in the margin] so that the playing boys may not break it in their heedless pastimes, with nothing more on it than this inscription "Here rest the hopes and ashes of John Clare." I desire that no date be inserted thereon, as I wish it to live or die with my poems and other writings, which if they have merit with posterity it will, and if they have not it

is not worth preserving. October 8th, 1824. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

The "Artis" and "Henderson" referred to in the Diary were respectively butler and head gardener at Milton Park. Artis made a name for himself as the discoverer of extensive Roman remains at Castor, the ancient Durobrivæ, of which he published a description, and Henderson was an accomplished botanist and ento- mologist. Their uniform kindness to the poor poct did them great honour.

While Clare was amusing himself by rhyming in the manner of the poets of the seventeenth century, he had the following correspondence with James Montgomery :-

"Helpstone, January 5, 1825.

"My dear Sir, I copied the following verses from a MS. on the fly-leaves of an old book entitled 'The World's Best Wealth, a Collection of Choice Counsels in Verse and Prosc, printed for A. Bettesworth, at the Red Lion in Paternoster Row, 1720: they seem to have been written after the perusal of the book, and are in the manner of the company in which I found [them]. I think they are as good as many old poems that have been preserved with more care; and, under that feeling, I was tempted to send them, thinking they might find a corner from oblivion in your

entertaining literary paper, the Iris; but if my judgment has misled me to overrate their merit, you will excuse the freedom I have taken, and the trouble I have given you in the perusal; for, after all, it is but an erring opinion, that may have little less than the love of poesy to recommend it.

"I am yours sincerely,

"JOHN CLARE.

"James Montgomery, Esq., Sheffield."

To this letter Montgomery replied in the following terms:-

"Dear Sir,-Some time ago I received from you certain verses said to be copied from the fly-leaves of an old printed book on which they were written. The title was 'The Vanity of Life, and the book's title 'The World's Best Wealth,' &c. Now though I suspected, from a little ambignity in the wording of your letter, that these verses were not quite so old as they professed to be, and that you yourself perhaps had written them to exercise your own genius, and sent them to exercise my critical acuteness, I thought that the glorious offence. carried its own redemption in itself, and I would not only forgive but rejoice to see such faults committed every day for the sake of such merits. It is, however, now of some importance to me to know whether they are of the date which they affect, or whether they are of your own pro- duction. The

supposition of your being capable of such a thing is so highly in your favour, that you will forgive the wrong, if there be any, implied in my enquiry. But I ain making a chronological collection of Christian Poetry,' from the earliest times to the latest dead of our contem- poraries who have occasionally tried their talents on consecrated themes, and if these stanzas were really the work of some anonymous author of the last century I shall be glad to give them the place and the honour due, but if they are the 'happy miracle' of your rare birth' then, however reluctantly, I must forego the use of them. Perhaps the volume itself contains some valuable pieces which I have not seen, and which might suit my purpose, The title tempts me to think that this may be the case, and as I am in search of such jewels as certainly constitute 'the world's best wealth,' I hope to find a few in this old-fashioned casket, especially after the specimen you have sent, and which I take for granted to be a genuine specimen of the quality (whatever be its antiquity) of the hidden treasures. If you will oblige me by sending the volume itself by coach I will take great care of it, and thankfully return it in due time free of expense. Or if you are unwilling to trust so precious a deposit out of your own hands, will you furnish me with a list of those of its contents (with the authors' names, where these are attached) which you think are most likely to meet my views, namely, such as have direct religious subjects and are executed with vigour or pathos? I can then see whether there be any pieces which I have not already, and if there be, I dare say you will not grudge the labour of

transcribing two or three hundred lines to serve, not a brother poet only, but the Christian public. At any rate, an carly reply to this application will be greatly esteemed, and may you never ask in vain for anything which it is honest or honourable to ask for. I need not add that this letter comes from one who sincerely respects your talents and rejoices in the success which has so conspicuously crowned them, when hundreds of our fraternity can get neither fame nor profit—no, nor even a hearing and a threshing for all their pains.

I am truly your friend and servant,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Sheffield, May, 5, 1826."

Clare was a great admirer of Chatterton, and the melancholy fate of "the marvellous boy" was frequently referred to by him in his correspondence. The idea of imitating the older poets was no doubt suggested to him by Chatterton's successful efforts, but he possessed neither the special faculty nor the consummate artifice of his model, and therefore we are not surprised to find him confessing at once to the trick he had attempted. He replied to Montgomery :-

"Helpstone, May 8, 1826.

"My dear Sir, I will lose no time in answering your letter, for I was highly delighted to meet so kind a notice from a poet so distinguished as yourself; and if it be vanity to acknowledge it, it is, I hope, a vanity of too honest a nature to be ashamed of at least I think so, and always shall. But your question almost makes me feel ashamed to own to the extent of the falsehood I com- mitted; and yet I will not double it by adding a repetition of the offence. I must confess to you that the poem is mine, and that the book from whence it was pretended to have been transcribed has no existence (that I know of) but in my invention of the title. And now that I have confessed to the crime, I will give you the reasons for committing it. I have long had a fondness for the poetry of the time of Elizabeth, though I have never had any means of meeting with it, farther than in the confined channels of Ritson's English Songs,' Ellis's 'Speci- mens, and Walton's Angler;' and the winter before. last, though amidst a severe illness, I set about writing a series of verses, in their manner, as well as I could, which I intended to pass off under their names, though some whom I professed to imitate I had never seen. As I am no judge of my own verses, whether they are good or bad, I wished to have the opinion of some one on whom I could rely; and as I was told you were the editor of the Iris,' I ventured to send the first thing to you, with many doubts and fears.' I was happily astonished to see its favourable reception. Since then I have written several others in the same style, some of which have been published; one in Hone's Every-day Book,' on 'Death,' under the name of Marvell, and some others in

the European Magazine;' Thoughts in a Churchyard,' the "Gipsy's Song,' and a 'Farewell to Love.' The first was intended for Sir Henry Wootton; the next for Tom Davies; the last for Sir John Harrington. The last thing I did in these forgeries was an Address to Milton,' the poet, under the name of Davenant. And as your kind opinion was the first and the last I ever inet with from a poet to pursue these vagaries or shadows of other days, I will venture to transcribe them here for the 'Iris,' should they be deemed as worthy of it as the first were by your judgment, for my own is nothing: I should have acknowledged their kind reception [sooner] had I not waited for the publication of my new poems, "The Shep- herd's Calendar, which was in the press then, where it has been ever since, as I wish, at its coming, to beg your acceptance of a copy, with the other volumes already published, as I am emboldened now to think they will be kindly received, and not be deemed intrusive, as one commonly fears while offering such trifics to strangers. I shall also be very glad of the opportunity in proving myself ready to serve you in your present undertaking; and could I light on an old poem that would be worth your attention, 300 or even 1,000 lines would be no objection against my writing it out; but I do assure you I would not make a forgery for such a thing, though I suppose now you would suspect me; for I consider in such company it would be a crime, where blossoms are collected to decorate the 'Fountain of Truth.' But I will end, for I get very sleepy and very unintelligible.

"I am, my dear Sir,

"Yours very sincerely and affectionately,

"JOHN CLARE.

"Mr. Montgomery, Sheffield."

At intervals during the years 1825–26 Clare was occupied in supplying his publishers with poems for his next volume —"The Shepherd's Calendar," which was brought out in May, 1827, with a frontispiece by De Wint. The descriptive poem which gives the title to the volume consists of twelve cantos, of various measures, and is followed by "Village Stories" and other compositions. Of the stories, that entitled "Jockey and Jenny; or, the Progress of Love," appears to have made the most favourable impression upon Clare's contemporaries. In this poem will be found the following bold and original apostrophe to Night:—

> Ah, powerful Night! Were but thy chances mine!
> Had I but ways to come at joys like thine!
> Spite of thy wizard look and sable skin,
> The ready road to bliss 't is thine to win.
> All nature owns of beautiful and sweet
> In thy embraces now unconscious meet:
> Young Jenny, ripening into womanhood,
> That hides from day, like lilies while in bud,

To thy grim visage blooms in all her charms,
And comes, like Eve, unblushing to thy arms.
Of thy black inantle could I be possest,
How would I pillow on her panting breast,
And try those lips where trial rude beseems,
Breathing my spirit in her very dreams,
That ne'er a thought might wander from her heart,
But I possessed it, or ensured a part!
Of all the blessings that belong to thee,
Had I this one how happy should I be!

In "The Dream," which appeared in the same volume, Clare's muse took a still more ambitious flight—with what success the reader has here an opportunity to judge for himself. The obscurities in the composition must find their excuse in the nature of the subject:—

THE DREAM.

Thou scarest me with dreams.—JOB.

When Night's last hours, like haunting spirits, creep
With listening terrors round the couch of sleep,
And Midnight, brooding in its deepest dye,
Seizes on Fear with dismal sympathy,
"I dreamed a dream" something akin to fate,
Which Superstition's blackest thoughts create—

Something half natural to the grave that seems,
Which Death's long trance of slumber haply dreams;
A dream of staggering horrors and of dread,
Whose shadows fled not when the vision fled,
But clung to Memory with their gloomy view,
Till Donbt and Fancy half believed it true.

That time was come, or seem'd as it was come,
When Death no longer makes the grave his home;
When waking spirits leave their earthly rest
To mix for ever with the damn'd or blest;
When years, in drowsy thousands counted by,
Are hung on minutes with their destiny:
When Time in terror drops his draining glass,
And all things mortal, like to shadows, pass,
As 'neath approaching tempests sinks the sun—
When Time shall leave Eternity begun.
Life swoon'd in terror at that hour's dread birth;
As in an ague, shook the fearful Earth;
And shuddering Nature seemed herself to shun,
Whilst trembling Conscience felt the deed was done.
A gloomy sadness round the sky was cast,
Where clouds seem'd hurrying with unusual haste;
Winds urged them onward, like to restless ships;
And light dim faded in its last eclipse;
And Agitation turn'd a straining eye;
And Hope stood watching like a bird to fly,
While suppliant Nature, like a child in dread,
Clung to her fading garments till she fled.
Then awful sights began to be reveal'd,
Which Death's dark dungeons had so long conceal'd;
Each grave its doomsday prisoner resign'd,
Bursting in noises like a hollow wind;
And spirits, mingling with the living then,
Thrill'd fearful voices with the cries of men.

All flying furious, grinning deep despair,
Shaped dismal shadows on the troubled air:
Red lightning shot its flashes as they came,
And passing clouds seem'd kindling into flame;
And strong and stronger came the sulphury smell,
With demons following in the breath of hell,
Laughing in mockery as the doom'd complain'd,
Losing their pains in seeing others pain'd.

Fierce raged Destruction, sweeping o'er the land,
And the last counted moment seem'd at hand:
As scales near equal hang in earnest eyes
In doubtful balance, which shall fall or rise,
So, in the moment of that crushing blast,
Eyes, hearts, and hopes paused trembling for the last.
Loud burst the thunder's clap and yawning rents
Gash'd the frail garments of the elements;
Then sudden whirlwinds, wing'd with purple flame
And lightning's flash, in stronger terrors came,
Burning all life and Nature where they fell,
And leaving earth as desolate as hell.
The pleasant hues of woods and fields were past,
And Nature's beauties had enjoyed their last:
The colour'd flower, the green of field and tree,
What they had been for ever ceased to be:
Clouds, raining fire, scorched up the hissing dews;
Grass shrivell'd brown in miserable hues;
Leaves fell to ashes in the air's hot breath,
And all awaited universal Death.
The sleepy birds, scared from their mossy nest,
Beat through the evil air in vain for rest;
And many a one, the withering shades among,
Waken'd to perish o'er its brooded young.
The cattle, startled with the sudden fright,
Sicken'd from food, and madden'd into flight;
And steed and beast in plunging speed pursued
The desperate struggle of the multitude.

The faithful dogs yet knew their owners' face,
And cringing follow'd with a fearful pace,
Joining the piteous yell with panting breath,
While blasting lightnings follow'd fast with death;
Then, as Destruction stopt the vain retreat,
They dropp'd, and dying lick'd their masters' feet.
When sudden thunders paus'd, loud went the shriek,
And groaning agonies, too much to speak,
From hurrying mortals, who with ceaseless fears
Recall'd the errors of their vanish'd years;
Flying in all directions, hope bereft,
Followed by dangers that would not be left;
Offering wild vows, and begging loud for aid,
Where none was nigh to help them when they pray'd.
None stood to listen, or to soothe a friend,
But all complained, and sorrow had no end:
Sons from their fathers, fathers sons did fly,
The strongest fled, and left the weak to die;—
Pity was dead:—none heeded for another,—
Brother left brother, and the frantic mother
For fruitless safety hurried east and west,
And dropp'd the babe to perish from her breast;
All howling prayers that would be noticed never,
And craving mercy that was fled for ever;
While earth, in motion like a troubled sea,
Open'd in gulfs of dread immensity
Amid the wild confusions of despair,
And buried deep the howling and the prayer
Of countless multitudes, and closed—and then

Open'd and swallow'd multitudes again.
Stars, drunk with dread, roll'd giddy from the heaven,
And staggering worlds like wrecks in storms were driven;
The pallid moon hung fluttering on the sight,
As startled bird whose wings are stretch'd for flight;
And o'er the East a fearful light begun
To show the sun rise—not the morning sun,
But one in wild confusion, doom'd to rise
And drop again in horror from the skies.
To heaven's midway it reel'd, and changed to blood,
Then dropp'd, and light rushed after like a flood,
The heaven's blue curtains rent and shrank away,
And heaven itself seem'd threaten'd with decay;
While hopeless distance, with a boundless stretch,
Flash'd on Despair the joy it could not reach,
A moment's mockery—ere the last dim light
Vanish'd, and left an everlasting Night;
And with that light Hope fled and shriek'd farewell,
And Hell in yawning echoes mock'd that yell.
Now Night resumed her uncreated vest,
And Chaos came again, but not its rest;
The melting glooms that spread perpetual stains,
Kept whirling on in endless hurricanes;
And tearing noises, like a troubled sea,
Broke up that silence which no more would be.
The reeling earth sank loosen'd from its stay,
And Nature's wrecks all felt their last decay.
The yielding, burning soil, that fled my feet,
I seem'd to feel and struggled to retreat;

And 'midst the dread of horror's mad extreme
I lost all notion that it was a dream:
Sinking I fell through depths that seem'd to be
As far from fathom as eternity;
While dismal faces on the darkness came
With wings of dragons and with fangs of flame,
Writhing in agonies of wild despairs,
And giving tidings of a doom like theirs.
I felt all terrors of the damn'd, and fell
With conscious horror that my doom was hell:
And Memory mock'd me, like a haunting ghost,
With light and life and pleasures that were lost;
As dreams turn night to day, and day to night,
So Memory flash'd her shadows of that light
That once bade morning suns in glory rise,
To bless green fields and trees, and purple skies,
And waken'd life its pleasures to behold;—
That light flash'd on me like a story told;
And days mis-spent with friends and fellow-men,
And sins committed,—all were with me then.
The boundless hell, whose demons never tire,
Glimmer'd beneath me like a world on fire:
That soul of fire, like to its souls entomb'd,
Consuming on, and ne'er to be consum'd,
Seem'd nigh at hand, where oft the sulphury damps
O'er-aw'd its light, as glimmer dying lamps,
Spreading a horrid gloom from side to side,
A twilight scene of terrors half descried.
Sad boil'd the billows of that burning sea,

And Fate's sad yellings dismal seem'd to be;
Blue roll'd its waves with horrors uncontrolled,
And its live wrecks of souls dash'd howlings as they roll'd.
Again I struggled, and the spell was broke,
And 'midst the laugh of mocking ghosts I woke;
My eyes were open'd our an unhoped sight—
The early morning and its welcome light,
And, as I ponder'd o'er the past profound,
I heard the cock crow, and I blest the sound.

"The Shepherd's Calendar" sold very slowly, for several months after its publication Mr. Taylor wrote to Clare —"The season has been a very bad one for new books, and I am afraid the time has passed away in which poetry will answer. With that beautiful frontispiece of De Wint's to attract attention, and so much excellent verse inside the volume, the 'Shepherd's Calendar' has had comparatively no sale. It will be a long time, I doubt, before it pays me my expenses, but ours is the common lot. * * * I am almost hopeless of the sale of the books reimbursing me. Of profit I am certain we have not had any, but that I should not care for: it is to be considerably out of pocket that annoys me, and by the new works my loss will probably be heavy." And again, after the lapse of four or five months—The poems have not yet sold much, but I cannot say how many are disposed of. All the old poetry-buyers seem to be dead, and the new ones have no taste for it."

And now for a time Clare eked out his scanty income by writing poems for the annuals, the silk-bound illustrated favourites of fashion, which for ten or twelve years almost sufficed to satisfy the languid appetite of the English public for poetry. Clare was sought after by several editors; among the rest, Allan Cunningham, editor of the "Anniversary;" Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall, who severally conducted the "Amulet" and the "Juvenile Forget-me-not;" Alaric A. Watts, editor of the "Literary Souvenir;" Thomas Hood, and others. "The Rural Muse," the last volume which Clare published, was composed almost entirely of poems which had appeared in the annuals, or other periodicals. The remuneration which Clare received was respectable, if not munificent. His kind-hearted Scotch friend, Allan Cunningham, was certain to see that he was treated with liberality: Mrs. Hall, on behalf of Messrs. Ackermann, sent him in October, 1828, three guincas for "The Grasshopper," and in the following month Mr. Hall wrote "Enclosed you will receive £5 for your contributions to the 'Amulet and the 'Juvenile Forget-me-not. I am however still £2 in your debt, £ being the sum I have set apart for you. How shall I forward you the remaining £3?" Mr. Alaric Watts frequently importuned Clare for contributions for the "Literary Souvenir" and the "Literary Magnet," but he was exceedingly fastidious and plain-spoken, and although he sent Clare presents of books he never said in his letters anything about payment. At length Clare hinted to him that some acknowledgment of that kind would be acceptable, and then Mr. Watts replied, "I have no objection to make

you some pecuniary return if you send me any poem worthy of yourself, but really those you have sent me of late are so very inferior, with the exception of a little drinking song, which I shall probably print, that it would do you no service to insert This appears to have closed the correspondence.

A sketch of Clare's life would be incomplete which did not notice the subject of his relations with his publishers.

His first two works-" Poems descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery and the Village Minstrel" were pub- lished conjointly by Messrs. Taylor and Hessey and Mr. Drury, of Stamford, on the understanding that Clare was to receive one half of the profits, and that the London and local publishers should divide the remaining half of the profits between them. Before the publication of the third work—the "Shepherd's Calendar"-an arrangement was come to by which Mr. Drury ceased to have any interest in Clare's books, and the London firm renewed the agreement which gave Clare one half of the profits. It was the practice of Taylor and Hessey to remit to Clare money on account, in sums of £10 or £20, and evidently at their own discretion-a discretion which, considering Clare's position and circumstances, appears to have been wisely and considerately exercised.

Added together, these remittances made, for a person in Clare's condition, a considerable sum of money, but the poet fretted and chafed under the want of confidence in his

judgment which he thought was implied by this mode of treatment, and he repeatedly applied to Taylor and Hessey for a regular and business-like statement of account. During the time Mr. Drury had a pecuniary interest in the sale of Clare's books, the London publishers excused themselves from furnishing an accouut on the ground that it had been complicated by Mr. Drury's claims, but years passed away after the latter had been arranged with, and still the rendering of the account was postponed. This irritated Clare, and he frequently spoke and wrote of his publishers with a degree of bitterness which he afterwards regretted. His suspicions, for which there was no real foundation, were at one time encouraged rather than otherwise by influential friends in London, and therefore in February, 1828, he resolved to take another journey to Town, with the two-fold object of having a settlement with his publishers and consulting Dr. Darling respecting a distressing ailment with which he was then afflicted.

"My dear and suffering Clare," wrote Mrs. Emmer- son at this time, "your painful letter of to-day is no sooner read by me than I take up my pen, and an extra- sized sheet of paper, to pour out the regrets of my heart for your illness. God knows I am little able to give thee 'comfort,' for indeed, my Clare, thy friend is a beggar in philosophy, so heavily have the ills of humanity pressed upon her of late; but such comfort as confiding and sympathizing souls can offer do I give in full to thee. Receive it, then, my poor Clare, and let the utterings of my pen (which instead of

gloomy ink I would dip into the sweet balm of Gilead for thy afflictions) prove again and again thy physician. Forget not what you told me in your former letter: 'your letters come over my melancholy musings like the dews of the morning. I am already better, and you are my physician."

* * * Now, my dear Clare, let me, instead of listening to, or rather acting upon your melancholy forebodings, entreat you to cheer up, and in the course of another week make up a little bundle of clothes, aur set yourself quietly inside the Deeping coach for London. I will get your sky chamber' ready to receive you, or my niece Eliza shall yield to you her lower apartment, the blue room. We can then, 'in council mel, talk over wills, and new volumes of poets, and all other worldly matters relating to yourself, myself, and posterity." And again, on the 20th of February-" I was yesterday obliged to receive a whole family of foreigners to dinner. I now hasten, my dear Clare, to entreat you will not allow your kind resolves of coming to visit us to take an unfavourable change. * * *
I would send down the money for your journey, but am fearful it might be lost. Let me merely say then, that I shall have the pleasure to give it you when we meet. I am sure you will benefit in your health by coming to see us. I have a most worthy friend, a physician, who will do everything, I am sure, to aid you. We shall have a thousand things to chat over when we meet, and it will require a calm head and a quiet Bring your MSS. with heart to effect all we propose, you, and I will do all in my power."

The cordiality of this invitation was irresistible, and Clare, a few days afterwards, presented himself in Stratford-place, where he was entertained during his stay in London, which extended over five weeks.

Shortly after his arrival he called upon Mr. Taylor, who told him that the sale of the "Shepherd's Calendar" had not been large, and that if he chose to sell his books himself in his own neighbourhood he might have a supply at cost price, or half-a-crown per volume. Clare consulted. his intimate friends on this project: Allan Cunningham indignantly inveighed against Mr. Taylor for making a suggestion so derogatory to the dignity of a poet, and Mrs. Emmerson at first took a similar view, but afterwards changed her mind, on seeing Clare himself pretty confident that he could sell a sufficient number of copics not only to clear himself from debt but enable him to rent a small farm. After Clare had accepted the offer she wrote to him as follows:-"I am sincerely happy to hear from your last communications about Mr. Taylor that you can now become the merchant of your own gems, so get purchasers for them as fast as possible, and, as Shakspeare says, 'put money in thy purse.' I hope your long account with T. may shortly and satisfactorily be settled. "T is well of you to do things gently and with kindly disposition, for indeed I think Mr. Taylor is a worthy man at heart."

The promised statement of account was furnished in August or September, 1829, but Clare disputed its accuracy and

some of his corrections were accepted. Years clapsed before he could feel quite satisfied that he had been fairly treated, and in the meantime a rupture with his old friend and trustee, Mr. Taylor, was only averted by that gentleman's kindness and forbearance. Clare gave the pedlar project a fair trial, but it brought him little beyond fatigue, mortification, and disappointment. About this time his fifth child was born.

Not long after Clare's return from London, the Mayor of Boston invited him to visit that town. He accepted the invitation and was hospitably entertained. A number of young men of the town proposed a public supper in his honour, and gave him notice that he would have to reply to the toast of his own health. Clare shrank from this terrible ordeal and quitted Boston with scant ceremony. This he regretted on discovering that his warm-hearted friends and admirers had, unknown to him, put ten pounds into his travelling bag. His visit to Boston was followed by an attack of fever which assailed in turn every member of his family, and rendered necessary the frequent visits of a medical man for several months. For a long time Clare was quite unable to do any work in the fields, or sell any of his poems, and hence arose fresh embarrassments.

In the autumn of 1829 Clare once more made a farming venture on a small scale, and for about eighteen months he was fairly successful. This raised his spirits to an unwonted pitch, and bis health greatly improved; but the gleam of

sunshine passed away and poverty and sickness were again his portion. In 1831 his household consisted of ten persons, a sixth child having been born to him in the previous year. To support so large a family it was not sufficient that he frequently denied himself the commonest necessaries of life: this for years past he had been accustomed to do, but still he could not "keep the wolf from the door." In his distress he consulted his confidential friends, Artis and Henderson. While talking with Henderson one day at Milton Park, Clare had the good fortune to meet the noble owner, to whom he told all his troubles. His lordship listened attentively to the story, and when Clare had finished promised that a cottage and a small piece of land should. be found for him. The promise was kept, for we find Mr. Emmerson writing on the 9th of November, 1831, "Why have you not, with your own good pen, informed me of the circumstance of your shortly becoming Farmer John? Yes, thanks to the generous Lord Milton, I am told in a letter from your kind friend, the Rev. Mr. Mossop (dated October 27th) that you have the offer of a most comfortable cottage, which will be fitted up for your reception about January the 1st, 1832, that it will have an acre of orchard and garden, inclusive of a common for two cows, with a meadow sufficient to produce fodder for the winter."

The cottage which Lord Milton set apart for Clare was situated at Northborough, a village three miles from Helpstone, and thus described by the author of "Rambles Roundabout":"Northborough is a large village, not in the

sense of its number of houses or its population, but of the space of ground which it covers. The houses are mostly cottages, half-hidden in orchards and luxuriant gardens, having a prodigality of ground. There is not an eminence loftier than a molehill throughout, yet the spacious roads and the wealth of trees and flowers make it a very picturesque and happy-looking locality. Clare's cottage stands in the midst of ample grounds." It has been generally supposed that the cottage was provided for Clare rent-free, but that this was not the case is shown by the fact that in one of his letters to Mrs. Emmerson he told her that he had had to sub-let the piece of common for less than he was himself paying for it. The rent was either £13 or £15 a-year, but whether the regular payment of that amount was insisted upon is very doubtful.

To the astonishment and even annoyance of many of Clare's friends, when he was informed that the cottage was ready for its new tenants, he showed the utmost reluctance to leave Helpstone. Mr. Martin gives the following account of what took place :-"Patty, radiant with joy to get away from the miserable little but into a beautiful roomy cottage, a palace in comparison with the old dwelling, had all things ready for moving at the beginning of June, yet could not persuade her husband to give his consent to the final start. Day after day he postponed it, offering no excuse save that he could not bear to part from his old home. Day after day he kept walking through fields and woods among his old haunts, with wild, haggard look, muttering incoherent

language. The people of the village began to whisper that he was going mad. At Milton Park they heard of it, and Artis and Henderson hurried to Helpstone to look after their friend. They found him sitting on a moss-grown stone, at the end of the village nearest the beath. Gently they took him by the arm, and, leading him back to the hut, told Mrs. Clare that it would be best to start at once to Northborough, the Earl being dissatisfied that the removal had not taken place. Patty's little caravan was soon ready, and the poet, guided by bis friends, followed in the rear, walking mechanically, with eyes half shut, as if in a dream. His look brightened for a moment when entering his new dwelling place, a truly beautiful cottage, with thatched roof, casemented windows, wild roses over the porch, and flowery hedges all round. Yet before. many hours were over he fell back into deep melancholy, from which he was relieved only by a new burst of song." His feelings found vent in the touching verses beginning "I've left my own old home of homes."

Shortly after removing to Northborough Clare made another ineffectual attempt to induce his trustees to draw out a portion of his fund money. Writing in connection with this subject Mr. Emmerson says " Mrs. Emerson and myself take a lively interest in your welfare, and we shall be glad to know exactly how you stand in your affairs, what debts you owe, and what stock you require for your present pursuit by stock, I mean a cow or cows, pigs, &c. Pray give me an early reply to all these particulars, that we may see if

anything can be done here to serve you." Clare replied at once, and in a few days Mrs. Emmerson wrote as follows:-" We have consulted with Mr. Taylor. Mr. Emmerson went to him yesterday on the receipt of your letter, and informed him of its contents, and it was concluded to set on foot a private friendly subscription to help Farmer John in his concerns. E. L. E. will give 10, which must be laid out in the purchase of a cow, which she begs may be called by the poetic name of Rose, or Blossom, or May. Mr. Taylor will kindly give £5 to purchase two pigs, and I dare say we shall succeed in getting another £5 to buy a butter churn and a few useful tools for husbandry, so that you may all set to work and begin to turn your labour to account, and by instalments pay off the various little debts which have accumulated in your own neighbourhood. Your garden, and orchard, and dairy will soon release you from these demands, I hope; at any rate you will thus have a beginning, and with the blessing of Providence, and health on your side, and care and industry on the part of your wife and children, I hope my dear Clare will sit down happy ere long in his new abode, rather than have cause to regret leaving his own old home of homes.' It is a very natural and tender lament."

Clare had not lived long at Northborough when he was waited upon by the cditor of a London magazine. who wormed from him an account of his private affairs, and having dressed up that account in what would now be called a sensational style, published it to the world. The article

contained many unjust insinuations against Clare's patrons and publishers, and Mr. Taylor commenced actions, afterwards abandoned, against the magazine in which it originally appeared, the "Alfred," and also against a Stamford paper, into which the article was copied. Clare indignantly protested against the use to which his conversation with his meddlesome visitor had been put, but it is impossible entirely to acquit him of blame. Mr. Taylor remonstrated with him upon his indiscretion, but with a consideration for his inexperience which it is very pleasant to notice, refrained from a severity of rebuke to which Clare had no doubt exposed himself. I have been much hurt," he says, "at finding that my endeavours to do you service have ended no better than they have, but if you supposed that I had. been benefited by it, or that I had withheld from you anything you were entitled to any profit whatever on any of your works-you have been grievously mistaken." Mr. Taylor was constant to the end, for after this he promoted Clare's interests by every means in his power, conferring with Dr. Darling on his behalf, discharging in conjunction with Mrs. Emmerson a heavy account sent in by a local medical man, advising him in all his troubles, offering him a home whenever he chose to come to London to see Dr. Darling, editing his last volume of poems, although it was brought out by a house with which he had no connection, and, finally, contributing to his maintenance when it became necessary to send him to a private asylum. Among the indications which Clare gave of the approaching loss of reason were frequent complaints that he was haunted by

evil spirits, and that he and his family were bewitched. Writing on this subject in February, 1833, Mr. Taylor said :- "As for evil spirits, depend upon it, my dear friend, that there are none, and that there is no such thing as witchcraft. But I am sure that our hearts naturally are full of evil thoughts, and that God has intended to set us free from the dominion of such thoughts by his good Spirit. You will not expect me to say much on this subject, knowing that I never press it upon my friends. I must, however, so far depart from my custom as to say, that I am perfectly certain a man may be happy even in this life if he will listen to the Word which came down from heaven, and be as a little child in his obedience and willingness to do what it requires of him. I am sure of this, that if we receive the Spirit of God in our hearts we shall never die. We shall go away from this scene, and our bodies will be consigned to the grave, but with less pain than we have often felt in life we shall be carried through what seem to be the pangs of death, and then we shall be with that holy and blessed company at once who have died fully believing in Christ, and who shall never again be separated from him and happiness. Farewell, my dear Clare.

"Believe me ever most sincerely yours,

"JOHN TAYLOR."

In 1832 Clare projected a new volume of poems, and with the assistance of his friends obtained in a few months two hundred subscribers. Mr. Taylor having represented that as publisher to the London University poetry was no longer in his line of business, Mr. Emmerson undertook the task of finding another publisher, and opened a correspondeuce with Mr. How, a gentleman connected with the house of Whittaker & Co. A large number of manuscript poems and of fugitive pieces from the annuals were submitted to Mr. How, who was requested by Mr. Emmerson to make the poet an offer. The negociation was successful, for on the 8th of March, 1834, Mr. Emmerson was enabled to write to Clare as follows:-

"My very dear Clare,-

"At length with great pleasure, although after great anxiety and trouble, I have brought your affair with Mr. How to a conclusion. I have enclosed a receipt for your signature, and if you will write your name at the bottom of it and return it enclosed in a letter to me, I shall have the £40 in ready money for you immediately. You will perceive by the receipt that I have sold only the copyright of the first edition, and that Mr. How stipulates shall consist of only 750 copies, or at the utmost 1000. * * * *
And now, with the license of a friend, I am about to talk to you about your affairs. This money has been hardly earned by your mental labour, and with difficulty obtained by me for you, only by great perseverance. We are therefore most

anxious it should be the means of freeing you from all debt or incumbrance, in order that your mind may be once more at ease, and that you may revel with your muse at will, regardless of all hauntings save hers, and when she troubles you you can pay her off in her own coin. * * * *

The sum you stated some time since I think was £35 as sufficient to clear all your debts, and thus you will be able to start fairly with the world again."[6]

While the "Rural Muse" was in the press, Mr. How, one of the very few of Clare's earlier friends who are still living, suggested to him the advisableness of his applying to the committee of the Literary Fund for a grant, and promising to exert himself to the utmost to secure the success of the application. Clare applied for £50, and obtained it, whereupon Mrs. Emmerson, to whose heart there was no readier way than that of showing kindness to poor Clare, writes" In my last, I told you I had written to Mr. How on the subject of the Literary Fund, &c. Yesterday morning the good little. man came to communicate to ine the favourable result of the application. The committee have nobly presented you with fifty pounds. *Blessings on them!* for giving you the means to do honour to every engagement, and leave you, I hope, a surplus to fly to when needed. * * * Mr. How is just the sort of man for my own nature. He is willing to do his best for Clare. He has shown himself in the recent event as one of the few who

perform what they promise. God bless him for his kindly exertions to emancipate you from your thraldom!"

The "Rural Muse" was published in July, 1835, and was cordially received by the "Athenæum," "Blackwood's Magazine," the "Literary Gazette," and other leading periodicals. It was well printed and embellished with engravings of Northborough Church and the poct's cottage. It has been already intimated that the poems included within this volume, while retaining all the freshness and simplicity of Clare's earlier works, exhibit traces of the mental cultivation to which for years so large a portion of his time had been devoted. The circle of subjects is greatly expanded, the passages to which exception may be taken on the score of carelessness or obscurity are few, and the diction is often refined and elevated to a degree of which the poet had not before shown himself capable. The following extracts are made almost at random:—

AUTUMN.

Syren of sullen moods and fading hues,
Yet haply not incapable of joy,
Sweet Autumn! I thee hail
With welcome all unfeigned;

And oft as morning from her lattice peeps
To beckon up the sun, I seek with thee
To drink the dewy breath
Of fields left fragrant then,

In solitudes, where no frequented paths
But what thine own foot makes betray thine home,
Stealing obtrusive there
To meditate thy end;

By overshadowed ponds, in woody nooks,
With ramping sallows lined, and crowding sedge,
Which woo the winds to play,
And with them dance for joy;

And meadow pools, torn wide by lawless floods,
Where waterlilies spread their oily leaves,
On which, as wont, the fly
Oft battens in the sun;

Where leans the mossy willow half way o'er,
On which the shepherd crawls astride to throw
His angle, clear of weeds
That crown the water's brim;

Or crispy hills and hollows scant of sward,
Where step by step the patient, lonely boy,
Hath cut rude flights of stairs
To climb their steepy sides;

* * * * * *

Now filtering winds thin winnow through the woods
With tremulous noise, that bids, at every breath,
Some sickly cankered leaf
Let go its hold and die.

And now the bickering storm, with sudden start,
In flirting fits of anger carps aloud,
Thee urging to thine end,
Sore wept by troubled skies.

And yet, sublime in grief, thy thoughts delight
To show me visions of most gorgeous dyes,
Haply forgetting now
They but prepare thy shroud;

Thy pencil dashing its excess of shades,
Improvident of wealth, till every bough
Burns with thy mellow touch
Disorderly divine.

Soon must I view thee as a pleasant dream
Droop faintly, and so reckon for thine end,
As sad the winds sink low
In dirges for their queen;

While in the moment of their weary pause,
To cheer thy bankrupt pomp, the willing lark
Starts from his shielding clod,
Snatching sweet scraps of song.

Thy life is waning now, and Silence tries
To mourn, but meets no sympathy in sounds,
As stooping low she bends,
Forming with leaves thy grave;

To sleep inglorious there mid tangled woods,
Till parch-lipped Summer pines in drought away;
Then from thine ivied trance
Awake to glories new.

MAY.

Now comes the bonny May, dancing and skipping
Across the stepping-stones of meadow streams,
Bearing no kin to April showers a-weeping,
But constant Sunshine as her servant seems.

Her heart is up—her sweetness, all a-maying,
Streams in her face, like gems on Beauty's breast;
The swains are sighing all, and well-a-daying,
Lovesick and gazing on their lovely guest.
The Sunday paths, to pleasant places leading,
Are graced by couples linking arm in arm,
Sweet smiles enjoying or some book a-reading,
Where Love and Beauty are the constant charm;
For while the bonny May is dancing by,
Beauty delights the ear, and Beauty fills the eye.

Birds sing and build, and Nature scorns alone
On May's young festival to be a widow;
The children, too, have pleasures all their own,
In gathering lady-smocks along the meadow.
The little brook sings loud among the pebbles,
So very loud, that water-flowers, which lie
Where many a silver curdle boils and dribbles,
Dance too with joy as it goes singing by.
Among the pasture mole-hills maidens stoop
To pluck the luscious marjoram for their bosoms;
The greensward 's littered o'er with buttercups,
And white-thorns, they are breaking down with blossoms.
"T is Nature's livery for the bonny May,
Who keeps her court, and all have holiday.

Princess of Months (so Nature's choice ordains,)
And Lady of the Summer still she reigns.
In spite of April's youth, who charms in tears,
And rosy June, who wins with blushing face;
July, sweet shepherdess, who wreathes the shears
Of shepherds with ber flowers of winning grace;
And sun-tanned August, with her swarthy charms,
The beautiful and rich; and pastoral, gay
September, with her pomp of fields and farms;
And wild November's sybilline array;—
In spite of Beauty's calendar, the Year
Garlands with Beauty's prize the bonny May.
Where' er she goes, fair Nature hath no peer,
And months do love their queen when she's away.

MEMORY.

I would not that my memory all should die,
And pass away with every common lot:
I would not that my humble dust should lie
In quite a strange and unfrequented spot,
By all unheeded and by all forgot,
With nothing save the heedless winds to sigh,
And nothing but the dewy morn to weep
About my grave, far hid from the world's eye:

I fain would have some friend to wander nigh
And find a path to where my ashes sleep—
Not the cold heart that merely passes by,
To read who lies beneath, but such as keep
Past memories warm with deeds of other years,
And pay to friendship some few friendly tears.

The Rural Muse" sold tolerably well for some months, and Mr. Whittaker told Mr. Emmerson that "he thought they would get off the first edition." But the time was rapidly approaching when literary fame or failure, the constancy or fickleness of friends, the pangs of poverty or the joys of competence were to be alike. matters of indifference to John Clare. He began to write in a piteous strain to Mrs. Emmerson, Mr. Taylor, and Dr. Darling, all of whom assured him of their deep sympathy, and promised assistance. Mrs. Emmerson, although completely prostrated by repeated and serious attacks of illness, sent him cheering letters so long as she could hold her pen, while Mr. Taylor wrote-"If you think that you can now come here for the advice of Dr. Darling I shall be very happy to see you, and any one who may attend you." The attacks of melancholy from which he had suffered occasionally for many years became more frequent and more intense, his language grew wild and incoherent, and at length he failed to recognize his own wife and children and became the subject of all kinds of hallucinations. There were times when he was perfectly rational, and he returned to work in his garden or in his little study with a zest which filled his family and neighbours

with cager anticipations of his recovery, but every succeeding attack of his mental malady was more severe than that which preceded it. Of all that followed little need be said, for it is too painful to be dwelt upon, and the story of Clare's life hurries therefore to its close.

His lunacy having been duly certified, Mr. Taylor and other of Clare's old friends in London charged themselves with the responsibility of removing him to the private asylum of Dr. Allen at IIigh Beech, in Epping Forest. Mr. Taylor sending a trustworthy person to Northborough to accompany him to London and take care of him on the road. This was in June or July, 1837, and Clare remained under Dr. Allen's care for four years.

Allan Cunningham, Mr. S. C. Hall, and other of Clare's literary friends energetically appealed to the public on behalf of the unhappy bard. Mr. Hall in the "Book of Gems" for 1838 wrote-"It is not yet too late : although he has given indications of a brain breaking up, a very envied celebrity may be obtained by some wealthy and good Samaritan who would rescue bim from the Cave of Despair," adding, "Strawberry Hill might be gladly sacrificed for the fame of having saved Chatterton."

This appeal brought Mr. Hall a letter from the Marquis of Northampton, whose name is now for the first time associated with that of the poet. The Marquis informed Mr. Hall that he was not one of Clare's exceed. ing admirers, but

he was struck and shocked by what that gentleman had said about "our county poet," and thought it would be "a disgrace to the county," to which Clare was "a credit," if he were left in a state of poverty. The county was neither very wealthy nor very literary, but his lordship thought that a collection of Clare's poems might be published by subscription, and if that suggestion were adopted he would take ten or twenty copies, or he would give a donation of money, if direct assistance of that kind were preferred. Mr. Hall says in his "Mem- ories," "The plan was not carried out, and if the Marquis gave any aid of any kind to the peasant-poct the world, and I verily believe the poet himself, remained in ignorance of the amount."

All that was possible was done for Clare at the house. of Dr. Allen, one of the early reformers of the treatment of lunatics. He was kept pretty constantly employed in the garden, and soon grew stout and robust. After a time he was allowed to stroll beyond the grounds of the asylum and to ramble abont the forest. He was perfectly harmless, and would sometimes carry on a conversation in a rational manner, always, however, losing himself in the end in absolute nonsense. In March, 1841, he wrote a long and intelligible letter to Mrs. Clare, almost the only peculiarity in which is that every word is begun with a capital letter. There is no doubt that at this time he was possessed with the idea that he had two wives-Patty, whom he called his second wife, and his life-long ideal, Mary Joyce. In the letter just referred to he begins "My dear wife Patty," and in

a postscript says, "Give my love. to the dear boy who wrote to me, and to her who is never forgotten." He wrote verses which he told Dr. Allen were for his wife Mary, and that he intended to take them to her. He made several unsuccessful attempts to escape in the early part of 1841, but in July of that year he contrived to evade both watchers and pursuers, and reached Peterborough after being four days and three nights on the road in a penniless condition, and being so near to dying of starvation that he was compelled to eat grass like the beasts of the field. The day after his return to Northborough he wrote what he called an account of his journey, prefacing the narrative by this remark, "Returned home out of Essex and found no Mary," Mr. Martin gives this extraordinary document in his "Life of Clare." It is a weird, pathetic, and pitiful story-"a tragedy all too deep for tears."

Having finished the journal of his escape he addressed it with a letter to "Mary Clare, Glinton." In this letter he says "I am not so lonely as I was in Essex, for here I can see Glinton Church, and feeling that my Mary is safe, if not happy I am gratified. Though my home is no home to me, my hopes are not entirely hopeless while even the memory of Mary lives so near to me. God bless you, any dear Mary! Give my love to our dear beautiful family and to your mother, and believe me, as ever I have been and ever shall be, my dearest Mary, your affectionate husband, John Clare." Truly,

Love 's not Time's fool though rosy lips and cheeks.
Within his bending sickle's compass come,
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out e'en to the edge of doom."

Clare remained for a short time at Northborough, and was then removed under medical advice to the County Lunatic Asylum at Northampton, of which establishment he continued an inmate until his death in 1864. During the whole of that time the charge made by the authorities of the Asylum for his maintenance was paid either by Earl Fitzwilliam or by his son, the Hon. G. W. Fitzwilliam. It is to the credit of the managers of the institution that although the amount paid on his behalf was that usually charged for patients of the humbler classes, Clare was always treated in every respect as a "gentleman patient." He had his favourite window corner in the common sitting room, commanding a view of Northampton and the valley of the Nen, and books and writing materials were provided for him. Unless the Editor's memory is at fault, he was always addressed deferentially as "Mr. Clare," both by the officers of the Asylum and the townspeople; and when Her Majesty passed through Northampton, in 1844, in her progress to Burleigh, a seat was specially reserved for the poet near one of the triumphal arches. There was something very nearly akin to tenderness in the kindly sympathy which was shown for him, and his most whimsical utterances were listened to with gravity, lest he should feel hurt or annoyed. He was classified in the Asylum books among the "harmless," and

for several years was allowed to walk in the fields or go into the town at his own pleasure. His favourite resting-place at Northampton was a niche under the roof of the spacious portico of All Saints' Church, and here he would sometimes sit for hours, musing, watching the children at play, or jotting down passing thoughts in his pocket note-book. In course of time it was found expedient not to allow him to wander beyond the Asylum grounds. He wrote occasionally to his son Charles, but appears never to have been visited by either relatives or friends. The neglect of his wife and children is inexplicable. It was no doubt while smarting under this treatment that he penned the lines given below, of which an eloquent critic has said that "in their sublime sadness and incoherence they sum up, with marvellous effect, the one great misfortune of the poet's life—his mental isolation—his inability to make his deepest character and thoughts intelligible to others. They read like the wail of a nature cut off from all access to other minds, concentrated at its own centre, and conscious of the impassable gulf which separates it from universal humanity:"—

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.

Clare's physical powers slowly declined, and at length he had to be wheeled about the Asylum grounds in a Bath chair. As he felt his end approaching he would frequently say "1 have lived too long," or "I want to go home." Until within three days of his death he managed to reach his favourite seat in the window, but was then seized with paralysis, and on the afternoon of the 20th of May, 1864, without a struggle or a sigh his spirit passed away. He was taken home.

In accordance with Clare's own wish, his remains were interred in the churchyard at Helpstone, by the side of those of his father and mother, under the shade of a sycamore tree. The expenses of the funeral were paid by the Hon. G. W. Fitzwilliam.[7] Two or three years after- wards a coped

monument of Kerton stone was erected over Clare's remains. It bears this inscription :-" Sacred to the Memory of John Clare, the Northamptonshire Peasant Poet. Born July 13, 1793. Died May 20, 1864. A Poet is born, not made." In 1869, another memorial was erected in the principal street of Helpstone. The style is Early English and it bears suitable inscriptions from Clare's Works.

In looking back upon such a life as Clare's, so prominent are the human interests which confront us, that those of poetry, as one of the fine arts, are not unlikely to sink for a time completely out of sight. The long and painful strain upon our sympathy to which we are subject as we read the story is such perhaps as the life of no other English poet puts upon us. The spell of the great moral problems by which the lives of so many of our poets seem to have been more or less surrounded makes itself felt in every step of Clare's career. We are tempted to speak in almost fatalistic language of the disastrous gift of the poetic faculty, and to find in that the source of all Clare's woe. The well-known lines—

"We poets in our youth begin in gladness,
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness"

ring in our ears, and we remember that these are the words of a poet endowed with a well-balanced mind, and who knew far less than Clare the experience of

"Cold, pain, and labour, and all fleshly ills."

In Clare's case we are tempted to say that the Genius of Poetry laid her fearful hand upon a nature too weak to bear her gifts and at the same time to master the untoward circumstances in which his lot was cast. But too well does poor Clare's history illustrate that interpretation of the myth which pictures Great Pan secretly busy among the reeds and fashioning, with sinister thought, the fatal pipe which shall "make a poet out of a man."

And yet it may be doubted whether, on the whole, Clare's lot in life, and that of the wife and family who were dependent upon him, was aggravated by the poetic genius which we are thus trying to make the scapegoat for his misfortunes.

It may be that the publicity acquired by the Northamptonshire Peasant Poet simply brings to the surface the average life of the English agricultural labourer in the person of one who was more than usually sensitive to suffering. Unhappily there is too good reason to believe that the privations to which Clare and his household were subject cannot be looked upon as exceptional in the class. of society to which both husband and wife belonged, although they naturally acquire a deeper shade from the prospect of competency and comfort which Clare's gifts seemed to promise. In this light, while the miseries of the poet are none the less real and claim none the less of our sympathy,

the moral problem of Clare's woes belongs rather to humanity at large than to poets in particular. We are at liberty to hope, then, that the world is all the richer, and that Clare's lot was none the harder, by reason of that dispensation of Providence which has given to English literature such a volume as "The Rural Muse." How many are there who not only fail, as Clare failed, to rise above their circumstances, but who, in addition, leave nothing behind them to enrich posterity! We are indeed the richer for Clare, but with what travail of soul to himself only true poets can know.

1. ↑ "Rambles Roundabout," by G. J. De Wilde.
2. ↑ The papers connected with Clare's onlistment are presersed in the Northampton Museum.
3. ↑ Among those who at this time or subsequently made Claro presents of books were Lord Radstock, Rishop Marsh, Mrs, Emmerson, Sir Walter Scott, Robert Bloomfield, Mr. Gilchrist, Lord Milton, Messrs. Taylor & Hessey, Messrs. Smith, Elder, & Co., Charles Lamb, Henry Behnes, Lady Sophia Pierrepoint, the lev. II. F. Cary, E. V. Rippingille, Allan Cunningham, Geo. Darley, Sir Charles A. Elton, William Gifford, Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall, James Montgomery, E. Drury, Alaric A. Watts, William Hone, &c. Clare's little library, consisting of 500 volumes, was purchased from his widow, after his death, and placed in the Northampton Museum.
4. ↑ Mr. S. C. Hall kindly informs me that Mys, Emmerson "was a hand. some, graceful, and accomplished lady." Ier letters show that she was Clare's senior by cleven or twelve years.-ED.
5. ↑ Coleridge's definition of watchmen.
6. ↑ Mr. How's connection with the firm of Whittaker & Co. terminated before the appearance of the Rural Muse," but he brought out the volume,

through them, on his own account, and twenty years afterwards transferred the copy- right to Mr. Taylor, who, in 1854, contemplated the re-issue of Clare's poems in a collected form.

7. ↑ The oft-repeated statements are incorrect, that the Northampton County Lunatic Asylum is a pauper asylum," that Clare was "a pauper lunatic," aud that Earl Fitzwilliam expressed the wish that he should have "a pauper funeral." The Fitzwilliams have been kind und generous friends of Clare and his family for nearly fifty years, and it is not to be credited that any member of that house ever said anything of the kind. It may be added that Earl Spencer continued his annuity of £10 to Mrs. Clare until her death, Feb. 5th, 1871. In this convectivu it should also be noted that the Rev. Charles Mossop, of Etton, and Mr. and Mrs. Bellars, of Helpstone, took a lively interest in the welfare of Mrs. Clare and her family, and in May, 1864, Mr. Ballars purchased the poet's cottage at Telpstone, and has set it apart for charitable uses, Lastly, Mr. Joseph Whitaker, of London, in whom is vested the copyright in Clare's poems, paid Mrs. Clare a handsome annuity for the last six or seven years of her life,

Graves of Infants.

Infants gravemounds are steps of angels, where
Earth's brightest gems of innocence repose.
God is their parent, so 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 the 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 o'er them, and the gale gently sighs.

Their lives were nothing but a sunny shower,
Melting on flowers as tears melt from the eye.
Each death * * *
Was tolled on flowers as Summer gales went by.
They bowed and trembled, yet they heaved no sigh,
And the sun smiled to show the 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.

Little Trotty Wagtail.

Little trotty wagtail he went in the rain,
And twittering, tottering sideways he ne'er 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 were 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.

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;
Bird's 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.

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Clock-a-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-a-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-a-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-a-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-a-clay,
Watching for the time of day.

Evening.

In the meadow's silk grasses we see the black snail,
Creeping out at the close of the eve, sipping dew,
While even's one star glitters over the vale,
Like a lamp hung outside of that temple of blue.
I walk with my true love adown the green vale,
The light feathered grasses keep tapping her shoe;
In the whitethorn the nightingale sings her sweet tale,
And the blades of the grasses are sprinkled with dew.

If she stumbles I catch her and cling to her neck,
As the meadow-sweet kisses the blush of the rose:
Her whisper none hears, and the kisses I take
The mild voice of even will never disclose.
Her hair hung in ringlets adown her sweet cheek,
That blushed like the rose in the hedge hung with dew;
Her whisper was fragrance, her face was so meek—
The dove was the type on't that from the bush flew.

Autumn.

I love the fitful gust that shakes
The casement all the day,
And from the glossy elm tree takes
The faded leaves away,
Twirling them by the window pane
With thousand others down the lane.

I love to see the shaking twig
Dance till the shut of eve,
The sparrow on the cottage rig,
Whose chirp would make believe
That Spring was just now flirting by,
In Summer's lap with flowers to lie.

I love to see the cottage smoke
Curl upwards through the trees,
The pigeons nestled round the cote
On November days like these;
The cock upon the dunghill crowing,
The mill sails on the heath a-going.

The feather from the raven's breast
Falls on the stubble lea,
The acorns near the old crow's nest
Drop pattering down the tree;
The grunting pigs, that wait for all,
Scramble and hurry where they fall.

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.

The Skylark.

Although I 'm in prison
Thy song is uprisen,
Thou 'rt singing away to the feathery cloud,
In the blueness of morn,
Over fields of green corn,
With a song sweet and trilling, and rural and loud.

When the day is serenest,
When the corn is the greenest,
Thy bosom mounts up and floats in the light,
And sings in the sun,
Like a vision begun
Of pleasure, of love, and of lonely delight.

The daisies they whiten
Plains the sunbeams now brighten,
And warm thy snug nest where thy russet eggs lie,
From whence thou 'rt now springing,
And the air is now ringing,
To show that the minstrel of Spring is on high.

The cornflower is blooming,
The cowslip is coming,
And many new buds on the silken grass lie:
On the earth's shelt'ring breast
Thou hast left thy brown nest,
And art towering above it, a speck in the sky.

Thou 'rt the herald of sunshine,
And the soft dewy moonshine
Gilds sweetly the sleep of thy brown speckled breast:
Thou 'rt the bard of the Spring,
On thy brown russet wing,
And of each grassy close thou 'rt the poet and guest.

There 's the violet confiding,
In the mossy wood riding,
And primrose beneath the old thorn in the glen,
And the daisies that bed
In the sheltered homestead—
Old friends with old faces, I see them again.

And thou, feathered poet,
I see thee, and know it—
Thou 'rt one of the minstrels that cheered me last Spring:
With Nature thon 'rt blest,
And green grass round thy nest
Will keep thee still happy to mount up and sing.

Love lives beyond the Tomb.

Love lives beyond the tomb,
And earth, which fades like dew!
I love the fond,
The faithful, and the true.

Love lives in sleep:
'T is happiness of healthy dreams:
Eve's dews may weep,
But love delightful seems.

'T is seen in flowers,
And in the morning's pearly dew;
In earth's green hours,
And in the heaven's eternal blue.

'T is heard in Spring,
When light and sunbeams, warm and kind,
On angel's wing
Bring love and music to the mind.

And where 's the voice,
So young, so beautiful, and sweet
As Nature's choice,
Where Spring and lovers meet?

Love lives beyond the tomb,
And earth, which fades like dew!
I love the fond,
The faithful, and the true.

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