THE PROSE OF JOHN CLARE

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★

EDITED BY
J. W. and ANNE TIBBLE

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Life shines beyond these schemes and counter-schemes,
And happiness flies on the maybloom's breath
Or snowstorm mimicking the winds of May:
Men have that in them which desires the flower,
The perfume and the music of their age,
That governs them, that glorifies the hour
When, severally resolved, their hosts engage
In indescribable battle. Few indeed
Prefer the barbed wire and the ravaged town,
The plague-pit where themselves and myriads bleed,
To the moon rising over the gleaming down.

from Inter Arma, EDMUND BLUNDEN

Clare's asylum foretells our need for an asylum, his deprivation foretells our deprivation.

GEOFFREY GRIGSON

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OUR thanks are due to Mr. Urwick Smith, the curator of the Peterborough Museum, and to his staff, for allowing us continuous access to the Clare Manuscripts, and in giving the facilities for transcribing, which has made this work so much easier.

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Mr. Edmund Blunden's inspiration is always at hand, in Japan or in England. And we are grateful to Mr. Geoffrey Grigson, whose recent work on Clare has helped to make our own later contributions possible.

For the photographs we are indebted to R. N. Tibble and E. Boult, and to Hilary Tibble for much patient checking of manuscripts.


LINCOLNSHIRE
STAMFORD
WELLAND
RIVER
LONG DITCH
MAXEY
NORTHBORO
LOLHAM BRIDGES
The Barrows
BAINTON
ETTON
PEAKIRK
PETERBOROUGH GREAT FEN
Burghley Hall
ASHTON
BARNACK
BARNACK SINNEMS
ASHTON LAWN
Way
Staves Acre Close
Eastwell Spring
HELPSTON
Fuddock's Nook
Sneap Green
GLINTON
Little Field
Cross Berry
Compter Green
Rojice Hill
UFFORD
Hilly Wood
WOODCROFT
CAR DYKE
Bates's Spinney
Porter's Snow Close
Hilly Snow
Tindhills
SOUTHORP
Sword Well
Open Cow Green
Orey Wood
Simmons Wood
Helpston Heath
WERRINGTON
Southey Wood
Northboro Hills
MARHAM
Langley Bush
Briggs Barn
Southorp Heath
Ged's Holt
Castor Anglings Woods
Emmsgate Heath
40 FOOT WAY
NORMAN CROSS WAY
Milton
PETERBOROUGH
AILESWORTH
CASTOR
LONGTHORPE
RIVER NENE
Durobrivae
Roman Camp
HUNTINGDONSHIRE
Scale of Miles
0 1 2 3 4
= Cross Roads
= Great or Turnpike Roads
Sketch from Local Map 1779.

INTRODUCTION

THIS book contains the main body of Clare's prose from the two collections of manuscripts at Peterborough and Northampton—apart from *Sketches in the Life of John Clare, by Himself*, published by Mr. Edmund Blunden in 1931, and *The Letters of John Clare*, 1950. Again risking colloquial phrasing and 'uncorrected' manuscripts, we feel sympathy may arrive at a fresher knowledge of Clare than if we 'corrected' and revised. Small words, slight, though obvious omissions, have been inserted without comment [ ]. But as in *The Letters*, we have tried to present Clare as exactly as possible as he wrote.

The original of the 'Autobiography' of the First Section is scattered through eight or nine sheaves of papers at Peterborough. Many of these fragments were printed, *as* fragments, in *John Clare: A Life*, 1932. Mr. Blunden believes there is a second, completer copy of the whole manuscript somewhere in existence. The fact that most sheets in the Peterborough papers are vertically crossed through, and some marked 'done for' by Clare, seems to support this. But to us it seems doubtful whether these fragments ever reached any further state of revision. The crossing through may refer only to Clare's having used them in the *Sketches* sent to Taylor in 1821. After that, when Taylor did not publish or return the manuscript of *Sketches*, Clare may have decided to use the chapters of his first draft and continue his 'Life' with them.

Our doubt about the existence of any completed fair copy of the 'Autobiography' should perhaps be more fully explained. Certainly it progressed beyond the 'I have gotten 8 chapters & have carried it up to the publication of the Poems on Rural Life' of the letter to H. F. Cary on the 30 December, 1824;* but if fair-copied and sent to Cary, as promised—then, it must have gone

* See Journal for 19 January 1825.

out of Cary's hands again sometime between 1826 and 1829. Mr. R. W. King says, in his *The Translator of Dante*, 1925—'after Cary's letter of Feb. 19, 1825, several [letters] belonging to the next year or two have unfortunately been lost'. We have not, in actual fact, any evidence beyond the lapse of time, that letters *were* lost. In the later Clare–Cary correspondence, 1829–32, nothing more is heard of the 'Autobiography'. Clare, with periodic illness over his head, was given to lapses in correspondence, as well as to not tidying up, much less completing, his manuscripts. Alas, for those good intentions in his letter to J. A. Hessey, of August 1823, 'I shant dye happy if I leave any disgraceful remains behind me'! Frederick Martin, in 1865, certainly saw the *Sketches*. But he may have meant no more than the fragments scattered through the Peterborough papers, by his 'very curious autobiographical memoirs'. In the letter to E. V. Rippingille, of May 1826, Clare says he has 'nearly finished' his 'Life', has brought it down to his second (1822) visit to London, and intends, as soon as it is finished, to 'sell' it. But even this may refer only to the fuller rough notes at Peterborough, which actually carry the account to the third (1824) London visit. Clare's 'done for' on the manuscript of the account of that visit does, we admit, seem evidence against our theory. But there is no further mention, as far as we know, of the 'completed' 'Autobiography', in other letters round about 1826, to Taylor, Hessey, Cunningham, Sharpe, or Frank Simpson, with whom he might be expected to discuss it. Though Clare undoubtedly intended, 'if I live', to try to publish it, it is tempting to conclude that the 'Autobiography', in final form, was never sent to Cary, or to anyone else: i.e., that it never reached sendable quality: that the Peterborough fragments, chaotic as they are, do, in fact, represent the only copy in existence. The future may reveal more Clare papers, if not the Emmerson letters, lurking forgotten in dark cupboards.

What we have done, therefore, in the First Section of this book, is to assemble the Peterborough fragments of Clare's 'Autobiography' in the order we hope Clare, in the main, intended. We have allowed his own chapter numbers, 2, 5, 6, and 7, to remain, though 6 seems a little later than he might finally have decided. We have also left his chapter titles and

inserted none of our own. The task was further complicated by the fact that there are at least three incidents which have two variants each, both crossed through, and only slightly differing from each other. These we have amalgamated where necessary, indicating what we have done in the notes. If a second copy of the 'Autobiography' should never come to light, here is the Peterborough version as entire as we could make it.

The *Sketches* give, as Mr. Blunden said in his Introduction to them in 1931, 'fresh information on the early life and thoughts of a poet of the purest kind: originality of judgment, bold honesty, illuminating and otherwise unobtainable observations on intimate village life in England between 1793 and 1821: a good narrative—nearly as good as Bunyan . . .' The 'Autobiography' has, as well as that illuminating freshness, a wealth of detail which the *Sketches*, by their written-to-order nature, naturally lack. It is the enchanting account of a vanished English childhood and youth, far away from, while yet contemporary with, the French terror and Napoleonic Wars. Not until Clare's entry into the Militia, probably about 1811 or 1812, do we hear of the invasion threats that began to hum over England about 1804. It is an account of a country childhood during one of the hardest periods of Enclosure, when rustic activities and customs, now swept away for ever, were still in full swing. It is at the same time dateless, with that inviolability that gives to human life a reality beyond failure and event. Its prose contains passages of a quality comparable with Dorothy Wordsworth's. The later chapters, *not* in *Sketches*, but first published by Mr. Blunden as 'The Londoners', and giving Clare's pen-portraits of the Lambs, Hazlitt, Cary, J. H. Reynolds, Cunningham, as well as the only contemporary picture of that inspired publisher, John Taylor, are perhaps too well known to need comment.* Of the whole 'Autobiography' Clare himself wrote to Cary (30 December 1824), '. . . I have made free with myself & exposed my faults & failings without a wish to hide them, neither do I care what is said about me but if you shoud see anything that might be against me in speaking of others I shall be thankful of your advice . . .' There is nothing

* Alan Porter, after the 1920 discoveries, published extracts from the early 'Autobiography' in *The Spectator*, for the first time.

that 'might be against' him: only that which may further reveal the delicate balance of excessive obstacles and high individual powers, between which, repeated choices made his life a pilgrimage that, after a hundred and fifty years, is still by no means fully realized.

In the Second Section of this book, the 'Journal' is given for the first time complete and 'uncorrected'.

The Natural History Letters to Hessey, and the Natural History Notes, of Section Three, have been hitherto unpublished, except for the account of the hawks. When, about 1824, John Taylor's partner, Hessey, tried to content Clare concerning delays over *The Shepherd's Calendar* and with the public's supposed lapsed interest in Clare's poetry, by suggesting he should try his hand at Natural History, the Selbornian, as well as the Angler, was very popular. Clare knew the writings of Pennant, Parkinson, Gerard, Culpepper, John Abercrombie, and the likeable Ellis, besides the great ones, White and Walton. From this angle, with Coleridge's and Dorothy Wordsworth's nature prose still unknown, he could only count Wordsworth's philosophic pre-occupations almost a defection from innocence. Caught in that niche, his nature prose preceded the nineteenth century's rich outpourings of field Natural History, world-journeyings, and Darwinian science—Knox, Buckland, Gosse, Dixon, Knapp, Aiken, Jefferies. It is far more comprehensive, but with the close and loving quality of Bloomfield's delightful account of spiders.

Clare lacks Jefferies's sustained sense of drama. He lacks Buckland's sense of fun—or Dixon's sententiousness. He lacks, too, of course, Jefferies's early blood-delight, and anything comparable to Buckland's amused but scientific curiosity about whether frogs could live a year, or two years, without breathing, walled up in cement! It is, perhaps, not altogether vain to recommend Clare's nature-jottings to the twentieth century's urban 'biped superiority'. Here may be found accounts of nightingales' parental idiosyncrasies, of a faithful hawk, of migrating elvers, of milk-stealing snakes, or the legends of the bittern. To those who need the 'delicate fellowship' as well as Empire, science, and travel, Clare's entirely gentle watchings, his anecdotes of flower, bird, beetle, or worm, unknown till

now, are part of that undercurrent of feeling, set flowing by White, which still helps to keep the sheer weight of scientific accumulation from overwhelming us.

His initial project of 'a Natural History of Helpstone', to be called 'Biographys of Birds & Flowers,'* lapsed. It is probable ten of the Natural History Letters printed in this book were originally sent in parcels of manuscript to Taylor and Hessey, and returned to Clare or Patty at a much later date. There are at least thirteen others, presumably never returned, which have found their way into salerooms, and hence, after Mr. Blunden's pioneer recognition of Clare in 1920, to America. Those are not in this volume.

Clare started three prose stories, or novels: 'The Two Soldiers', 'The Stage Coach', and 'The Parish Register'. These are all in too fragmentary a state to be representative. It is the same with the novel-essay, 'The Bone and Cleaver Club', a revealing, if incomplete, statement of Clare's attitude towards integrity. 'The Bone and Cleaver Club' was begun under the title 'Notes from the Memoirs of Uncle Barnaby & Family as written by himself'. (See letter to John Taylor for 31 January, 1822.) But as soon as the occasion for which Clare needed money (to help his neighbours the Billings brothers retain Bachelors' Hall) blew over, Clare laid aside this novel-essay, as he laid aside the others. He could not, or did not, as Rilke and so many others did at all costs, summon the concentration necessary for works of this kind. All we have given is a fragment first printed in *The Mint*, by Mr. Grigson, of 'The Two Soldiers', and a speech from 'The Bone and Cleaver Club'.

Of Clare's critical Essays, the Essay on Popularity was first published in *The European Magazine* in November 1825. J. L. Cherry reprinted it, in 1773, but evidently from the manuscript now at Northampton, There is no complete manuscript at Peterborough. We have therefore given the Northampton text, and relegated the slightly longer, well-punctuated text of *The European Magazine* to an Appendix. The Essay on Landscape has not previously been published. Nor has that on Common Honesty. We have given both, from the Peterborough Manuscripts. The Essay on Landscape might almost be called an

* See Journal for 11 March 1825.

Essay on Peter de Wint. But it has also an interesting thesis to propound. Blake might not have agreed with Clare's assumption that the painter's whole business was the most faithful study of nature's infinite design and multiplicity. Blake would have said this could only result, even the study of trees, which Clare felt had been neglected, in 'blots and blurs'. But surely the Lombard poplars and the elms at least are identifiable in *Flatford Mill*, for instance. Clare's Essay is, therefore, an addition to contemporary comment on the landscape art of the early nineteenth century we are glad to offer to his readers. The Essay on Criticism and Fashion is assembled from the fragments Cherry must have seen—the Northampton notebook, used, Clare wrote, for preserving his 'best thoughts.'

Of the rest of Clare's critical Essays—on Pride, Industry, Mock Modesty and Morals, Happiness, Nothing, Affectation, Honour, False Appearances—all the manuscripts of which are in fragmentary state, we have offered portions from those on Industry, on Mock Modesty and Morals, and on False Appearances. Writing, in that period of excessive isolation, 1827 to 1837, Clare tends, in these Essays, to repeat the same theme. That theme was the difficulty, and the necessity, of being honest in thought and word and action. Sick and lonely, he became too intent on exposing 'the cant & humbug of the days fashion'. He knew, too, the need for pruning his first drafts himself.

The moment he set foot in the outer world of affairs, Clare was struck by this difficulty and necessity of being wholly honest. He insisted that merit and attempted integrity alone would ensure reward. Before the end he knew merit occasionally took centuries to earn recognition. But this question of integrity may not have been his 'unwaking dream', but, rather, the 'heart of the matter'. In one form or another, it occupies most writers who wish to, or do, live beyond their mortal day. It may be still the crux of human difficulties. Be that as it may, Clare's rich but undramatic 'identity' had such capacity for mingling sympathetically with things and people outside, that its owner, in the conflict between that identity's sympathy and its struggle towards wholeness, lost sight, often, of the identity, in twenty-six years of madness. But with these two characteristics, Clare's

rich sympathy, and his struggle for wholeness, his shrewd but self-trained intelligence, and his exquisite lyricism, 'easy as breathing', were linked. All was wrought in a long isolation. Pecuniary responsibility for three generations turned the tables on a nature whose strong need was to snatch from husbandry time to express its delight in earth's quite needless loveliness. The madness was itself but 'north-north-east'. The essential values, perhaps much nearer the truth he craved than many values of mass-sanctioned normality, remained with him through madness into old age. These facts, we feel, are still some of the chief clues to further understanding of him.

We have given in this book, for the first time, Clare's curious 'Dream' of 1832. We have also offered the most essential of his comments, inspired perhaps by his reading of Cobbett, Montesquieu, and others, on social and political affairs, and scattered up and down his manuscripts. As in the 'Autobiography', it seemed to us that the livingness of Clare's prose is, here, as moving as his power to recall the original from its symbol in his poetry.

The 'Fen Description' ('Autumn'), the 'Journey from Essex,' the fragment on Self-Identity, we have printed as exactly as possible as he wrote. This is the first time the 'Journey' has been thus available. These three are of the same date—1841. All are in the clearest handwriting. The 'Journey' has a stark reality, lined in a stark prose, unlike anything else in English literature. Madness gleams through—in places lighting up the reality. The latest fragments of all, simple pieces of description, already printed by Mr. Blunden—when Clare assembled his powers in prose for the last time, except for letters, from Northampton Asylum—will speak again to his steadily growing public for themselves.

J. W. AND ANNE TIBBLE

University College
Leicester
August 1950

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

1793–1824

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

1793–1824

MY DEAR CHILDERN

Before this meets your knowledge I may be unconsious of your welfare & the laughing schoolboy may be gathering the spring daisey from the sod that covers me with unconsious pleasure yet it matters not good counsil is always in season come when it will

Many people will think me a vain fellow perhaps attaching or fancying such importance to these memoirs as to think they will repay my vanity or labour in dwelling on them to this length & in many instances the manner in which they are written may draw on me a juster [condemnation]* for some of my remarks are very weak & some of the anecdotes very trifling & the expressions impertinent but most of the narrative was written in severe illness which may be a sufficient appology for defects in the author though not perhaps for their being thrust on the reader As to the humble situation I have filled in life it needs no appology for all tastes are not alike they do not all love to climb the Alps but many content themselves with wandering in the valleys—while some stand to gaze on the sun to watch the flight of the towering eagle—others not less delighted look down upon the meadow grass to follow the fluttering of the butterflye in such a latitude I write not without hopes of leaving some pleasure for my readers on the humble pages I have here written

[CHAPTER 1]

I cannot trace my name to any remote period a Century & a half is the utmost & I have found no great ancestors to boast in

* Omission of perhaps one word—MS.

the breed All I can make out is that they were gardeners parish clerks & fiddlers & from these has sprung a large family of the name still increasing where kindred has forgotten its claims & 2nd & 3rd cousins are worn out

[Our cottage] was as roomy & comfortable as any of our neighbours & we had it for forty shillings while an old apple tree in the garden generally made the rent* the garden was large for a poor man & my father managed to dig it night & morning before the hours of labour & lost no time He then did well but the young farmer that succeeded our old landlord raised the rent & the next year made four tenements of the house leaving us a corner of one room on a floor for three guineas a year & a little slip of the garden which was divided into four parts but as my father had been an old tenant he gave him the choice of his share & he retained our old apple tree Tho the ground was good for nothing yet the tree still befriended us & made shift to make up the greater part of our rent

I had plenty of leisure but it was the leisure of solitude for my sundays were demanded to be spent in the fields at horse or cow tending my whole summer was one days employment as it were in the fields I grew so much into the quiet love of nature's perserves that I was never easy but when I was in the fields passing my sabbaths and leisure with the shepherds & herdboys as fancys prompted sometimes playing at marbles on the smooth-beaten sheeptracks or leapfrog among the thymy molehills sometimes running among the corn to get the red & blue flowers for cockades to play at soldiers or running into the woods to hunt strawberries or stealing peas in churchtime when the owners were safe to boil at the gypseys fire who went half-shares at our stolen luxury we heard the bells chime but the fields was our church & we seemd to feel a religious poetry in our haunts on the sabbath while some old shepherd sat on a molehill reading aloud some favourite chapter from an old

* 'They are of a particular sort we call them the Golden Russet' Clare says in a letter to J. A. Hessey (20 January 1823). 'The tree,' he continues, 'is an old favourite with my father and stood his friend many a year in the days of adversity by producing us abundance of fruit which always met with ready sale and paid his rent it has borne less latterly till this last season when it produced a great quantity.'

fragment of a Bible which he carried in his pocket for the day a family relic which possesd on its covers & title pages in rude scrawls genealogys of the third & fourth Generations when aunts mothers & grandmothers dyd when cousins &c were married & brothers & sisters born occupying all the blank leaves in the book & the title pages which leaves were preservd with a sacred veneration tho half the contents had been sufferd to drop out & be lost

I lovd this solitary disposition from a boy & felt a curiosity to wander about spots were I had never been before I remember one incident of this feeling when I was very young it cost my parents some anxiety it was summer & I started off in the morning to get rotten sticks from the woods but I had a feeling to wander about the fields & I indulged it I had often seen the large heath calld Emmonsales stretching its yellow furze from my eye into unknown solitudes when I went with the mere openers & my curiosity urgd me to steal an opportunity to explore it that morning I had imagind that the world's end was at the orizon & that a days journey was able to find it so I went on with my heart full of hope's pleasures & discoverys expecting when I got to the brink of the world that I coud look down like looking into a large pit & see into its secrets the same as I believd I coud see heaven by looking into the water So I eagerly wanderd on & rambled along the furze the whole day till I got out of my knowledge when the very wild flowers seemd to forget me & I imagind they were the inhabitants of new countrys the very sun seemd to be a new one & shining in a different quarter of the sky still I felt no fear my wonder-seeking happiness had no room for it I was finding new wonders every minute & was walking in a new world & expecting the world's end bye & bye but it never came often wondering to myself that I had not found the edge of the old one the sky still touchd the ground in the distance & my childish wisdom was puzzld in perplexitys night came on before I had time to fancy the morning was by which made me hasten to seek home I knew not which way to turn but chance put me in the right track & when I got back into my own fieldds I did not know them everything lookd so different The church peeping over the

woods coud hardly reconsile me when I got home I found my parents in the great distress & half the village about hunting me as one of the woodmen in the woods had been killd by the fall of a tree & it seemd to strengthen their terrors that some accident had befallen myself as they often leave the oaks half cut down till the barkmen come to pill* them which if a wind happens will fall down unexpected

The first books I got hold of besides the Bible & the Prayer Book were an old book of Essays with no title & another large one on Farming *Robin Hoods Garland* & *The Scotch Rogue*† the old book on farming belongd to old Mr. Gee who had been a farmer & who livd in a part of our house which once was his own he had had a good bringing up & was a decent scholar & he was always pleasd to lend me them even before I coud read without so much spelling as guesses at words so as to be able to make much of them or understand them

I became acquainted with *Robinson Crusoe* very early in life having borrowed it of a boy in Glinton school of the name of Stimson who only dare lend it to me for a few days for fear of his uncles knowing of it to whom it belongd yet I had it a sufficient time to fill my fancys

[CHAPTER 2]

What a many heedless escapes from death doth a boys heedless life meet with I met with many in mine once when wading in the meadow-pits with a lot of cow-tending boys we bid to do each others tasks we had gone several times & it was my turn to attempt again when I unconsciously got beside a gravel ledge into deep water my heels slipt up & I siled‡ down to the bottom I felt the water choke me & the thunder in my ears & I thought all was past but some of the boys coud swim & so I escapd another time we were swimming on bundles of bulrushes when

* 'peel' or 'strip', particularly of oaks felled in spring.

† There were innumerable editions of the *Complete History of all the Notable and Merry Exploits performed by Robin Hood and his Men*. But we have failed to trace *The Scotch Rogue*.

‡ Clare always used this expressive dialect word in its figurative sense—'to subside fainting'.

getting to one end mine suddenly bounced from under me like a cork & I made shift to struggle to a sallow bush catching hold of the branches of it I got out but how I did it I know not for the water was very deep yet we had dabbld there Sunday after Sunday without the least fear of danger.

once when bird-nesting in the woods of which I was very fond we found a large tree on which was a buzzards nest it was a very hard tree to climb there was no twigs to take hold of & it was too thick to swarm. So we consulted for a while some proposing one thing & some another till it was decided that a hook tyd to the end of a long pole that woud reach to the collar of the tree woud be the best to get up by in taking hold of it & swarming several attempted to no purpose & at last I tryd tho I was rather loath to try the experiment I succeeded in getting up to the collar which swelld in such a projection from the tree that I coud not make a landing without hazarding the dangerous attempt of clinging with my hands to the grain & flinging my feet over it I attempted it & faild so there I hung with my hands & my feet dangling in the air I expected every moment to drop & be pashd to pieces for I was a great height but some of my companions below (while some ran away) had the shrewdness to put the pole under me & by that means I got on the grain just in time before I was exhausted

I never had much relish for the pastimes of youth instead of going out on the green at the town end on winter Sundays to play football I stuck to my corner stool poring over a book in fact I grew so fond of being alone at last that my mother was feign to force me into company for the neighbours had assurd her mind into the fact that I was no better than crazy at length my schooldays was to be at an end as I was thought learned enough for my intended trade which was to be a shoemaker

But there usd to be 'crookhorn'* in those days I usd to like & 'duck under water'* on May Eve or to toss the cowslip balls over the garland* that hung from chimney to chimney across

* See appendix to Anne Elizabeth Baker's *Glossary of Northamptonshire Words and Phrases* (1854). Clare assisted her, from his asylum, with poems on these Roman-introduced Floralia or May-games, country festivities which, a hundred and fifty years after Clare's writing, have almost entirely disappeared.

the street & there was going to Eastwell on a Sunday to drink sugar & water at the springhead but enclosure came & drove these from the village I usd to be very fond of fishing & of a Sunday morning I have been out before the sun delving for worms on some old weed-blanketed dunghill & sliving off across the wet grass that overhung the narrow path then I usd to stop to wring my wet trouser-bottoms now & then & off agen beating the heavy drops off the grass with my pole-end till I came to the flood-washd meadow stream my tackle was eagerly fastened on & my heart woud thrill with hopes of success as I saw a sizable gudgeon twinkle round the glossy pebbles or a fish leap after a flye or a floating something on the deeper water where is the angler that hath not felt these delights in his young days & where is the angler that doth not feel taken with their memory when he is old

I usd also to be very fond of poking about the hedges in spring to hunt pootys & I was no less fond of robbing the poor birds nests or searching among the prickly furze on the heath poking sticks into the rabbit holes & carefully observing when I took it out if there was down on the end which was a sign of a nest with young then in went the arm up to the shoulder; & then fear came upon us that a snake might be concealed in the hole our bloods ran cold within us & started us off to other sports we usd to chase the squirrels in the woods from grain to grain that would sit washing their faces on the other side & then peep at us again we usd to get boughs from the trees, to beat a wasps nest till some of us were stung & then we ran away to other amusements

& then the year usd to be crownd with its holidays as thick as the boughs on a harvest-home there was the long-wishd-for Christmas the celebrated week with two Sundays when we usd to watch the clerk return with his bundle of evergreens & run for our bunch to stick [in]* the windows & empty candlesticks hanging in the corner or hasten to the woods to get ivy branches with their jocolat berries which our parents usd to color with whiting & the blue-bag sticking the branches behind the pictures on the walls

Then came valentine though young we were not without

* No 'in'—MS.

loves we had our favourites in the village & we listend the expected noises of creeping feet & the tinkling latch as eagerly as upgrown loves wether they came or not it made no matter dissapointment was nothing in those matters then the pleasure was all then came the first of April O how we talked & hoiped of it ere it came of how we woud make April fool of others & take care not to be caught ourselves when as soon as the day came we were the first to be taken in by running on errands for pigeons milk & glass-eyed needles or some such April fool when we were undeceivd we blushd for shame & took care not to be taken in again till the day returned when the old deceptions were so far forgotten as to deceive us again

Then there was the first of May we were too young to be claimants in the upgrown sports but we joind our little interferences with them & ran under the extended handkerchiefs with the rest unmolested then came the feast when the Cross was throngd round with stalls of toys & many colord sugar-plums & sweets horses on wheels with their flowing manes lambs with their red necklaces & box-cuckoos we lookd on these fineries till the imagination almost coaxd our itching fingers to steal & seemd to upbraid our fears for not daring to do it the sweetmeats were unbounded there was barley-sugar candied lemon candied horehound & candied peppermint with swarms of colord sugar-plums & tins of lollypops our mouths watered at such luxurys we had our penny but we knew not how to lay it out there were gingerbread coaches & gingerbread milkmaids & to gratify two propensitys the taste & the fancy together we bought one of these gilded toys & thought we had husbanded our pennies well till they were gone & then we went away to coax our parents for more thinking of better bargains when we got monėy again

then there was Eastwell spring famous in those days for its spaws & its brough at the fountain were we used to met of a Sunday & have sugard drink.

& then came the sheep-shearing were we was sure of frumity from the old shepherds if we sought the clipping-pens & lastly came the harvest-home & its cross-skittles Ah what a paradise begins with life & what a wilderness the knowledge of the world discloses Surely the Garden of Eden was nothing

more than our first parents entrance upon life & the loss of it their knowledge of the world

CHAPTER 3

When I had done with going to school it was proposd that I shoud be bound apprentice to a shoemaker but I rather dislikd this bondage my scholarship was to extend no further then to qualify me for the business of a shoemaker or stone-mason so I learnt cross-multiplation for the one & bills of account for the other but I was not to be either at last a man of the name of Mowbray of Glinton woud have taken me for a trifle & another at home was desirous of taking me merely out of kindness to my father but the trifle they wanted coud not be found & I did not much relish the confinement of apprenticeship

this Will Farrow was a village wit a very droll fellow a sort of Æsop his shop usd to be a place of amusement for the young ploughmen & labourers on winter evenings he was famous for a joke & a droll story & had a peculiar knack at making up laughable anecdotes on any curious 'bull' which happend in the village & a satirical turn for applying nicknames to people who were almost sure to be calld by the one given till the day they dyd & rememberd by it afterwards when their own was forgotten many of his names are now afloat in the village he had a brother living who was a sailor 21 years & who kept a Journal of his life which he got me to copy out in part there was nothing particular in it except a mention of Lord Byron who saild in the same ship & was known among the sailors not as a poet but as a traveller

George Shelton a stone-mason woud have taken me but I dislike this too & shoyd off* with the excuse of not liking to climb tho I had clomb trees in rapture after the nests of kites & magpies this fondness for climbing trees after birds nests went against me but I whimperd & turnd a sullen eye upon every occasion till they gave me my will my parents hopes were almost gone as they thought I had been born with a dislike to work & a view to have my liberty & remain idle but the fact was I felt timid & fearful of undertaking the first trial in everything

* 'Took fright, avoided': really 'shied off'; but Clare spelt it as he pronounced it.

they woud not urge me to anything against my will so I livd on at home taking work as it fell

I went weeding wheat in the spring with old women listening to their songs & stories which shortened the day in summer I joined the haymakers in the meadow or helpd upon the stacks when I was out of work I went to the woods gathering rotten sticks or picking up dried cow-dung in the pasture which we call cazons for firing

Thus I livd a season spending the intervals of play along with shepherders or herdboys in lone spots out of sight for I had grown big enough to be ashamed of it & I felt a sort of hopeless prospect around me of not being able to meet manhood as I coud wish I always had that feeling of ambition about me that wishes to gain notice or to rise above my fellows my ambition then was to be a good writer & I took great pains on winter nights to learn my Friend John Turnill setting me copies who by the bye was far from a good writer himself I was fond of books before I began to write poetry these were such that came my way 6 py Pamphlets that are in the possession of every doorcalling hawker & found on every bookstall at fairs & markets whose bills are as familiar with everyone as his own name shall I repeat some of them *Little Red Riding Hood, Valentine & Orson, Jack & the Giant, Long Tom the Carrier, The King & the Cobbler, Tawney Bear, The Seven Sleepers, Tom Hickathrift, Johnny Armstrong, Idle Laurence,* who carried that power spell about him that laid everybody to sleep—*old Mother Bunch, Robin Hood's Garland, Old Mother Shipton & Old Nixons Prophecys, History of Gothan* & many others shall I go on no these have memorys as common as Prayer books Poulters with the peasantry such were the books that delighted me & I savd all the pence I got to buy them for they were the whole world of literature to me & I knew of no other I carried them in my pocket & read them at my leisure & they was the never weary food for winter evenings ere Milton Shakespeare & Thomson had an existence I even feel a love for them still nay I cannot help fancying even now that cock robin babes in the wood mother hubbard & her cat &c &c are real poetry in all its native simplicity & as it shoud be I know I am foolish enough to have fancys different from others & childhood is

a strong spell over my feelings but I think so & I cannot help it

after I had been left to my idle leisures awhile doing jobs as I coud catch them I was then sent for to drive plough at Woodcroft Castle of Oliver Cromwell memory,* tho Mrs Bellairs the mistress was a good kind woman & the place was a very good one for living my mind was set against it from the first & I was uneasily at rest One of the disagreeable things was getting up so soon in the morning as they are much earlier in some places then in others & another was getting wetshod in my feet every morning & night for in wet weather the moat woud overflow the causeway that led to the porch & as there was but one way to the house we was obligd to wade up to the knees to get in & out excepting when the headman carried the boys over on his back as he somtimes woud I staid here one month & then on coming home to see my parents they coud not persuade me to return They now gave up all hopes of doing anything with me & fancyd that I shoud make nothing but a soldier

it was but a bad start to be sure & I felt ashamd of myself almost but my mind woud be master & I coud not act otherwise in this dilemma my uncle who livd as footman with a counselor at Wisbeach came over to see us & said there was a vacancy in his masters office & he woud try & get me the place as he was certain I was scholar good enough for it & tho my father & mother was full as certain of it I doubted my abilitys very strongly but was glad to accept the proposal of going over to try

I started for Wisbeach with a timid sort of pleasure & when I got to Glinton turnpike I turnd back to look on the old church as if I was going into another country Wisbeach was a foreign land to me for I had never been above eight miles from home in my life I coud not fancy England much larger than the part I knew At Peterborough brig I got into the boat that carrys passengers to Wisbeach once a week & returns the third day a distance of twenty-one miles for eighteenpence I kept thinking

* This fortified and moated manor-house was held for the Royalists in the Civil Wars by Dr. Michael Hudson, chaplain to the King. Trying to escape, Hudson had his hands hacked off as he hung from the battlements, and was later killed by a Stamford soldier as he struggled out of the moat. See later note (p. 65) for Scott's use of this incident.

all the way in the boat what answers I shoud make to the questions askd & then put questions to myself & shapd proper replys as I thought woud succeed & then my heart burnt within me at the hopes of success I thought of the figure I shoud make afterwards when I went to see my friends dressd up as a writer in a lawyers office I coud scarcely contain myself at times & even broke out into a tittering laugh but I was dampd quickly when I thought of the impossibilitys of success for I had no prepossessing appearance to win favours for such a place my mother trimmd me up as smart as she coud she had found me a white neckcloth & got me a pair of gloves to hide my coarse hands but I had outgrown my coat & almost left my sleeves at the elbows & all my other garments betrayed too old an acquaintance with me to make me as genteel as coud have been wishd but I had got my fathers & mothers blessings & encouragements & my own hopes in the bargain made me altogether stout in the dreams of success

At length the end of my journey approachd when the passengers lookd out to see Wisbeach brig that stretches over the river in one arch my heart swooned within me at the near approach of my destiny 'To be or not to be' I kept working my wits up how to make the best use of my tongue while the boatmen were steering for the shore & when I was landed my thoughts were so busy that I had almost forgot the method of finding out the house by enquiring for Counselor Bellamy people stared at me & paused before they pointed down the street as if they thought I was mistaken in the name '& are you sure it is Counselor Bellamy you want?' said another 'I am sure of it' I said & they showed me the house in a reluctant way when I got up to the house I was puzzled as I often have been in finding but one entrance were a fine garden gate with a 'Ring the bell' seemd to frown upon me as upon one too mean to be admitted I paused & felt fearful to ring.

I was puzzld what to do & wishd myself a thousand times over in my old corner at home at length my hand trembld & pulld the bell it rang & to my great satisfaction my uncle came being the only manservant & bade me welcome 'I have told Master about your coming' said he 'You must not hang your head but look up boldly & tell him what you can do—so I went

into the kitchen as bold as I coud & sat down to tea but I ate nothing I had filld my stomach with thoughts by the way at length the councelor appeard & I held up my head as well as I coud but it was like my hat almost under my arm Aye aye so this is your nephew Morris is he said the Counselor 'Yes Sir said my uncle Aye aye so this is your nephew' repeated the Councelor rubbing his hands as he left the room 'Well I shall see him again' but he never saw me again to this day—I felt happily mortifyd for the trial was over I was not much dissapointed for I thought all the way that I cut but a poor figure for a lawyers clerk so far it seems I was right the next morning my uncle said that his mistress has bade him to make me welcome & to keep me till Sunday morning when the boat returnd to Peterborough so I spent Saturday looking about the town after amusements

I was fond of peeping into booksellers windows & I found one full of paintings of a painter who was taking portraits & teaching drawing in the town that was the early travels after fame of a name well-known with the world now—Rippingille*—I remember one of them was the village ale house another was the pencil sketch of the Letter carrier of the town whose face seemd familiar with everyone who pasd by the rest I have forgotten—I little thought when I was looking at these things that I shoud be a poet & become a familiar acquaintance with that painter who had blinded the windows with his attempts into fame Poets & painters grow ashamed of their early productions & perhaps my friend Rippingille will not thank me for bringing up this association of his early days yet I don't see what occasion they have to feel so for all things have a beginning & surely it is a pleasure in happiness to review the rough road of anxietys & troubles in gaining it—

On Sunday my uncle saw me to the boat & I left Wisbeach & my dissapointment behind with an earnest tho mellancholy feeling of satisfaction I made up for my lost ambition by the thought of once more seeing home & its snug fireside my parents welcomd me home with a mellancholy smile that

* See Chapter 10 (seq) for Clare's later friendship with, and pen-portrait of, E. V. Rippingille, self-taught painter of rural and domestic life. Rippingille eventually became a champion of orthodoxy against the Pre-Raphaelites.

bespoke their feelings of dissapointment as I sat upon my corner stool & related my adventures

but good luck was at my elbow with a more humble & more suitable occupation Francis Gregory our neighbour at the Blue Bell wanted a servant & hired me for a year I was glad & readily agreed He was fond of amusement & a singer tho his notes were not more varied than those of the cuckoo he had but 2 old songs for all companys one called 'The milking pail' & the other 'Jack with his broom' his jokes too were like a pack of cards they were always the same but told in a different form it was a good place they treated me more like a son than a servant & I believe this place was the nursery for that lonely & solitary musing which ended in rhyme I usd to be generally left alone to my toils for the master was a very weak man & always ailing my labours were not very burthensome being horse or cow tending &c when I made up for the loss of company by talking to myself & engaging my thoughts with any subject that came uppermost in my mind.

one of my worst labours was a journey to a distant village named Maxey to fetch flour once & sometimes twice every week in these journeys I had haunted spots to pass & as the often-heard tales of ghosts & hobgoblins had made me very fearful to pass such places at night it being often nearly dark ere I got there I usd to employ my mind as well as I was able to put them out of my head so I usd to imagine tales & mutter them over as I went making myself the hero somtimes making myself a soldier & tracing the valorous history onwards through various successes till I became a great man & somtimes it was a love-story not fraught with many incidents of knight-errantry but full of successes as uncommon & out of the way as a romance travelling about in foreign lands & indulging in a variety of adventures till a fair lady was found with a great fortune that made me a gentleman & my mind woud be so bent on the reverys sometimes that I have often got to the town unawares & felt a sort of dissapointment in not being able to finish my story tho I was glad of the escape from the haunted places I know not what made me write poetry but these journeys & my toiling in the fields by myself gave me such a habit for thinking that I never forgot it & always mutterd & talkd to myself after-

wards I have often felt ashamed at being overheard by people that overtook me it made my thoughts so active that they became troublesome to me in company & I felt the most happy to be alone

with such merry company I heard the black & brown beetle sing their evening song with rapture & lovd to see the black snail steal out upon the dewy baulks I saw the nimble horse bee at noon spinning on wanton wing I lovd to meet the wood-man whistling away to his toils & to see the shepherd bending over his hook on the thistly greens chattering love storys to the listening milkmaid while she milkd her brindld cow

The first primrose in spring was as delightful as if seen for the first time & how the copper colord clouds of the morning was watchd*

On Sundays I usd to feel a pleasure to hide in the woods instead of going to Church to nestle among the leaves & lye upon a mossy bank where the fir-like fern its under forest keeps

In a strange stillness

watching for hours the little insects climb up & down the tall stems of the wood grass o'er the smooth plantain leaf a spacious plain or reading the often-thumbd books which I possessd till fancy 'made them living things' I lovd the lonely nooks in the fields & woods & my favourite spots had lasting places in my memory that bough that when a schoolboy screened my head before enclosure destroyed them

I lovd to employ leisure when a boy wandering about the fields watching the habits of birds to see the woodpecker swee-ing away in its ups & downs & the jaybird chattering by the woodside its restless warnings to passing clowns & the travels of insects were the black beetle mumbld along & the opening of field flowers such amusements gave me the greatest of pleasures but I coud not account for the reason they did so a lonely book a rude bridge or woodland style with ivy growing round the posts delighted me & made lasting impressions on my feelings but I knew nothing of poetry then yet I noticd everything as anxious as I do now & everything pleasd me as much I thought the gipseys camp by the green wood side a picturesque & an

* Sentence unfinished.

adoring object of nature & I lovd the gipseys for the beautys which they added to the landscape I heard the cuckoos wandering voice & the restless song of the Nightingale & was delighted while I paused & [it] utterd its sweet jug-jug as I passd its blackthorn bower I often pulld my hat over my eyes to watch the rising of the lark or to see the hawk hang in the summer sky & the kite take its circles round the wood I often lingered a minute on the woodland stile to hear the woodpigeons clapping their wings among the dark oaks I hunted curious flowers in rapture & muttered thoughts in their praise I lovd the pasture with its rushes & thistles & sheep tracks I adored the wild marshy fen with its solitary hernshaw sweeing along in its mellancholy sky I wandered the heath in raptures among the rabbit burrows & golden blossomd furze I dropt down on the thymy molehill or mossy eminence to survey the summer landscape as full of rapture as now I markd the varied colors in flat spreading fields checkerd with closes of different tinted grain like the colors in a map the copper tinted colors of clover in blossom the sun-tannd green of the ripening hay the lighter hues of wheat & barley intermixd with the sunny glare of the yellow carlock & the sunset imitation of the scarlet headaches with the blue cornbottles crowding their splendid colors in large sheets over the land & troubling the cornfields with destroying beauty the different greens of the woodland trees the dark oak the paler ash the mellow lime the white poplar peeping above the rest like leafy steeples the grey willow shining chilly in the sun as if the morning mist still lingered on its cool green I felt the beauty of these with eager delight the gadflys noonday hum the fainter murmur of the beefly 'spinning in the evening ray' the dragonflys in spangled coats darting like winged arrows down the thin stream the swallow darting through its one archd brig the shepherd hiding from the thunder shower in a hollow dotterel the wild geese skudding along & making all the letters of the alphabet as they flew the motley clouds the whispering wind that muttered to the leaves & summer grasses as it flitted among them like things at play I observd all this with the same raptures as I have done since but I knew nothing of poetry it was felt & not uttered Most of my sundays was spent in this manner about the fields

I noticd the cracking of the stubbs in the increasing sun while I gazed among them I lovd to see the heaving grasshopper in his coat of delicate green bounce from stub to stub I listend the hedgecricket with raptures

the evening call of the partridge the misterious spring sound of the landrail that cometh with the green corn.

I lovd the meadow lake with its flags & long purples * crowding the waters edge I listend with delight to hear the wind whisper among the feather-topt reeds & to see the taper bulrush nodding in gentle curves to the rippling water & I watchd with delight on haymaking evenings the setting sun drop behind the brigs & peep agen through the half circle of the arches as if he longd to stay

I left [Gregory's] with the restless hope of being something better than a ploughman my little ambitions kept burning about me every now & then to make a better figure in the world I knew not what to be at

A bragging fellow namd Manton from Market Deeping usd to frequent the public-house when I livd there he was a stone-cutter & sign-painter he usd to pretend to discover something in me deserving encouragement & wanted to take me apprentice to learn the misterys of his art but then he wanted the trifle with me that had dissapointed my former prosperitys he usd to talk of his abilitys in sculpture & painting over his beer till I was almost mad with anxiety to be a sign-painter & stone-cutter but it was useless & such things made my mind restless

It was thought that I shoud never be able for hard work & I tried the trade of a Gardener when a companion of mine Thomas Porter of Ashton told me that the master of the kitchen gardens at Burghley wanted an apprentice

So off my father took me it was a fine Sabbath morning & when we arrived he mistaking everyone for gentlemen that wore white stockings pulld off his hat to the gardener as if it had been the Marquis himself I often thought afterwards how the fellow felt his consequence at the sight for he was an ignorant proud fellow he took me & I was to stop three years my work for the time I staid was taking vegetables & fruit down to the Hall twice a day as requird & go on errands to Stamford as requird the man was of so harsh a temper that none

* Perhaps purple loose-strife, but—more likely—purple bugle.

liked him & the foreman became weary of the place as well as myself

I was often sent to Stamford at all hours in the night for one thing or another sometimes for liquors & sometimes to seek him by the mistress's orders But I dare not seek him & as I was of a timid disposition I [was] very often fearful of going & instead of seeking him I usd to lie down under a tree in the Park & fall asleep & in the autumn nights the rime usd to fall & cover me on one side like a sheet which affected my side with a numbness & I have felt it ever since at spring & fall & I often think that the illness that oppresses me now while I write this narrative proceeds from the like cause though I have often made the fields my bed since then when I have been at merry-makings & stopt out when all were abed & at other times when I had taken too much of Sir John Barleycorn & coud get no further

The Marquis* was then a boy I have him in my minds eye in his jean jerkin & trousers shooting in the Park or fishing in the river

After I had been there a few weeks I savd my money to purchase Abercrombies *Gardening*† which became my chief study the gardens were very large & I remember finding some curious flowers which I had never seen before growing wild among the vegetables one was a yellow headache perennial & another was a blue one annual I never saw none like them before or since

I learnt irregular habbits at this place which I had been a stranger to had I kept at home though I had no money to spend yet my elder companions woud treat me we were far from a town yet confinement sweetens liberty & we stole every opportunity to get over to Stamford on summer evenings & when I had no money to spend my elder companions woud offer to treat me for the sake of my company there & back agen & to keep me from divulging the secrets to my master by making me a partner in their midnight revels we usd to get out of the windows & climb over the high wall of the extensive gardens

* The Marquis of Exeter. He later gave Clare an annuity of £15.

† Perhaps the most widely read of John Abercrombie's popular manuals were *Every Man his own Gardener* and *The Gardener's Pocket Journal*.

for we slept in the garden-house & were lockd in every night to keep us from robbing the fruit I expect our place of rendezvous was a public-house calld the 'Hole in the Wall' famous for strong ale & midnight merriment kept by a hearty sort of fellow calld Tant Baker (I suppose the short name for Antony) he had formerly been a servant at Burghley & his house in consequence was a favourite with the Burghley servants always he dyd last year 1822 very rich—I wrote a long poem in praise of his ale in the favourite Scotch metre of Ramsay & Burns it was not good but there are parts of it as I think worthy of a better fate than being utterly lost it has long been out of my possession my friend Gilchrist told me after I had shown it to him that the house had been long celebrated by drunken Barnaby & that he himself had gaind a niche of immortality for Tant Baker in a new edition of that work*

So we got up early one morning in the autumn & started for Grantham which we reached the first night a distance of twenty-one miles & I thought to be sure I was out of the world we slept at an alehouse calld The Crown & Anchor & I wishd myself at home often enough before morning but it was too late then our enquiries not meeting work there we travelld on to Newark-on-Trent & there we got work at a nurseryman's of the name of Withers we lodgd at a lame mans house of the name of Brown whose son was a carpenter & celebrated for making fiddles I felt quite lost when I was here though it was a very lively town but I had never been from home before scarcely further than out of sight of the steeples I became so ignorant in this far land that I coud not tell which quarter the wind blew from & I even was foolish enough to think the sun's course was alterd & that it rose in the west & set in the east I often puzzled at it to set myself right but I still thought so the fine old castle [ ]† stands by the river & I often stood upon the

* A twentieth edition of *Drunken Barnaby's Four Journeys to the North of England*, the original of which was *Barnabae Itinerarium*, (1638), was published in 1822—presumably Gilchrist's edition. In this facetious, topographical, Latin-English rhyme of the supposed Barnaby Harrington (Richard Brathwait) we find reference to the deserted halls and kitchens of Burghley's 'vast brick house', to the many beggars of Stamford, and a bawdy description of the 'Hole of Sarah', the 'drunkard's cave'. This must have been Tant Baker's 'Hole in the Wall', as it was in the early seventeenth century. † The MS. has 'that'; but that makes no sense.

bridge I remember one night to look at it by moonlight & if I remember rightly there is a brick mansion bound up in its ruins which are uninhabited & the light of the windows glowing through the ruins gave it an awful appearance at night something akin to the old ruind castles inhabited by banditts in romances we did not stay here long for the master did not give us wages sufficient paying us one part & promising us the rest if we suited him by a further trial*

I workd with a man here of very singular character who knew more ghost storys & marvelous adventures then I had ever met with before & he was one of the most simple mind he even believd anything that was imposd on him for truth in a serious manner & nothing but a laugh at his credulity woud shake his faith he was of a good memory & the only books he read was Abercrombies *Gardening* & the Bible & he woud repeat a whole chapter by heart & remember the texts which he heard at Church years bye he believd in witches & often whisperd his suspicions of suspected neighbours in the village he had a great taste for looking about Churches & Churchyards & woud go ten miles on a Sunday to visit one which he had not seen before to read the epitaphs & get those he liked best by heart he had an odd taste for gentlemens coats of arms & collected all the livery buttons he coud meet with he had worked in the gardens 33 years his name was George Cousins he was one of the most singular innofensive men I ever met with

We worked awhile in the nursery at hoeing the weeds up between the young trees & as the ground was baked very hard in the sun it was much too heavy for my strength for I was but a boy the wages we got was small tho the master promisd us more if we suited him by a further trial but neither the wages nor the work suited me for my mind was ill at rest

So we got up earlier than usual one morning & as we were not burthened with luggage we easily stole away undetected & left our credit with our host ninepence-halfpenny in debt

The strength of my companion was stubborn enough for any toil but mine was young & feeble & like my mind strange &

* We have taken the liberty of inserting the paragraph about Cousins, and the following one, immediately below. The MS. has them following 'so we got up . . .'. where they are clearly out of place.

unfit with the world I did not know what to be at The Nottinghamshire Militia was recruiting at Newark & I fled my toils & listed

We travelled from Newark to Stamford the same night but dare not show ourselves in a public-house so we went through & lay under a tree in the Park the rime fell thick & we were coverd as white as a sheet when we got up

CHAPTER 4

MY FIRST FEELINGS AND ATTEMPTS AT POETRY

I CANNOT say what led me to dabble in Rhyme or at what age I began to write it, but my first [ ]* were imitations of my fathers songs for he knew & sung a great many I made a many things before I venturd to commit them to writing for I felt ashamed to expose them on paper & after I venturd to write them down my second thoughts blushd over them & I burnt them for a long time but as my feelings grew into song I felt a desire to preserve some & usd to correct them over & over until the last copy had lost all kindred to the first even in the title I went on for some years in this way wearing it in my memory as a secret to all tho my parents usd to know that my leisure was occupyd in writing yet they had no knowledge of what I coud be doing for they never dreamd of my writing poetry at length I venturd to divulge the secret a little by reading imitations of some popular song floating among the vulgar at the markets & fairs till they were common to all but these imitations they only laughd at & told me I need never hope to make songs like them this mortified me often & almost made me desist for I knew that the excelling such dogerel woud be but a poor fame if I coud do nothing better but I hit upon a harmless deception by repeating my poems over a book as though I was reading it this had the desird effect they often praisd them & said if I coud write as good I shoud do I hugd myself over this deception & often repeated it & those which they praised as superior to others I tryd to preserve in a hole in the wall but my mother found out the hoard & unconsciously took them for kettle-holders & fire-lighters whenever she wanted paper not

* MS. torn.

knowing that they were anything further than attempts at learning to write for they were writing upon shop-paper of all colours between the lines of old copy-books & on any paper I coud get at for I was often wanting tho I saved almost every penny I had given me on Sundays & holidays to buy it instead of sweetmeats & fruit I usd to feel a little mortified after I had discovered it but I dare not reveal the secret by owning to it & wishing her to desist for I feared if I did she woud have shown them to someone which woud have put me to shame so I kept the secret dissapointment to myself & wrote on suffering her to destroy them as she pleasd but when I wrote anything which I imagined better than others I preserved it in my pocket till the paper was chafed through & destroyed

My mother bought me a pictured pocket-hankerchief from Deeping May fair as a fairing on which was a picture of Chatterton & his verses on Resignation she was mentioning the singular circumstance to me yesterday by asking me wether I remembered it & saying that she little thought I shoud be a poet then Chatterton's name was clouded in mellancholy memories while his extraordinary genius was scarcely known the common people knew he was a poet & that was all they know the name of Shakespeare as one but the ballad-monger who supplys hawkers with their ware is poets with them & they imagine one as great as the other so much for that envied eminence of common fame I was fond of imitating everything I met with & therefore it was impossible to resist the oppertunity which this beautiful poem gave me I am not certain that this is the name of the poem my memory was freshend some years ago to believe so by reading the life of Chatterton by (I think) someone of the name of Davey as I have the poem by me I will insert it*

* John Davis's *Life of Thomas Chatterton* (1806) must be the volume Clare means. It gives 'The Resignation', beginning 'Oh God whose thunder shakes the sky'. This is surely the handkerchief poem Clare meant to quote but did not—not an excerpt from Chatterton's long and ugly political satire on the Duke of Grafton's resignation.

CHAPTER 5

MY FIRST ATTEMPTS AT POETRY

I NOW followd gardening for a while in the Farmers Gardens about the village & workd in the fields when I had no other employment to go to Poetry was a troublesomely pleasant companion annoying & cheering me at my toils I coud not stop my thoughts & often faild to keep them till night so when I fancyd I had hit upon a good image or natural description I usd to steal into a corner of the garden & clap it down but the appearance of my employers often put my fancys to flight & made me loose the thought & the music together for I always felt anxiety to control my scribbling & woud as leave have confessd to be a robber as a ryhmer when I workd in the fields I had more oppertunitys to set down my thoughts & for that reason I liked to work in the fields & bye & bye forsook gardening altogether till I resumd it at Casterton I usd to drop down behind a hedge bush or dyke & write down my things upon the crown of my hat & when I was more in a kip for thinking than usual I usd to stop later at night to make up my lost time in the day thus I went on writing my thoughts down & correcting them at leisure spending my Sundays in the woods or heaths to be alone for that purpose & I got a bad name among the weekly church goers forsaking the churchgoing bell & seeking the religion of the fields tho I did it for no dislike to church for I felt uncomfortable very often but my heart burnt over the pleasures of solitude & the restless revels of ryhme that was eternally sapping my memorys like the summer sun over the tinkling brook till it one day shoud leave them dry & unconscious of the thrilling joys busy anxietys & restlessness which it had created & the praises & censures which I shall leave behind me I knew nothing of the poets experience then or I shoud have remaind a labourer & not livd to envy the ignorance of my old companions & fellow clowns I wish I had not known any other tho I was not known as a poet my odd habits did not escape notice they fancyd I kept aloof for some sort of study others believd me crazd & some put more criminal interpretations to my rambles & said I was night-walking associating with the gipseys robbing

the woods of the hares & pheasants because I was often in their company & I must confess I found them far more honest than their calumniators whom I knew to be of that description Scandel & Fame are cheaply purchasd in a village the first is a nimble-tongued gossip & the latter a credulous & ready believer who woud not hesitate but believd anything I had got the fame of being a good scholar & in fact I had vanity enough to fancy I was far from a bad one myself while I coud puzzle the village schoolmaster over my quart (for I had no tongue to brag with till I was inspired with ale) with solving algebra questions for I had once struggled hard to get fame in that crabbed wilderness but my brain was not made for it & it woud not reach it tho it was a mystery only half unveild to my capacity yet I made enough of it to astonish their ignorance for a village schoolmaster is one of the most pretending & most ignorant of men & their fame is often of the sort which that droll genius Peter Pindar* describes—whats chistend merit often wants a truth

The neighbours believing my learning to be great thought it a folly in me to continue at hard work when they fancyd I might easily better myself by my learning & as Lord Milton was a great friend to my father they persuaded me to go to Milton to see what he woud do for me the parish clerk a man of busy merits who taught the Sunday-school offerd to go with me as he knew his Lordship better than I did by seeing him at his Sunday-school often I accepted the proposal & started once more upon ambitions hitherto fruitless errands I remember the morning we saw two crows as soon as we got into the fields & harpd on good luck & success & my companion gave me advice with the authority of a patron as well as a friend as soon as we got there on making the nessesary enquiries we were told that his Lordship woud see us by & by hour passed after hour till

* John Wolcot (1738–1819), satirist and physician, who believed that doctors could do little more than 'give nature a shove in the back', wrote coarsely humorous diatribes ridiculing the King, Pitt, and other ministers. These—the first of which, *The Lousiad*, appeared in 1785—were, nevertheless, immensely popular in the rapidly developing democracy of this period. Gifford of *The Quarterly* replied with a savage *Epistle to P. Pindar*; and in the bout with fisticuffs which was a result of this, Pindar is reported to have had the worst of it. According to repute, he was 'a thick squat man with a large dark and flat face, and no speculation in his eye'.

night came & told us we was dissapointed the porter comforted us by saying we shoud call again to-morrow but my friend the Clerk had more wit in the way & we met his Lordship the next day at the heath Farm near home which he was in the habit of visiting often as soon as we came up to his Lordship my companion began to descant on my merrits in a way that made me hang my head & begd his Lordship to do somthing for me & upon hearing to whom I belongd he promisd he woud but I found he had a double errand for before he had finishd his tale of my [learning] he pulled an antique box out of his pocket which he had found in levelling some headlands near Eastwell spring a spot famous for summer Sunday revels it was in the form of an apple-pie & contained several farthings of King Charles the Second's reign his Lordship reachd & took it & gave him a good exchange for his curiosity which raisd the clerks voice in the conclusion of his story of me when his Lordship heard to whom I belongd he promisd to do somthing for me but such trifling things are soon shovd out of the memory of such people who have plenty of other things to think of I heard no more of it & worked on at my employment as usual

My fondness for study began to decline on mixing more into company [with] young chaps of loose habits that began by force & growing into a custom was continued by choice till it became wild & irregular Poetry was for a season thrown by these habits were gotten when the fields were enclosed mixing among a motley set of labourers that always follow the news of such employments I usd to work at setting down fencing & planting quick-lines* with partners whose whole study was continual striving how to get beer & the bottle was the general theme from week-end to week-end such as had got drunk the oftenest fancied themselves the best fellows & made a boast of it as a fame but I was not such a drinker as to make a boast of it though I joined my sixpence towards the bottle as often as the rest I often missed the tot that was handed round for my constitution would not have borne it Saturday nights usd to be what they calld randy nights which was all meeting together at the public-house to drink & sing & every new beginner had to

* Young hawthorns.

spend a larger portion than the rest which they calld 'colting' a thing common in all sorts of labour

Once in these midnight revels we escaped a great danger very narrowly on going for ale at the dancing a quarrel ensued when one of the party determind on cheating the others by running off with the beer I was [with him] & we got into an old barn which had been open to the weather for years & had been falling a long time We saw no danger & hugd ourselves over our bottle till we had finishd it when we started the next day when I passed the gable-end we had sat under was down a heap of rubbish

At these feasts & merrymakings I got acquainted with the gipseys & often associated with them at their camps to learn the fiddle of which I was very fond the first acquaintance I made was with the Boswell crew as they were calld a popular tribe well known about here & famous for fiddlers & fortune tellers the old Father who was calld King Boswell dyd at a great age this year 30 children & grandchildren all grown up following him in singular pomp to the grave.

I had often heard of the mistic language & black arts which the gipseys possesd but on familiar acquaintance with them I found that their mystic language was nothing more than things calld by slang names like village provincialisms & that no two tribes spoke the same dialect exactly their black arts were nothing more of witchcraft than the knowledge of village gossips & the petty deceptions playd off on believing ignorance

But everything that is bad is thrown upon the gipsies their name is grown into an ill omen & when any of the tribe are guilty of a petty theft the odium is thrown upon the whole tribe an ignorant iron-hearted Justice of the Peace at —— Sessions whose name may perish with his cruelty sitting in absence of a wise & kinder associate mixd up this malicious sentence in his condemnation of 2 gipsies for horse-stealing 'This atrocious tribe of wandering vagabonds ought to be made outlaws in every civilized kingdom & exterminated from the face of the earth!' & this persecuting unfeeling man was a clergyman!

I usd to spend my Sundays & summer evenings among them learning to play the fiddle in their manner by the ear & fancy in their pastimes of jumping dancing & other amusements I

became so instructed in their ways & habits that I was often tempted to join them they are very ignorant in the ways of the world & very loose in their morals they seem by their actions to be ignorant of any forms of faith in religion & if they are questiond by a confidant for they will reveal nothing to strangers they will admit the existance of a God & say that a belief that there is a God is sufficient without any more trouble to get to heaven. They keep the Sabbath by indulging in all manner of sports & pastimes but they show a knowledge of how it ought to be kept by desisting from them when a stranger or suspicious person dressd in the color of a parson passes bye

I never met with a scholar amongst them nor with anyone who had a reflecting mind they are susceptible to insult & even fall into sudden passions without a seeming cause their friendships are warm & their passions of short duration but their closest friendships are not to be relied on The men are very hot in their tempers & loose in their discourse delighting to run over smutty ribaldry but the women have not lost the modesty that belongs to them so far as to sit & hear it without blushing the young girls are reserved & silent-seeming in the company of men & their love affections are cold & careless of return they sometimes marry with the villagers but it is very rarely & if they do so they often take to their wandering courses again village clowns are oftener known to go away with the gipsy-girls which happens very frequently

I had a great desire myself of joining the Smiths Crew & a young fellow that I workd with at a limekiln did join with them & married one of their gipseys his name was James Mills & he's with them still I usd to dislike their cooking which was done in a slovenly manner & the dread of winters cold was much against my inclinations their descriptions of their summer revellings & their journeys to Kent & their wood rendezvous at Norwood where they got sums of money by fiddling & fortune-telling & them that coud do neither got a high harvest by hop gathering which work they describd as being so easy were likely temptations to my fancy

They are deceitful generally & have a strong propensity to lying yet they are not such dangerous characters as some in civilized life one hardly ever hears of a gipsey committing

murder their common thefts are trifling depredations taking anything that huswifes forget to secure at night killing game in the woods with their dogs but some of them are honest

they eat the flesh of badgers & hedgehogs which are far from bad food for I have eaten of it in my evening merrymakings with them they never eat dead meat but in times of scarcity which they cut into thin slices & throw on to a brisk fire till it is scorched black when it loses its putrid smell & does very well for a makeshift when they can afford it they wash the meat in vinegar which takes the smell out of it & makes it eat as well as fresh meat they are more fond of vegetables than meat & seldom miss having tea in an afternoon when they can afford it they are fond of smoking to excess both men & women their common talk is of horses asses dogs & sport

I have often noticd the oddness of their names such as Wisdom Doughty Lolly Letice Rover Ishmael & are the names of a well-known tribe whose surname is Smith many of their names are Jewish but few are Christian Viney Liskey Major They seem to be names which have descended from generation to generation as their young bear similar names to their parents not generally but almost universally

In my first acquaintance with them I had often noticd that the men had a crooked finger on one hand nor would they satisfy my enquireys till confidence made them more familiar then I found that the secret was that their parents disabled the finger of every male child in war-time to keep them from being drawn for Militia or sent for soldiers for any petty theft they might commit which would invariably be the case if they had been able men when taken before a magistrate as they lay under the lash of the law with the curse of a bad name

They had pretentions to a knowledge of medicine but their receipts turnd on mystic charms & spells yet they had a knowledge of plants which they give names to themselves & as I had a knowledge of wild plants I usd to be amusd with the names they calld them by a little plant with a hard stem that grows in villages & waste places one sort bearing yellow flowers & another purple ones these they called burvine & reckond famous for the scurvy Waspweed is the water betony growing by brooksides which gaind their name by the wasps being in-

variably attracted to its blossoms getting therefrom a glutinous matter for the cement of their combs this is a celebrated plant with the gipseys for the cure & relief of deafness Buckbane is the bogbean hiskhead is the selfheal a cure for wounds & furzebind is the tormentil a cure for fevers adderbites &c

In fortune telling they pretend to great skill both by cards & plaster & by the lines on the hand & moles & interpretation of dreams but like a familiar Epistle among the common people that invariably begins with this comes with our kind love at present thank God for it the preface to every lady's fortune was the same that they had false friends & envious neighbours but better luck woud come & with the young that two was in love with them at the same time one being near & one at a distance one was a dark girl & one was a fair girl & he lovd the fair girl the best &c &c the credulous readily believed them & they extorted money by another method of muttering over the power of revenge which fright[ed] the huswife into charity I have heard them laugh over their evening fire at the dupes they have made in believing their knowledge in foretelling future events & trying each other's wits to see who could make a tale that would succeed best the next day

as I said before they have no scholars amongst them yet I have known people write letters for them to be read I suppose by the same assistance

There [are] not so many of them with us as there used to be The Enclosure has left nothing but narrow lanes where they are ill-provided with a lodging Langley Bush is the one place where they frequent commonly they are very troublesome to those who are acquainted with them always calling to see them & never leaving the house without begging something

I usd to spend many of my winter nights & Sabbath leisure when I grew up in the world at a neighbours house of the name of Billings it was a sort of meeting-house for the young fellows of the town where they used to join for ale & tobacco & sing & drink the night away. The occupiers were two bachelors & the cottage was called 'Bachelors Hall' it is an old ruinous hut & has needed repairs ever since I knew it for they neither mend up the walls nor thatch the roof being negligent men but quiet

& inoffensive neighbours I still frequent their house it has more the appearance of a deserted hermitage then an inhabited dwelling I have sat talking of witch & ghost stories over our cups on winter nights till I felt fearful of going home John Billings the elder had a very haunted mind for such things & had scarce been out on a journey with the night without seeing a gost will O whisp or some such shadowy mystery & such reccolections of midnight wanderings furnishd him with storys for a whole winters fireside

We used to go often to the woods to pill oaks & sometimes to shoot crows in the winter evenings or in fact anything that chance started & once we went on a Sabbath day there were three of us & James Billings was the gunner for I had no eyes to kill anything even if I was close to it though my will perhaps was as good as the rest On rustling about among the bushes we started a hare which hopped on a little way & stood to listen when my companion lifted his old gun to take aim & a sudden shock tinkled in my ears like the sound of broken glasses we were astounded & looked on each others faces with vacancy the gun had burst & all the barrel was carried away to the lock & part of the lock likewise we saw danger in each other faces & dare not make enquiry what was the matter as all of us expected we were wounded but as soon as the fright was over we found none of us was hurt what became of the gun we could not tell for we could not find a fragment but that which he held in his hand was not this an alarm to tell our consciences that we were doing wrong & whether it was chance or providence that interfered it was a narrow escape I felt the warning for me & never was caught on the same errand again

John Billings was an inoffensive man he believed everything that he saw in print as true & had a cupboard full of penny books *The King & the Cobbler The Seven Sleepers* accounts of people being buried so many days & then dug up alive of bells in churches ringing in the middle of the night of spirits warning men when they were to die he had never read Thomson or Cowper or Wordsworth or perhaps heard of their names yet nature gives everyone a natural simplicity of heart to read her language & the gross interferences of the world adulterate them He often usd to carry a curious old book *The Pleasant Art*

*of Money Catching** & another whose title was *Laugh & be Fat* there was a tale of *Juggler Percy & the Butchers Dog* several rules & receipts for saving & cheap living a collection of proverbs & a long poem of forty or fifty verses I fancied some of the verses good & I think they were written by a poet perhaps Randolph he felt as happy over these as we whiled away the impatience of a days bad fishing under a green willow or an old thorn as I did over Thomson Cowper & Walton which I often took in my pocket to read

He is fond of getting 'cuckoos' bluebells primroses & any favourite flowers from the fields & woods to set in his garden His Sundays best leisure is when the weather & season permit him to ramble by the river-sides a-fishing & we have spent many Sundays together in that diversion

Tho I always felt in company a disbelief in ghosts witches &c yet when I was alone in the night my fancys created thousands & my fears were always on the look out every now & then turning round to see if aught was behind me I was terribly frighted on seeing a willowisp for the first time & tho my fears grew less by custom for there are crowds about our fenny flats yet I never could take them on the credit of philosophy as natural phenomenon at night time but always had a suspicion of something supernatural belonging to them—I have had a many 'night fears' I used to be terribly amazed when a boy in taking the horses away to heath in springtime when the badgers made a horrible squeeling noise in the woods resembling the screams of a woman

but the worst fright I ever met with was on a harvest night when I worked at Bassets of Ashton we was always late ere we gave over work as harvesters generally are & ere we finished our suppers it was nigh midnight by the time I started home which was but the distance of a short mile but I had a terror haunting spot to cross called Barn parks in which was several ruins of Roman camps & saxon castles & of course was people[d] with many mysterys of spirits the tales were numberless of ghosts & goblings that were seen there & I never passed it without my memory keeping a strict eye to look for

* An anonymous publication (1816–51).

them & one night rather late I fancyd I saw something stand wavering in the pathway but my hopes put it off as a shadow but on coming nearer I found that it was something but whether of flesh & blood was a question my astonished terrors magnified it into a horrible figure it appeared to have ears of a vast length & the hair seemed to hang about it like [ ]* I trembled & almost wished the earth would open to hide me I would have spoke but I could not & on attempting to pass it I gave it the road & ran off as fast as I could & on stopping at the stile to look where it was my unnervd terror found it close at my heels I thought it was nothing but an infernal now & scarce remember what I did I took to my heels & when I got home I felt nearly fit to dye I felt afraid that ghosts did exist & I dare not pass the close the next day till quite late in the day when everybody was abroad when to my surprise I found it was nothing but a poor cade-foal that had lost its mother & had been raised with milk till it was grown up & had been turned there to wean it the day before it followed me again & my disbelief in ghosts was more hardend than ever

CHAPTER 6

MEMORIES OF LOVE

Among all the friendships I have made in life those of school-friends & childish acquaintances are the sweetest to remember there is no deception among them there is no regret in them but the loss they are the fairest sunniest pages memory ever doubles down in the checkerd volume of life to refer to there are no blotches upon them they are not found[ed] like bargains upon matters of interest nor broken for selfish ends

One of my first friendships was with Richard the brother of John Turnill It began with infancy by play at feasts by the cottage wall with broken pots & gathering the cumpld seeds of the willow for cheeses making houses & fires of sticks & stones & along to the second stage of hunting birds nests & painted pooty shells† through dewy boughs & busy growing grass in

* Here Clare's stock of comparisons seems to have given out: gap of one word —MS. † Snail-shells, empty or full—delight of so many country children.

the spring & the partnerships of labours toils & sunday leisures but death came when we were growing up into each others pleasures like spring flowers & took him away before our budding friendship coud blossom yet it was the mirage of happiness

What numberless hopes of successes did we whisper over as we hunted among the short snubby bushes of the heath & hedgerows or crept among the blackthorn sprays after the nest of the nightingale what happy discourses of planning pleasures did we talk over as we lay on the soft summer grass gazing into the blue sky shaping the passing clouds to things familiar with our memorys dreaming of the days to come when we shoud mix with the world & be men little thinking we shoud chew the cud of sweet & bitter fancy when we met it but he never did I have mentiond were he dyd & was buried a little while back*

His brother John's acquaintance began with learning me on winter nights to write & sum he was of a studious musing turn of mind & fond of books always carrying one of some sort in his pocket to read between toils at leisure hours They were sometimes sixpenny books of stories & at other times the books which he usd at school for he had been [to] boarding school & read in books there that are unknown in a village school I remember being very often delighted with one which he repeated in ryhme by heart about a lady being killed in battle by a speed ball while seeking her lover & another tale in prose of the old man & his ass which was a favourite & he contrivd to bring the Newspaper in his pocket in weeding time which I was always very anxious to read his father was a farmer & I usd to work for them in the weeding & haymaking season his mind was always anxious after knowledge & too restless to stick to anything long so he had a superficial knowledge of many things & a solid information with none one season he woud be occupied with Mathematics working problems (he was also ambitious of stirring in the almanack diaries attempting to unriddle the puzzles for the prizes & to ryhme new charades riddles & rebuses) of algebra & Geometry on a slate fitted to his pocket & making Dials on a board & fixing them on the top of his weedhook shaft to enquire the hour of the day then

* We have not found this among the Fragments.

before he had formed half an acquaintance with this he woud be with the assistance of a book he had purchasd a cheap penny-worth at some secondhand bookstall once he happend on Lilly's *Astrology** at Deeping Fair & then his head was forever after nativitys & fortunetelling by the stars his mother was skilld in huswife phisics Culpepper's *Herbal*† she usd to be up after getting herbs at the proper time of the plants that are said to rule them expecting they woud perform miracles I remember the last things he was busy with after studying a book on bees a restless desire after glass hives

Sometimes he woud be after drawing by perspective & he made an instrument from a shilling art of painting which he had fashiond that was to take landscapes almost by itself it was of a long square shape with a hole at one end to look through & a number of different colourd threads crossd into little squares at the other from each of these squares different portions of the landscape was to be taken one after the other & put down in a facsimile of the square done with a pencil on the paper but his attempts made but poor reflections of the objects & when they were finishd in his best colours they were but poor shadows of the original & the sun with its instantaneous sketches made better figures of the objects in their shadows

I found another boy-acquaintance which grew up with few breaks in it to manhood with Tom Porter who lives in a lone cottage on Ashton Green he had a fondness for flowers & possesd a few old books old 'heirlongs' in the family one belonging to his great grandfather who had been steward to the Noells at Walcott Hall two which I usd to be most pleasd with were Sandys *Travels*‡ & Parkinsons *Herbal*§ & I usd often to make Sunday visits to read them his fondness for books were those of

* Perhaps *Christian Astrology* (1647), one of William Lilly's many works, for two centuries an authority in astrological literature.

† Nicholas Culpepper's *Herbal*, or complete 'Family Physician', 'a botanical and astrological practice of physic', contained, as well as the 'Herbal', the 'London Dispensatory', and 'Astrological Judgments of all the Diseases of the Human Body'.

‡ *The Travels* of George Sandys, 'judicious' colonist and poet, first appeared in '*The Relation of a Journey*, begun in 1610 in Four Books' (1615).

§ The *Theatrum Botanicum*, or 'Herbal of large extent,' by John Parkinson, apothecary, first issued in 1640, was a book to delight boys like Clare and Tom Porter.

gardening & he bought & buys still all the secondhand ones that treat upon that subject which chance lays his hands on we usd to go out on Sundays to hunt curious wild flowers to plant in the garden such as the orchids

As I grew up a man I mixd more in company & frequented dances for the sake of meeting with the lasses

I was a lover very early in life my first attachment being a schoolboy affection was for Mary who cost me more ballads than sighs & was belovd with a romantic or Platonic sort of feeling if I coud but gaze on her face or fancy a smile on her countenance it was sufficient I went away satisfyd we played with each other but named nothing of love yet I fancyd her eyes told me her affections we walked together as school-companions in leisure hours but our talk was of play & our actions the wanton nonsense of children yet young as my heart was it woud turn chill when I touchd her hand & tremble & I fancyd her feelings were the same for as I gazd earnestly in her face a tear woud hang in her smiling eye & she woud turn to wipe it away her heart was as tender as a birds

but when she grew to womanhood she felt her station above mine at least I felt that she thought so for her parents were farmers, & farmers had great pretentions to somthing then so my passion coold with my reason & contented itself with another tho I felt a hopeful tenderness that I might one day renew the acquaintance & disclose the smotherd passion she was a beautiful girl & as the dream never awoke into reality her beauty was always fresh in my memory she is still unmarried I cannot forget her little playful fairy form & witching smile even now

I remember an accident that roused my best intentions & hurt my affection into the rude feelings of imaginary cruelty when playing one day in the churchyard I threw a green walnut that hit her on the eye. She wept & I hid my sorrow & my affection together under the shame of not showing regret lest others might laugh it into love*

There is nothing but poetry about the existence of childhood

* This paragraph is a fragment entirely by itself, but as it is almost certain it refers to Mary Joyce we have placed it here.

real simple soul-moving poetry laughter and joy of poetry & not its philosophy & there is nothing of poetry about manhood but the reflection & the remembrance of what has been

Surely our play-prolonging moon on spring evenings shed a richer lustre than the mid-day sun that surrounds us now in manhood for its poetical sunshine hath left us & we have learned to know that for when boys every new day brought a new sun we knew no better & we were happy in our ignorance there is nothing of that new & refreshing sunshine upon the picture now it shines from the heavens upon real matter-of-fact existences & weary occupations

After mixing into the merrymaking of Wakes Weddings & housewarmings & Hollidays I lost that lonely feeling & grew dissipated not that I was overfond of drink but I drank for the sake of company & to stifle unpleasant feelings which my follys often brought on me perhaps the word housewarming needs an explanation to be understood it is a custom common in villages & it is this when a person shifts from an old habitation to a new one the gossips their old neighbours meet to have a tea drinking with any others that chuse to go & the men going there at night to drink ale & the young ones make up a dance & thus they warm the new house as they call it by drinking & singing & other merriment I spoke of follys they were love follys that often made the heart ache a pain well known to lovers causd by rejected addresses to someone whom I felt a sudden affection for & who on my disclosing it woud affect to sneer & despise me my first love really was with a girl of Ashton whose name was Elizabeth Newbon She was no beauty but I fancyd she was everything & our courtship was a long one I usd to meet her on Sundays at a lodge-house on Ashton Green at first & then went to her home her father was a wheelwright & an old man who professd to be learned in the Bible he was always trying my wisdom where such & such passages might be found my silence generally spoke my lack of religion & he shook his head at my ignorance he thought that religion consisted in learning such scraps as a sort of necessity by heart he knew the book in the Bible in which God was not once mentioned it was Ezra & he knew the name of the mountain where Noah's ark rested & other Bible curiosities he read it to be able to search for these &

to be able to talk about them he thought himself a religious man though he never went to Church & he was so for he was happy & harmless he possesd a large Bible with notes which he took in numbers when he was a young man it was Wright's Bible & he often spoke of the pleasure he felt in reading the first number one Sunday night in a terrible thunderstorm he had another book on which he set great value it was Lord Napier's *Key to the Revelations** he believd the explanations given there as the essence of truth & every newspaper occurrence that happend in war & political government he fancyd he coud find there he believd in Moore's Almanack too with great reverence & unlocked its mystical hieroglyphics with his Revelations Key yearly though it was not so suitable a key as Moore's who waited the events of the year & explained it afterwards

. . .† this went on for years with petty jealousys on both sides at length giving ear to the world she chargd me with sins of changing affection . . .

[CHAPTER 7]

When the country was chin-deep in the fears of invasion & every month was filled with the terrors which Bonaparte had spread in other countries a national scheme was set on foot to raise a raw army of volunteers & to make the matter plausible a letter was circulated said to be written by the prince regent I forget how many was demanded from our parish but I remember the panic which it created was very great no great name rises in the world without creating a crowd of little mimics that glitter in borrowed rays & no great lie was ever put into circulation with[out] a herd of little lyes multiply[ing] by instinct as it were & crowding under its wings the papers that were circulated assured the people of England that the French were on the eve of invading it & that it was deemed nessesary

* '*A Plaine Discovery of the whole Revelation of Saint John*', *set forth by John Napeir of Marchistoun. Whereto are annexed certain Oracles of Sibylla* (1593). The D.N.B. has Napier (sic) John (1550–1617) as the inventor of logarithms.

† The omission is from another short fragmentary account of Elizabeth Newbon, in which C. writes 'my *second* [it. ours] was a riper one Elizabeth Newbon . . .' But since the fuller account we have used contains no end, we have used the conclusion of the fragment here.

by the regent that an army from 18 to 45 should be raised immediately this was the great lye & the little lies were soon at its heels which assured the people of Helpstone that the French had invaded & got to London & some of these little lyes had the impudence to swear that the french had even reached northampton the people got at their doors in the evening to talk over the rebellion of '45 when the rebels reached Derby & even listened at intervals to fancy they heard the french 'rebels' at Northampton knocking it down with their cannon I never gave much credit to popular storys of any sort so I felt no concern at these storys though I coud not say much for my valour if the tale had provd true we had a cross-graind sort of choice left us which was to be forced to be drawn & go for nothing or take on as volunteers for a bounty of two guineas I accepted the latter & went with a neighbours son W. Clarke to Peterbrough to be sworn on & prepard to join the regiment at Oundle the morning we left home our mothers parted with us as if we were going to Botany Bay & people got at their doors to bid us farewell & greet us with a Job's comfort that they doubted we should see Helpstone no more I confess I wished myself out of the matter by times when we got to Oundle the place of quartering we were drawn out into the fields & a more motley multitude of lawless fellows was never seen in Oundle before & hardly out of it there were 1300 of us we was drawn up into a line & sorted into companys I was one of the shortest & therefore my station is evident I was in that mixed multitude called the batallion which they nicknamed 'bum-tools' for what reason I cannot tell the light company was called 'light-bobs' & the grenadiers 'bacon-bolters' these were names given to each other who felt as great an enmity against each other as ever they all felt for the french some took lodgings but lodgings were very expensive the people took advantage of the tide & charged high so I was obligd to be content with the quarters alloted me which were at the Rose & Crown Inn kept by a widow woman & her two daughters which happend to be a good place the girls were modestly good-naturd & the mother a kind-hearted woman behaving well to all who returnd it our company was the 5th & the Captain was a good sort of fellow using his authority in the language of a friend advising our

ignorance when wrong of what we ought to do to be right & not in the severity of a petty tyrent who is fond of abusing those beneath him merely for the sake of showing authority I was never wonderful clean in my dress—at least not clean enough for a soldier for I thought I took more than nessesary pains to be so & I was not very apt at learning my exercise for I then was a ryhmer & my thoughts were often absent when the word of command was given for this fault I was terribly teazd by a little louse looking corporal who took a delight in finding fault with me & loading me with bad jests on my awkwardness as a soldier as if he had been a soldier all his life I felt very vext at the scurrilous coxcomb & retorted which only added more authority in his language he found fault with me when it belongd to others merely to vex me & if I venturd to tamper with his mistake he woud threaten me with the awkward squad for speaking I grew so mad at last with this fool that I really think I shoud have felt satisfaction in shooting him & I was almost fit to desert home then again I thought my companions woud laugh at me so I screwed up my resolution to the point at last & determind if he accusd me wrongfully for the time to come I woud certainly fall out of the ranks & address him be the consequence what it woud I had no great heart to boxing but I saw little fear in him for he was much less in strength than I was & the dread of the dark hole or awkward squad was but little in comparison to the teasing insults which this fellow daily inflicted so I determind to act up to my vengeance be the consequence what it might & I soon found an oppertunity for he was presently at his pert jests & sneering meddling again madness flusht my cheeks in a moment & when he saw it he rapt me over my knees in a sneering sort of way & said he woud learn me how such fellows as I were dealt with by soldiers I coud stand it no longer but threw my gun aside & seizing him by the throat I hurld him down & kickd him when he was down which got the fellow fame for those that had been against him before lifted him up & calld him a good fellow & me a coward

I was threatend with the black hole by one & even the tying up to the halberd by others who said that drummers were exercising themselves & very able to use the whip for punish-

ment I thought I possesd commonsense in a superior degree as not to feel fear at threatend surmises of any sort for I had always lookd on such things as mere trumpery for children but I confess my common-sense was overcome & I felt fearful that somthing was in the wind till it blew over & got too stale the Captain enquired into the fray & the black hole was dispensd with I serving an addition on guard in its stead the fellow threw a mortified eye on me ever after & never found his tongue to tell me of a fault even when I was in one

The officers were often talking about Bonaparte in the field & praising each other in a very ridiculous manner very often I will repeat one anecdote having found that the common men were more expert in making nightly plunders in orchards then learning their exercise by day as they coud not come at the offender being those that slept in outhouses that coud go in & out as they chusd they determind on a plan to harass them as they calld it by taking them out in the field two additional hours in the morning from six to eight but they were not aware that six is a very late hour with ploughmen who were usd to get up before the sun all the year round so instead of harassing the men they quickly harassed themselves & thê scheme dropt in one of these early exercises one of the officers ladys whose fears for her husbands safty seemd very great even in little things sent the servent-maid after him with his breakfast as she came simpering along making her timid enquirys the captains of companys declard that they thought Mr XXX had been too much of a soldier to stand this & others swore upon their honours that he woud not stand it at length the enquiring maid found out her noble master who sneeringly disdaind to take it the maids only reason for bringing it being that her mistress was afraid he woud take cold by being out of doors in such unusual hours which to be sure was a mortifying disclosure to the pen-feathered soldier 'Go home & teach your mistress to know better girl' was the gallant replye & his brother officers who were on the look-out to watch the event when they saw the maiden depart hastend up to congratulate his valour & shake hands with him as a brother worthy the name of soldier the very clowns coud not help seeing this as ridiculous & burst into a hearty laugh as the farce ended this got into a byeword & I

itched to do somthing with it & wrote a ballad which I ventured to offer one evening at Bell's the printers for publication A young man behind the counter read it & laughd heartily saying he had heard of the circumstance but it was too personal to print & returnd it I felt fearful of being found out so I quickly destroyed it tearing it into little pieces as I went along & then threw them away but I heard nothing more of the matter I cannot remember much of it now but I thought little of it when I wrote it & more after it was destroyd

I once got into the awkward squad not for my own fault but that of others which shows that bad company is not very commendable one morning an old pieman came up & taking as he fancyd an advantage of our hunger like a crafty politician he askd an increasd price for them thinking our nessesity woud urge us to buy

On the last time we was calld up there was a fresh bounty set on foot of a further 2 guineas to those who woud enlist for extended service as they calld it to be sent so many miles out of the country to guard barracks castles or any other urgencys that might happen five shillings of which was to be paid down & the rest to be given when they were wanted I[t] did not much matter in extent of service but I felt purposes enew for the 5 shillings & when it was offerd me I took it without further enquirey & never heard further about it

[CHAPTER 8]

As USUAL I had now many schemes & plans in my mind of what I coud or might do I had improvd my frequent trials in rhyming & often felt I might gain some notice in time to come I fancyd too that I was book learnd for I had gotten together by saving a quantity of old books of motley merits all of which Drury got for a little or nothing I will reccolect some of them there was the young mans best companion Arithmetic the last was a favourite with me & I kept it Bonnycastles *Mensuration* & Wards *Mathematics* Leybourns & Morgans *Dialling Female Shipwright Robinson Crusoe Pilgrims Progress* Martindales *Landsurveying* & Cockers *Landsurveying* Hills *Herbal* Balls *Astrology* Culpeppers *Herbal* Rays *History of the Rebellion*

Hudibras Numbers of *Josephus* & Parnells *Poems* Flemmings *Algebra* Sturms *Reflections* Herveys *Meditations* Wallers *Poems* Westleys *Philosophy* Thompsons *Travels* Leschamps *Fables of Aesop* a book on Comets *Life of Barnfield More Carew Duty of Man* Watts *Hymns* Lees *Botany* & Waltons *Angler* Kings *Tracks of London laid open The Fathers Legacy or Seven Stages of Life* Bloomfields *Poems** some of these books were great favourites particularly Waltons *Angler* tho I never caught any more fish then usual by its instructions I bought it at a bookstall kept by a shopkeeper of the name of Adams at Stamford for 2 shillings & I gave it to my friend O. Gilchrist The *Female Shipwright* was a winter evening favourite in my first bookdays it belongd to my sister & was a true story printed by subscription for the woman whose history it related Bloomfields *Poems* were great favourites & Hills *Herbal* gave me a taste for wild flowers which I lovd to hunt after & collect to plant in my garden which my father let me have in one corner of the garden & on happening to meet with Lees *Botany* secondhand I fell for collecting them into familys but it was a dark system & I abandoned it with a dissatisfaction I also was fond of gathering fossil stones tho I never knew these was the subject of books yet I was pleasd to find & collect them which I did many years tho my mother threw them out of door when they was in her way A Dr Dupere of Crowland collected such things & my friend John Turnill got some for him This gave me the taste for fossil hunting my friend Artis had what was left when I became acquainted with him my habits of study grew anxious & restless & increased into a multiplicity of things poetry natural history Mathematics &c but I had little ambition to write down anything but my ryhmes these were on local circumstances mostly

* In this list of scholars' books, the more unusual should be mentioned. James Ray of Whitehaven wrote *A Compleat History of the Rebellion . . . in 1745* (1749); Christoph Christian Sturm's '*Reflections* on the Works of God' was translated from the German in 1788; James Hervey's tawdry *Meditations* were enthusiastically received by a large public; *The Whole Duty of Man*, by Richard Allestree (?) (1659), was an extremely popular theological work in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries. King's *Tracks of London Laid Open* and *The Female Shipwright* we have not traced, nor *The Father's Legacy*. Isaac Watts's *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, containing 'The Sluggard' and other well-known rimes, bears the date 1806, and is still among Clare's books at Northampton, perhaps the earliest he possessed.

& on spots & things which I felt a fondness for two or three of a Satirical nature I will insert here 'Elegy on the death of a Quack' was written on a quack Doctor who came to Deeping & whom the dupd people called Doctor Touch as it was rumourd about on his first appearance there that he curd all diseases by touching the patient with his hand which made the villagers all round anxious to know the truth of it lame & blind & such felt a vain hope that he might be inspired & went on purpose for their relief & Deeping was threatend to be crowded with cripples as the Pool of Bethesda my father & Will Farrow the shoemaker mentioned a while back went over to Deeping directly on his arrival there to ascertain the truth & leave their infirmitys behind them if possible but experience put a new face on the story the fellow did not cure them by touch but by blisters which he laid on in unmerciful sizes at half a guinea a blister & the money was to be paid down before he did his work this last demand compleatly shook my fathers faith as to his mission for he understood that prophets of old workd for nothing & he expected to see modern miracles performd in the same manner but when he found it was no such thing he & his companion refusd to have anything to do with the medical prophet who was very importunate & even abusive at their credulity when they reachd home & told their tale I sat down & wrote the following Epitaph the fellow stopt at Deeping a good while for he found plenty of believers to swallow his hoaxing pretensions in his bills he made a great parade against all knowledge & the faculty & made a boast of his ignorance by starting what he thought a better plea & in making his patients believe

I usd to drop down under a bush & scribble the fresh thoughts on the crown of my hat as I found nature then so I made her if an old pond with its pendant sallows fringing its mossy sides happend to be in the pleasant nook where I sat concealed among the blackthorns drawing its picture I calld it a pond & so my feelings were stirred into praise & my praises were mutterd in prose or ryhme as the mood might suit at the moment then these moods often repeated grew unperceivd into quantity on paper & then I indulged my fancy in thinking how they woud look in print I selected what I thought best & hid the others

out of shames way as laughing-stocks for the crowd who think it a childs occupation to indulge in such feelings & inexcusable in a man

So I determined on some plan or other to preserve what I wrote & I went to Deeping to purchase a blank book of Henson the printer & bookseller there I believe it was at the fair he was rather inquisitive to know what I wanted it for & on getting flusht with ale I dropt some loose hints about dabbling in ryhmes & he expressd a desire to see some I told him he shoud somtime & it passd on I gave eight shillings for the blank book & inserted such of the poems I had bye me that I thought better of then the rest & the others I left as they were Edward Drury has this book he got it out of me by an impertinent invasion of my secrets & kept it as all my other MSS are kept—for some purpose unknown to me—there are several fragments in it which I intended to have made use of but there are in all that are scatterd about which prevents me*

As to my learning I am not wonderfully deep in science nor so wonderfully ignorant as many may have fancied I puzzled over everything in my hours of leisure with a restless curiosity that was ever on the enquiry & never satisfied when I got set fast in one thing I did not tire but tried at another tho with the same success in the end yet it never sickend me I still pursued knowledge in a new path & tho I never came off victorious I was never conquered

I have puzzled wasted hours over Lee's Botany to understand a shadow of the system so as to be able to class the wild flowers peculiar to my own neighbourhood for I find it woud require a second Adam to find names for them in my way & a second Solomon to understand them in Linnaeus's system—moder[n] works are so mystified by systematic symbols that one cannot understand them till the wrong end of ones lifetime & when one turns to the works of Ray Parkinson & Gerard were there is more of nature & less of art it is like meeting the fresh air &

* Sentence unfinished—MS.

balmy summer of a dewey morning after the troubled dreams of a nightmare

I always had a thirst after knowledge in everything & by that restless desire have only acquired a very superficial knowledge of many things that serves no other purpose than to make me feel my real ignorance of everything so much the more

I now left home with a brother of Gordons to burn lime for Wilders of Bridge Casterton were we worked at first from light to dark (& in some emergencys all night) to get some money to appear a little descent in a strange place having arrivd penniless with but a shabby appearance in the bargain we got lodgings at a house of scant fame a professd lodging-house kept by a man & his wife of the name of Cole & we was troubled at night with threble fares in each bed an inconvenience which I had never been usd to they took in men of all descriptions the more the merrier for their profits when they were all assembled round the evening fire the motley countenances of many characters lookd like an assemblage of robbers in the rude hut dimly & mysteriously lighted by the domestic savings of a farthing taper & I remember a droll mistake in a stranger on my first coming there which created a deal of merriment among the lodgers, tho too serious in the strangers feelings to be laughd at—at an election somewere in Lincolnshire or Yorkshire one of the contending M Ps decoyd a great many of his canvassers from London who was brought down at their decoyers expense & left to go home at their own one of these unfortunates a delicate looking man with manners & habits bordering on gentility wanderd back with the pass of providence as his only friend sometimes walking & sometimes riding as chances fell out by the way & he arrived to learn all the beds were occupied by more successfull travellers & just late enough to make his dissapointment a nessesity to keep it or do worse so he was reccomended to our lodging house & being a thorough bred Londoner his simple wonderings at everything he saw started the titter among the other lodgers who fancied that such simple enquireys bespoke the man a runaway from bedlam he on the contrary not thinking it possible that his serious enquireys coud

be construed into anything laughable fancyd as the fears in his countenance easily dechypherd that we had mystical designs about us & felt for his safty no doubt enough to wish himself at home one of his mistakes was a startling one to be sure on walking in the garden in the evening he pulld up a flower of the white nettle by the wall & admired it as one of the finest flowers he had ever seen in a country garden there might be some expectation of cockney ignorance mixd up with it but I never forgot it & fancyd that the man had been brought up out of the world & the laugh & whisper went round the cottage fire & made him dream of danger so instead of going to bed he begd leave to sit up in his chair till morning when he gladly started & told the people at the Inn that he had been in great danger of losing his life among a gang of robbers over the way & that in the middle of the night he verily believd someone had been murderd in the chamber above his head so he took care to keep awake till morning the noise he mistook for murder was the groans & noise of a man who was troubled with the nightmare

When we first went we workd hard to save money & tryd to be saving in which we succeeded for a time & I got about 50 shillings in about 6 weeks with which I intended to purchase a new olive-green coat a color which I had long aimd at & for which I was measurd already ere I left home expecting to be able to pay for it in a very short time but an accident happend in the way which prevented me

we usd to go on Sundays to the Flower Pot a little public house at Tickencoat a neighbouring village & on one of these excursions I first saw Patty going across the fields toward her home I was in love at first sight & not knowing who she was or were she came from I felt very ill at rest I clomb on the top of a dotterel to see which way she went till she was out of sight but chance quickly thru her again in my way a few weeks when I was going to fiddle at Stamford I then venturd to speak to her & succeeded so far as to have the liberty to go home with her to her cottage about four miles off & it became the introduction to some of the happiest & unhappiest days my life has met with After I left her to return home I had taken such a heedless observance of the way that lead over a cow-pasture with its thousand paths & dallied so long over pleasant shapings of the

future that twilight with its doubtful guidance overtook my musings & led me down a wrong track in crossing the common as I coud not correct myself I got over a hedge & sat down on a baulk between a wheat-field were my ryhming feelings again returnd & I composd while sitting there the ballad inserted in the Village Minstrel & the song of all the days &c when the moon got up I started agen & on trying to get over the same hedge again as I thought to cross the common I saw somthing shine very bright on the other side I fancyd it to be some bare ground beaten by the sheep & cows in hot weather but doubting I stoopd down to feel & to my terrord supprise I found it was water & while in that stooping posture I saw by the lengthy silver line that stretchd from me it was the river if I had taken a step without this caution—I was frighted & sat under the hedge till daylight what a many times does a mans follys meet with those dangers & death-escapes in his heedless pleasure-haunted youth my reccolection can own many in mine from boyhood

A young shoemaker paid his addresses to her whose visits were approved of more by her parents than herself when I had disinherited him of [her] affections they encouraged him to come on & urgd & tried to win her mind over to his & their wishes such was the tide that bore strongly against us on our first acquaintance

Casterton cow-pasture where I usd to pass on my visits to Patty was a very favourite spot & I planned & wrote some of the best poems in my first volume among its solitudes my love-rambles then made me acquainted with many of the privacies of night which she seemed wishing to keep as secrets I was then the companion of the evening & very often the morning star Patty's Lodge stood in a lone spot & the very path seemed to lose itself in the solitudes & was glad to take the direction of rabbit-tracks ere it led one to the door Nature revelled in security

I usd to go on evenings in the week & every Sunday to the Lodge not at all times on love-errands merely but to get out of the way for the lodging house was generaly cumberd with inmates & the Inn was continualy troubling one with new jobs the solitude round the Lodge was plentiful & there were places

were the foot of man had not printed for years perhaps the scenery all round were beautiful heaths & woods swelld their wild & free varieties to the edges of the orizon* I usdto wander about them with my artless & interesting companion in more then happiness A large wood in summer usd to be coverd with Lillys of the valley of which she usd to gather handfuls for her flower pots & I helpd her to gather them in the woods were large caverns calld swallow pits by the woodmen of an immense depth so that if a stone was thrown in one might count awhile before one heard it echo

After I had burnt lime at the kiln awhile Mrs Wilders of the New Inn hearing that I had been at Burghley Gardens got me to work in the garden were I had a good time of it but the place led me into all sorts of company I workd here till the autumn & then went with my old companion to Pickworth

Pickworth is a place of other days it appears to be the ruins of a large town or city the place were we dug the kiln was full of foundations & human bones we was about a stones throw from the spot were the church had been which was entirely swept away excepting a curious pointed arch perhaps the entrance to the porch that still remains a stout defiance to the besiegings of time & weather it now forms a gateway to a stackyard a new church has been built on the site of the old one since I was there at the sole expence as I have heard of the Revd Mr Lucas of Casterton There were some literary associations too belonging to the spot it was the place were Tycho Wing† the celebrated astronomer was born & livd & the hall of his ancestors is still to be tracd as a heap of ruins & moats & fishponds of black mellancholy looking water partly in a close & partly in a wood calld 'Woodhead' . . .‡ In a large farmhouse were Tycho Wing once resided there is said that his study is still to be seen in the form he left were the walls are stuck round with the old almanacks he made but I have not seen it & can say no further for its correctness

. . . . .

* May be 'vision'—MS.
† Astrologer and editor of *Olympia Domata* (1696–1750).
‡ Clare repeated the sentence. We have left the repetition out.

I wrote several of my poems while I was here & formd a resolution of publishing them for I was over head & ears in embarassments & knew not which way to get out I had shown some to my first acquaintance in the matter J. B. Henson of Market Deeping among which was a sonnet to the Setting Sun & the one to the Primrose two of the earliest I ever wrote & these two he approvd of very much & also a poem on the death of Chatterton which he wanted to print in a penny book to sell to hawkers but I was doubtful of its merits & not envious of such fame so I declind it he seemd very anxious to publish the poems he said he woud write to his London bookseller & we proposd to do it by subscription & as soon as a hundred subscribers was gotten (I forget their names) he was to begin to print it & on our starting he would print 300 prospectuses for one Pound & I wishd him to write the thing but he declind & urgd me to it I was very loath & had a worse opinion of my prose abilitys then my poetry for I had never written a letter except the silly love epistles aluded [to] but I tryd what I coud do we lodgd at a public house still [with]* a mellancholy sign swinging in the wind by a solitary clump of some five or six houses [which] coud give it a licence to be calld so that stood as if no passengers coud ever be supposd to find it & as tho the road had forgotten the few fragments of the town that measured it it seemd to stand out of the worlds eye yet there was occasional droppers in that made it anything but a place fit for study so I usd to think over it in my morning & night journeys too & from work having another limekiln at Royale† about 2 miles off & at this place I sat down one day & wrote my address to the public on a piece of paper which I kept for the purpose it gave me a deal of trouble & I was ill satisfied with what I had written but I wanted to do something to get out of debt so I wrote it & directed it with a pencil & in the want of sealing wax seald it with pitch & took it to Stamford but my heart was in a thousand minds ere I got there sometimes I thought I woud give up all thoughts of poetry & agen my hopes returnd & I resolvd to try the experiment thinking that if I got laughed at & reapd scorn instead of profits in the publication of my poems it woud only be a[n] excuse to all foolish fancys &

* MS. has 'of.' † Ryhall.

scribbling follys for the future so I sat down upon a stone heap before I got into Stamford & lookd over it again to correct it & I felt as I went on as if everybody knew my errand & my face reddend at the gaze of a passer bye the post office was shut up when I got there & they wanted a penny with the letter but I had not got one so they took [it] with a loath kind of look bye & bye a letter returnd from Henson stating that he woud meet me at Stamford with 100 of the prospectuses & arrange for further matters I accordingly went & for the first time saw a sonnet of mine in print & I scarcely knew it in its new dress & felt a prouder confidence then I had hitherto done thinking it got merit by its dress his mind was rather changd when I got there he did not seem so urgent to print them & instead of a pound he had got 5 or 6 shillings more of me for the journey &c &c I was not aware that promises was a current coin among booksellers of all sizes from Henson the salebill printer to the city professor I met him at the Dolphin Inn & while we was drinking together a dull looking fellow in a genteelish dress came in to whom Henson gave one of the papers offering at the same time as a sort of apology a little account [of] my profession &c but the fellow just threw his eyes over it then lookd at me & walkd out of the room without saying a word the next person that came in was of a milder disposition tho his profession is not agreed on as associate with such places yet in spite of foibles he was a good fellow Henson begd him to peruse one he did & made enquiries to me which I answered in a shoy manner but he wishd me success & gave the sonnet some praise askd me to drink with him & bade Henson set his name down as a subscriber wishing at the same time that he was able to give me further assurances this gave me good heart & did me more good than all I ever met with before or after I felt it deeply & never forgot the name of the Rev Mr Mounsey a short time after I left Pickworth & returnd when Henson proposd to print the work as soon as he shoud have 100 subscribers after I had got a good many things ready for him to begin with he said he coud not do it unless I coud borrow £15 of any friend in the village but there was not a friend in the village friendly enough to lend me fifteen shillings & I told him so then he proposd £10 & in this shuffling from one proposal to another I got

very uneasy my confidence in his promises shrunk to nothing I wishd then that I had never engagd in the matter & felt ashamd as I went down the street scarcely daring to look anybody in the face for the prospectuses had filld everybodys mouth with my name & prospects most of which was Jobs comforters & the cry was against me

After I had printed & distributed all my prospectus papers I found not one subscriber* & my hopes seemd lost & I hardly knew what course to take I had got no work to go to & I hardly dare show my face to seek for any everybody seemed to jeer me at my foolish pretensions & seemd shoy at my fallen hopes & I felt ashamed as I went down the street scarcely daring to look anyone in the face for the prospectuses had filled everybodys mouth with my name & prospects enquiry stood on tiptoe with questions go where I woud & I hated to hear them I evaded them as well as I coud I felt uncommonly uneasy & knew not what to do I sometimes thought of running away & leaving home were I might be at peace among strangers for my dissapointment was fast growing into a byword I went to Stamford twice to enlist in the artillery which was recruiting there but my variety of minds prevented me besides my love matters were a strong tether that I coud not easily break I went so far at one time to take the money for a recruit but the sergeant was a better man than such usually are & said he took no advantage of a man in liquor for I was fresh at the time & let me off with paying the expenses of the drink but I was wanting in height which might be a better plea than the sergeants honesty

In the midst of the dilemma a bookseller namd Thompson sent in a bill for 15 shillings which he desird I woud pay him as he was going to leave the place I was very willing to pay him but I was not able to so I wrote him a few lines to tell him the situation I was in sending at the same time a few prospectuses & wishing he woud do somthing to assist me while I promisd to pay the bill as soon as ever I was able which I hopd to be ere long I got my companion T. Porter of Ashton to take the letter but he treated all with contempt & abusd him the bill was run

* A copy of a letter to Henson (B.M. Correspondence) says 'I send you some of the principal subscribers . . .' Though there is no date the letter probably refers to this point. The number of subscribers finally was seven.

for some numbers of the *Boston Enquirer* which I never finishd

Ned Drury had entered on the shop then & on seeing one of the prospectuses he took it as a matter of profit paid the 15 shillings for me before he enquird further this matter he has translated into a lye in the Introduction* which has another lye in it not of his insertion as he says & that is of my selling the poems for 20 Pounds I never sold them at all is the fact of the matter When my friend Porter told me of his success I was in a tetterd perplexity & knew not what to do but Ned Drury with his friend R. Newcomb publisher of the *Stamford Mercury* calld at a farmer of the name of Clark to dine & enquire into my character & merits as a poet the former was open to every meddler but the latter was a secret so they came to enquire more about it with me I was at a neighbours house when they came (at Billings the 'Bachelors Hall') & my sister ran for me & on telling me two gentlemen wanted to see me I felt hopeful & hurriedly went home where I found them talking to my parents Drury said little or nothing but Newcomb askd some questions as to how my writings were disposd of when I told him that I had made proposals for Henson to print them he said they did not wish to take them out of his hands but that instead of desiring money to print them they woud let me have money for my necessitys so I thought the difference of advantage a good one & readily engaged to get my MSS. from Henson Mr Newcomb invited me to dine with him on the Monday as he prepard to start but cautiously opend the door again to remind me that unless I brought the MSS. I need not come I felt insulted with his kindness & never accepted the invitation tho I took some of them the next day when Drury looked over them & gave me a guinea as a sort of earnest I suppose & promisd to pay my debts I remaind with him the whole day & he gave me a poem in my hands to read of Lord Byrons— I think it was *The Giaour*—the first time I had seen any of them

I once signd an agreement with Drury which allowed me a quarter profit I was fresh at the time but it got wind & others heard of it that knew better then I did so he sent it up to London to be destroyd I know nothing tho I know that I

* To *Poems Desriptive of Rural Life and Scenery.*

have never signed an agreement of any kind since & never will

I promisd to take him more of my poems when I got them from Hensons so I wrote to him & sent it by my mother to deliver up my poems as [he] had broken the agreement by wishing me to borrow £15 I told him that this was an impossibility all along & mentiond my better prospects in the new engagement I had made with Drury he gave them up with some reluctance & I took them to Drury [he] showd them to the Rev[d] Mr. Twopenny of Little Casterton who sent them back with a cold note stating that he had no objection to assist in raising the poor man a small subscription tho the poems appeard to him to posses no merit to be worthy of publication Drury read this precious thing to me & as I fancyd all men in a station superior to mine learned & wise especially parsons I felt my fortune as lost & my hopes gone & tho he tryd to cheer me I felt dejected a long time & almost carried it too far after prosperity shone out upon me I rememberd it keenly & wrote the following lines on his name & a letter which I never sent

Twopenny his wisdom is & Twopenny his fame is
Twopenny his merit is & Twopenny his name is
And as Twopence is a trifle I will do without him
I'll sing in spite of Twopences & not care Twopence about him

After Twopenny sent his note Drury showd them agen to Sir English Dolben* who expressd a different opinion & left his name as a subscriber this heartend me again & I rhymd on & became pacified in this winter I finishd all the fragments that I thought worth it for most of what I had done hitherto was unfinishd the earliest of such were Helpstone which I intended for a long poem in the manner of Goldsmith & the fate of Amy Address to a Lark Noon which I wrote very early & composd on a hot day in summer while I went to fill my fathers bottle with water at Round Oak spring Evening &c &c the sonnets to the Setting Sun the Primrose the gipseys evening blaze & a Scene &c these were begun when I was 14 or 15 & finishd & in some

* John English Dolben, of Finedon Place, Northamptonshire, was an ancestor of the poet—friend of Robert Bridges, D. M. Dolben.

cases alterd throughout I began to write Sonnets at first from seeing two very pretty ones in an old newspaper I think they were by Charlotte Smith* the rest in the first vol was written the next summer & winter while the book was going thro the press one at the latter end Crazy Nell was taken from a narative in the *Stamford Mercury* nearly in the same manner it was related I was very pleasd with it & thought it one of the best I had written & I think so still the next spring my master Wilders sent for me to work in the garden & I started when I renewd my acquaintance with Patty which had rather broken off

I usd to seize the leisure that every wet day brought me to go to Drury's shop to read books & to get new tunes for my fiddle which was a pleasure of no freshness whenever I wrote a new thing I usd to take it to Drury very often on Sunday morning to breakfast with him in one of these visits I got acquainted with Dr. Bell a man of odd taste but a pleasant acquaintance he was fond of books & had edited a droll one entitled *The Banisher of the Blue Devils* a jest book he usd to cut all the curious & odd paragraphs out of newspapers & paste them on sheets of paste-board he had a great many of these things which he had collected for many years he had been a doctor in the army & in the East or West Indies became acquainted with 'Peter Pindar' then in the same capacity some of whose early poems he possesd which had never been publishd he wrote to Earl Spencer respecting me & succeeded in getting me a salary of £10 per Annum—I was full of hopes at my present success but my money matters were still precarious for Drury objected to paying all my bills tho he did it afterwards my mistress wishd to see some of my pieces & usd to be anxious to introduce me to strangers whom she would talk to about me & who woud express a curiosity to see me but I usd to get out of the way when I coud one of these who stopd there a day or two saw some of them & said that the poem of evening was an imitation of something that has slipt my memory now I thought the man shoud say something if he knew nothing & seeing I displayd but a bookless appearance he

* Charlotte Smith (1749–1806) who, Miss Mitford said, 'with all her faults', had the 'eye and mind of a landscape poet', published her Sonnets, dedicated to Hayley, in 1784. They ran into eleven editions.

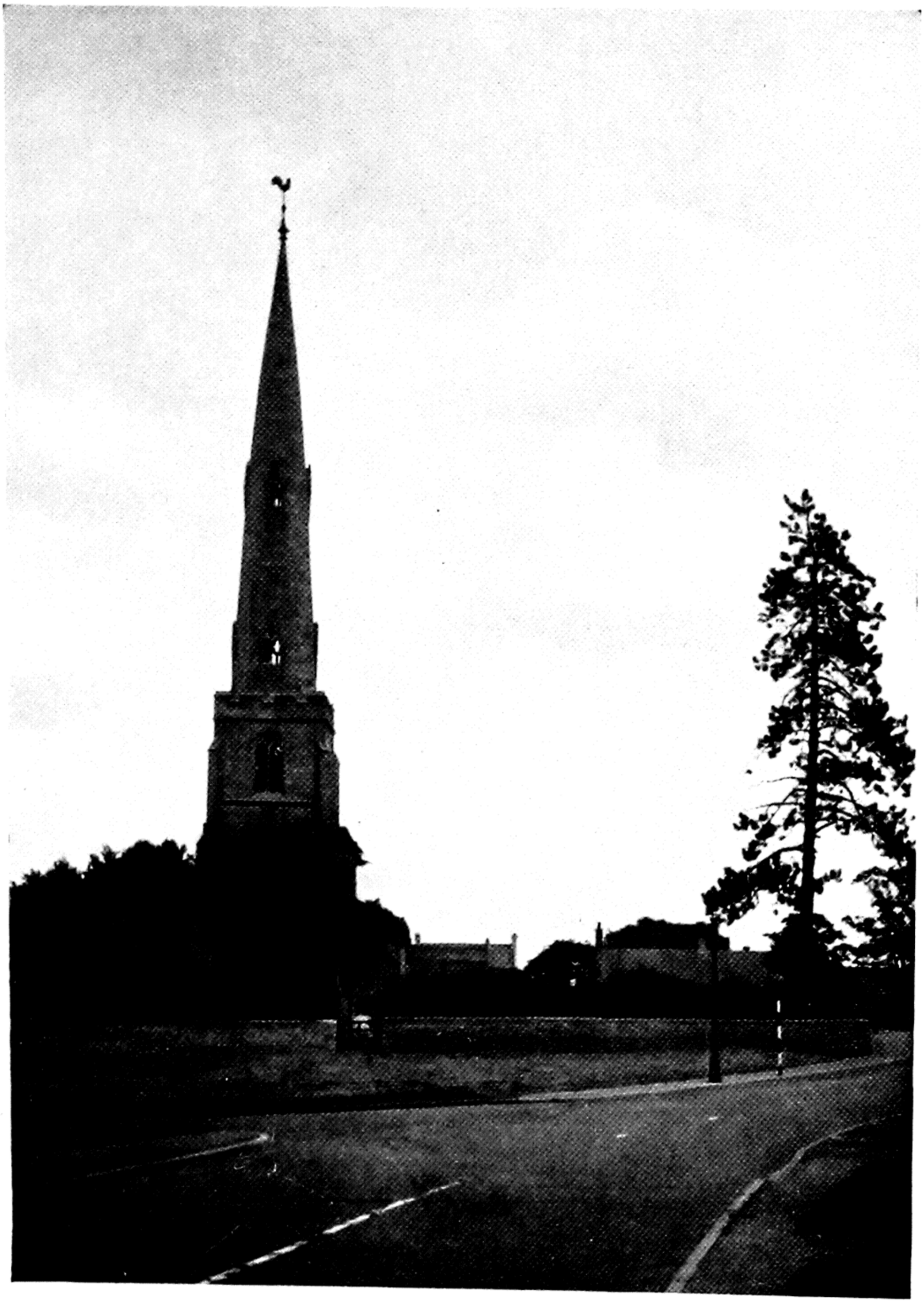
hazarded his makeshift for learning as heedless as he pleasd I know nothing of who or what he was—

Drury told me now that my poems was crownd with the utmost success I coud wish for as they were in the hands & had met the favourable opinion of a gentleman who coud & woud do them justice but he woud not tell me his name a painter of profiles was in the town whom he engagd to take my likeness these things are trifles to remember but they were great at their beginnings they made me all life & spirits & nothing but hope & prosperity was before me

Pattys friends who rather lookd coldly on my acquaintance with her & who seemd to take my [attentions]* as more of intrusions then visits now began to be anxious after my [good faith]* & courted my acquaintance while I on the contrary felt their former slights & now I felt myself on vantage ground I determind to take my revenge & neglected to go or but slightly heeded their urgent invitations & while I was at home in the winter I renewd my acquaintance with a former love I had made a foolish confidence with a young girl at Southorp & though it began in a heedless [frolic]* at Stamford Fair from accompanying her home it grew up into an affection that made my heart ache to think it must be broken for Patty was then in a situation that marriage only coud remedy I felt awkwardly situated & knew not which way to proceed I had a variety of minds about me & all of them unsettled my long-smotherd affections for Mary revivd with my hopes & as I expected to be on a level with her bye & by I thought then I might have a chance of success in reviving my former affection Amid these delays Patty's emergency became urgent She had revealed her situation to her parents when she was unable to conceal it any longer who upbraided her with not heeding their advice & told her as she had made her bed hard she shoud lie on it [. . .]† when I reflected on these things I felt stubbornly disposd to

* The MS. has gaps. We have substituted possible words.

† Clare has here repeated himself word for word: see passage on p. 56: 'A young shoemaker . . . their wishes'. We have therefore omitted the passage in the above.



Glinton Spire—'so tall; and yet
so very slender and neat'



Part of Helpstone Heath, in winter
'reeded grass, breast-high and undisturbed'

leave them the risk of her misfortune but when she complained of their harshness I coud stand out no longer & promisd that my prosperity shoud make me her friend & to prove that I was in earnest I gave her money till we shoud be married This behaviour pacifyd them & left her at peace

They were poor tho they had known better days & they fancyd that the memory of these things ought to be accounted for & take them above the level above the vulgar occupations of life like my profession their friends too still enjoyd prosperity & woud fancy it a stain to their family with a limeburner such was the tide that bore strongly against us in our first acquaintance but when my book was publishd the wind changd & all were on my side courting my acquaintance

I held out as long as I coud & then married her at Casterton church her uncle John Turner was father & gave her the wedding dinner

I workd on at the New Inn till the winter & then returned home on a disagreement on the wages he promisd me nine shillings a week the year round & then wished to put me off with seven he was an odd man but a good master & the place on the whole one of the best I ever met with I left it with regret & rather wishd to return as I liked the town & the fields & solitudes were wild & far better than the fenny flats that I had been usd to I left Casterton on the Bullring Day at Stamford & on calling on Drury I fell in with John Taylor whom I found was the editor of my poems then in the press & nearly ready for publishing he was visiting at Mr. Gilchrists & in the evening they sent one of the servant-maids to Drurys to invite me to go I felt loath but on his persuasion I started & he showed me the door I read an account of Woodcroft Castle from Wood's *History** & Taylor talkd over some sayings & doings of the living authors

I have often been accusd of being a drunkard & of being ungrateful towards friends & patrons by a set of meddling trumpery to whom I owe none who never gave me further notice than their scandal which is too weak or foolish for me to

* Scott used the historical story of Dr. Michael Hudson's tragic end at the hands of the Roundheads at Woodcroft in *Woodstock*.

notice or replye to they are a set of little curs without teeth whose barkings can do no harm & whose busy meddling rather serves to create laughter than anger the utmost breath of their satire blown up to bursting has not sufficient strength to bear up a soap bubble so let them rail most of them have known me from childhood & coud never find that I had any faults till now —I possesd their good word 18 years & it did me no service— & if I shoud live to wear their bad one as long it will do me no harm so I care nothing about them though their meddling gets the ears of some that believe them—I have felt all the kindness I have receivd though I did not make a parade of it I did not write eternal praises & I had a timidity that made me very awkward & silent in the presence of my superiors which gave me a great deal of trouble & hurt my feelings I wishd to thank them & tell them that I felt their kindness & remaind silent neither did I trumpet the praises of patrons eternally were ever I went—I had found great talkers were always reckoned little liars & that eternal praisers in public were alowd to be whis-perers of slander in secret so I thought that if I was always speaking of myself & patrons among such company I shoud be suspected & reckond as one of them—I was never utterly cast down in adversity I struggled on neither was I at any time lifted up above my prosperity—I never attempted to alter my old ways & manners I arboured no proud notions nor felt a pride above my station I was courted to keep company with the 'betters' in the village but I never noticd the fancied kindness the old friends & neighbours in my youth are my friends & neighbours now & I have never spent an hour in any of the houses of the farmers since I met with my [success]* or mixd in their company as equals I visit none but an old neighbours with whom I was acquainted in my days of labour I keep on in the same house that we always occupied & have never felt a desire to have a better—tho it has grown into a great incon-venience since my father first occupied it 35 years ago [ ]† till every misfortune as it were came upon him to crush him at once for as soon as he was disabled from work the old tree faild

* Gap—MS. But Clare must have intended a more revealing word than 'success'.

† This is the excerpt we have transferred to p. 12, since introductory material seemed so lacking.

to bear fruit & left us unable to get up the rent & when Drury found me out we owd for two years & was going to leave it the next year my father was going to a parish house & I was at Casterton in service were I intended to remain & when I met with my unexpected prosperity I never felt a more satisfied happiness than being able to keep on the old house & to put up with all its inconveniences & when I was married the next door occupier happened to leave his tenement so I took it & remaind on—I have often been urgd & advisd to leave it & get a more roomey & better looking house by visitors who gave me no better encouragement than their words & whom I did not expect woud be of any service to me in case their advice happend to lead me into greater inconvenience in the end so I took no notice of them & lived on in the same house & in the same way as I had always done following my old occupations & keeping my old neighbours as friends without being troubld or dissapointed with climbing ambitions that shine as fine as they may only tempt the restless mind to climb so that he may be made dizzy with a mocking splendour & topple down headlong into a lower degradation than he left behind him as soon as he went to the parish for relief they came to clap the town brand on his goods & set them down in their parish books because he should not sell or get out of them I felt utterly cast down for I coud not help them sufficient to keep them from the parish so I left the town & got work at Casterton with Gordon I felt some consolation in solitude for my distress letting loose my revenge on the unfeeling town officer* in a satire on the 'Parish' which I forebore to publish afterwards

They remained quiet spectators of my success & ceased to meddle with my father when I did not care for their kindnesses or fear their resentment

[CHAPTER 9]

In the beginning of January my poems was publishd after a long waiting anxiety of nearly two years & all the reviews except Philips waste paper Mag spoke in my favour in the

* Possibly 'Bumtagg the bailiff'. But see the whole of Clare's satire on the new rich of 1820. *Collected Poems*, 1935.

course of the publication I had venturd to write to Lord Milton to request leave that the vol might be dedicated to him but his Lordship was starting into Italy & forgot to answer it so it was dedicated to nobody which perhaps might be as well as soon as it was out my mother took one to Milton when his Lordship sent a note to tell me to bring 10 more copys on the following Sunday I went & after sitting awhile in the servants hall where I coud eat or drink nothing for thought his Lordship sent for me & instantly explaind the reason why he did not answer my letter in a quiet unaffected manner which set me at rest he told me he had heard of my poems by Parson Mossop who I have since heard took hold of every oppertunity to speak against my success or poetical abilitys before the book was publishd & then when it came out & others praisd it instantly turnd round to the other side Lady Milton also asked me several questions & wishd me to name any book that was a favourite expressing at the same time a desire to give me one but I was confounded & coud think of nothing & so lost the present in fact I did not like to pick out a book for fear of seeming over-reaching on her kindness or else Shakespeare lay at my tongues end Lord Fitzwilliam & Lady Fitzwilliam too talkd to me & noticd me kindly & his Lordship gave me some advice which I had done well perhaps to have noticed better than I have he bade me beware of booksellers & warnd me not to be fed with promises on my departure they gave me a handful of money the most that I had ever possesd in my life together & I felt almost sure I should be poor no more there was seventeen pounds

afterwards I was visited by the Hon[ble] Mr. Pier-point* with an invitation to go to Burghley on the Sunday but when sunday came it began to snow too unmercifully for a traveller ever to venture thus far so I declind going tho it was not the weather prevented me I. felt fearful that my shoes would be in a dirty condition for so fine a place when I got there the porter asked me the reason why I did not come before & when I spoke of the weather he said 'they expected you & you shoud stand for no weathers tho it rained knives & forks with the tynes downward we have been suspected of sending you away' this was a lesson which I afterwards took care to remember after a

* Henry Manvers Pierrepont, brother-in-law of the Marquis of Exeter.

while his Lordship sent for me I went upstairs & thro winding passages after the footman as fast as I could hobble almost fit to quarrel with my hard-nailed shoes at the noise they made on the marble & boarded floors & cursing them to myself as I set my feet down in the lighest steps I was able to utter his Lordship recieved me kindly askd me some questions & requested to look at the MSS which Mr. Pierrpoint wishd me to bring in my pocket he expressd a regret that Lady Sophia his sister could not see me being very ill & having sat up too long the day before on expecting my coming I felt vexed I did not go but it was no use her Ladyship gave me the *Pleasures of Hope** after I had been about half an hour eying the door & now & then looking at my dirty shoes & wishing myself out of danger of soiling such grandeur he saw my embarrassment as I suspect & said I shoud lose my dinner in the servants hall & had better go but it was no use starting for I was lost & coud not stir a foot I told his Lordship & he kindly opend the door & showd me the way when he suddenly made a stop in one of the long passages & told me that he had no room in his gardens for work at present but that he woud alow me 15 guineas a year for life

The first publication of my poems brought many visitors to my house out of a mere curiosity I expect to know wether I realy was the son of a thresher & a labouring rustic as had been stated & when they found it realy was so they lookd at each other as a matter of satisfied supprise askd some gossipy questions & on finding me a vulgar fellow that mimickd at no pretensions but spoke in the rough way of a thoroughbred clown they soon turnd to the door & dropping their heads in a goodmorning attitude they departed—I was often annoyed by such visits & got out of the way whenever I coud & my wife & mother was often out of temper about it as they was often caught with a dirty house than which nothing was a greater annoyance

Good luck began to smile from all quarters & my successes

* This wide-ranging poem of the martial, yet energetically peace-championing Campbell, published (1799) when he was only twenty-one, might be read with as much profit as are Campbell's far more well-known war poems. Years later, at High Beech, Clare was the companion of Campbell's only son, who was subject to a mild, intermittent, but incurable insanity.

made me almost beside myself Lord Radstock wrote to me with the most feeling affection & has acted to me more of a father then a friend Blair's sermons* accompanyd the letter & Mrs. Emmerson about the same time wrote with kind encouragements & accompanyd it with Youngs *Night Thoughts* but the first letter I ever recievd was from a disguisd Name A.B. supposd to be Dawson Turner of Yarmouth† seasond with good advice which I did not heed as I ought & Captain Sherwill† wrote to me early & kindly it was thro his friendship that I recievd the present from Walter Scott of 2 Guineas & the Lady of the Lake which was wrongly & sadly mistated in the gossip that appeard in the *London Mag.* intitld 'A Visit &c' I felt dissapointed when I heard it was a present from the author but I said nothing C.S. made an apology for the omission by saying that Walter Scott enjoyd such a high literary character that he did not wish to hazard an opinion or insert his name in the Vol I cannot exactly say what the words were without referring to the letter but a little slip of paper was inserted in the Vol by C.S. stating that Walter Scott presented that . . . he‡ remembered the time when the author of the Lady of the Lake hazarded his reputation in a [ ]§ matter by courting the favour of the critics in stating that his livelihood consisted in his writings wether this be true or false it rests in my mistake for Octave Gilchrist was the man that told me & I believe him

I was now wearing into the sunshine & the villagers saw carriages now & then come to the house filld with gossiping gentry that was tempted by curiosity more than anything else to seek me from these I got invitations to correspond & was swarmd with promises of books till my mother was troubld & fancied that the house woud not hold them but the trouble was soon set aside for the books never came & one letter generally

* Hugh Blair (1718–1800), like the earlier author of *The Grave*, bases his title to fame on one work. His *Sermons* enjoyed an extraordinary popularity. See Journal for 31 October 1824.

† Clare's replies to the botanist and antiquary's well-meant advice have unfortunately not survived. Nor those to Markham Sherwill, author of *Ascent to the Summit of Mont Blanc* (1825) and of *Poems* (1832).

‡ The top of the page has unfortunately been cut away: 'he' therefore refers, not to Sherwill, but to Gilchrist, mentioned below. The facts were that Sherwill had importuned the newly made baronet about Clare, and Scott declined to write his name in the books. § Gap in MS. of perhaps one word.

worded with extravagant praise courting a quick reply I replied warmly & there the matter ended I had nothing but my dissapointment in return but I soon felt experience growing over these deceptions & when such matters was palmd on me again I never answerd them I had one or two of these things nay more from parsons—

Some of them askd me if I kept a book to insert the names of visitors & on my answering in the negative they woud often request to insert them on any paper & many of them left promises which they never performd so I soon learnd that promises was a good seed time but performances brought a bad harvest forgetfulness coming between like Pharoahs lean kine & swallowing them up I had the works of Lord Byron promisd by 6 different people & never got them from none of them

amid these successes I went to work as usual but was often tormented & sent for to satisfye the gaze of strangers—Lord Radstock started a subscription that filld me with astonishment at his accounts of its success Taylor & Hessey inserted a hundred pounds in their name at the top of the list & the good Lord Fitzwilliam gave me a hundred pounds from a letter which Taylor sent who took the [opportunity]* to kill two birds with one stone & mentioned Keats in his letter to whom his Lordship gave 50 pound & a short time after a tirade†

Chauncy Hare Townsend‡ came to see me one evening in summer & askd me if John Clare lived there I told him I was he & he seemd supprised & askd agen to be satisfied for I was shabby & dirty he asked freely & was dissapointed I dare say at finding I had little or nothing to say for I always had a natural depression of spirits in the presence of strangers that took from me all power of freedom or familiarity & made me dull & silent for [when] I attempted to say anything I could not reccolect it & made so many hums & hahs in the story that I was obliged to leave it unfinished at last I often tryd to master this confusion by trying to talk over reasonings & arguments as I went about in my rambles which I thought I did pretty well but as soon as I got before anybody I was as much to seek as ever C. H. T. was a little affecting with dandyism & mimicked a lisp in his speech which he owd to affectation rather than

* Gap—MS. † MS. breaks off. ‡ More usually 'Townshend'.

habit otherwise he was a feeling & sensible young man he talked about Poets & poetry & the fine scenery of the lakes & other matters for a good while & when he left me he put a folded paper in my hand which I found after he had gone was a sonnet & a pound bill he promised & sent me Beattie's *Minstrel* some letters passd between us & I sent him a present of my *Village Minstrel* when I never heard of him afterwards he has since published a volume of Poems*

Among the many that came to see me there was a dandified gentleman of unconscious odditys of character that not only bordered on the ridiculous but was absurdly smothered in it he made pretensions to great learning & knew nothing On his first coming he began in a very dry manner to examine the fruits of experience in books & said he hoped I had a fondness for reading as he wished to have the pleasure to make me a present of some he then begd my walking stick & after he had got it he wanted me to write my name on the crook I really thought the fellow was mad he then asked me insulting liberties respecting my first acquaintance with Patty & said he understood that in the country the lower orders made their courtship in barns & pigsties & asked me whether I did I felt very vexd & said it might be the custom of the high orders for aught I knew as experience made fools wise in most matters but I assured him he was very wrong respecting that custom among the lower orders here his wife said he was fond of a joke & hoped I should not be offended but I saw nought of a joke in it & found afterward that he was a scant remove from the low order himself as his wife was a grocer's daughter after he had gossiped an hour he said 'Well I promised to give you a book but after examining your library I dont see that you want anything as you have a great many more than I expected to find Still I should make you an offer of something have you got a Bible?' I said nothing but it was exactly what my father had long wanted & he instantly spoke for me & said 'We have a Bible Sir but I cannot read it the print is so small so I should thank you for one' The man looked very confused & explained

* Clare's letter thanking Townshend for his gift of Beattie's *Minstrel* is dated April. Townshend's first visit is more likely, therefore, to have been March than summer. See *Letters* for information on Townshend and his publications.

by his manner that he had mentioned the very book which he thought we had to escape giving it

I met with notice from the Bishop of Peterboro who sent me a beautifully bound copy of Miss Aikins *Elizabeth** his lady came to see me twice with the Revd Mr. Parsons & a young lady who presented me with a Vol of sermons on the Christian religion they talkd awhile about my poems & started—Drury usd to be very fond of introducing me to strangers when I was at his house & I went there very often & at one of these calls General Birch Reynardson came into the shop to buy some books & made some enquireys about me Drury told him I was at hand & he expressd a desire to see me when he invited me to come to Holywell which I did at the beginning of April

It was a pleasant day for the season & I found the scenery of Holywell very beautiful he showd me his library which was the largest I had seen then & he pulld out of the crammd shelves a thin quarto beautifully bound in red morocco he said they were Love Elegys written by his father & of course in his mind were beautiful I just glancd over them & fancied they were imitations of Drummond at the end were some in ms which I suspected to be written by himself I then went to see the garden & strolld a little about the park a little river ran sweeping along & in one place he was forming a connection with it to form an island in one sunny spot was a large dial & near it under the shadow of some evergreens was a bird house built in the form of a cage glass all round & full of canarys that were fluttering about busily employd in building their nests—in looking about these places a young lady the governess to the children whom I mistook for his wife neither of whom unriddled my mistake till I found it out & I felt ashamed & next after looking about the gardens & the library I was sent to dinner in the Servants Hall when it was over the housekeeper invited me into her room where the governess came & chatted in a free manner & asking me to correspond with her gave me her address The house-

* *Memoirs of the Court of Queen Elizabeth*, by Lucy Aikin (1818). Mrs. Barbauld's niece also wrote a poem and a novel, as well as a life of her aunt, but her name rests on her historical works.

keeper wishd me to write an address to her son in imitation of Cowpers lines on his mothers picture the governess was a pretty impertinent girl & mischievously familiar to a mind less romantic than my own I felt startled into sudden supprises at her manner & in the evening on my return home I was more supprised still when on getting out of the park into the fields I found her lingering in my path & on coming up to her she smiled & told me plainly she was waiting to go a little way home with me I felt evil apprehensions as to her meaning but I was clownish & slow in smiles & advantage to interpret it she chatted about my poems & resumed the discourse of asking me to correspond with her which I promisd I woud when we came to the break of the heath that stands in view of Patty's cottage I made a step to get rid of her, but she lingered & chattered on till it grew very late when a man on horseback suddenly came up & asked the road we had come from she thinking it was the General hastily retreated but on finding her mistake she returned & resumed her discourse till it grew between the late & early when I wished her goodnight & abruptly started without using the courage of shaking her by the hand I felt excessively awkward all the way home & my mind was filled with guesses & imaginings at her strange manner & meanings I wrote one letter to her & intended to be very warm & very gallant in it but fancying that she only wanted me to write love letters to have the pleasure to talk about them & laugh at them my second mind wrote a very cold one in which I inserted the 'Second Address to a Rosebud in Humble life' in which I requested no answer nor hinted a second advance so there the matter or mystery ended for I never unriddled its meaning though it was one of the oddest adventures my poetical life met with it made me rather conceited as I fancied the young lady had fallen in love with me she came from Birmingham I shall not mention her name here

I now received invitations to go to Milton* not to visit Lord Milton but his servants but they were the first-rate of the house

* Clare's visit to Milton which began his friendship with Artis and Henderson may have preceded his visit to Holywell in April 1820, or even Townshend's visit of March.

well-informed men not unacquainted with books & I never met with a party of more happy & heartier fellows in my life there was Artis up to the neck in the old Roman coins & broken pots of the Romans & Henderson never wearied with hunting after the emperor butterfly & the hornet sphinx in the Hanglands Wood & the orchises on the Heath & West an upright honest man though his delight in reading extended little further than the prices that fat sheep & bullocks fetchd & the rise of corn each week 'the mans the man for a' that' & Roberts who sung a song of Moores & admired his poetry clever & as stoutly as most amateurs & 'Grill' the cook he was a Frenchman & possesd a fund of patient good-humour & a countenance unmatchable in England his visage was a caricature in good earnest & would heartily repay Cruikshank a journey from London to take it Artis drew an outline of his countenance but they want the spirit of the original they are only outlines & there was Hague the wine buttler whose library consisted of one solitary book Brown's* *Reflections on a Summer Day* he was an odd good sort of fellow there were two young maidens Mrs. Procter & Mrs. Byron who had not the womanly affectation about them of even attempting to show some affinity of kindred in the coincidences of their names with two popular poets they were above pardonable vanities & one of them was a lover of poetry

Mr. Hopkinson of Morton sent an odd sort of invitation for he was an odd sort of man he sent a note saying that a horse woud be at my door at Helpstone on such a morning at such a time of the clock leaving me no option wether I chuse to go or not It was harvest† & I was busy reaping wheat I told the man I was reaping for about the matter & he said I had better go so according the pony came & I started the day after I got in his wife took me round the town to walk as she told me but I found it was to sho me to her parishoners I felt very much

* Not Coleridge's 'William *Browne* of Ottery,' nor William E. Brown, the Scottish divine, nor Moses Browne, the eighteenth-century poet of *Piscatorial Eclogues*, seems to be the author we want.

† This visit to Hopkinson the magistrate of Morton, in Lincs., certainly belongs *after* Clare's first London visit, dealt with in his next chapter, but just as certainly, in the absence of Clare's own verdict, it fits best here.

anoyed at the awkward situation it led me in for I found they did not want to be troubled either with one or the other her impertinent enquireys were often evaded with a careless indifference & a pretending business at their domestic labours they woud scarcely wait to hear her speak ere the weel was started into a quicker twirl or the pots & pans scoured with a more bustling hand she was going to take me a regular round from door to door but I was obliged to tell her that I was not fond of such visiting she desisted but not without seeming to be offended she was one of the oddest & most teasing fancied kindnesses that I ever met with—as soon as I got in she took me up stairs to show me a writing desk which she told me to consider as my own & showd me at the same time all the draws & their contents of Paper Pens Ink saying that she expected I woud make use of it & hoped I woud write something every day she woud find me plenty of paper but when the upshot came & after I had exhausted my whole budget of thanks for the present she begd to caution me that I shoud not take it away with me that it was mine every time I came & as long as I staid but she coud not part with it out of the house as it was an old favourite she proposd reading my poems over leaf by leaf to give her opinion of them & make observations &c &c for my benefit & advantage to correct in a second edition & she began with the introduction she read a few lines & then she preachd over a half hours comment she said the introduction was very well written but I must now think of improving it as I had met with many friends whom it would be very rude of me not to mention as they certainly woud look for some compliment from me for the notice they had taken & she thought I coud do it better in ryhme when we got to the poems she would remember this as a pretty poem but why did you not dedicate it to some one of your friends as you did the Woodman she read in a loud confident voice like the headboy in a school who is reckoned a good reader & tho she met with words frequently that she did not understand [she] would jar them over with an unnecessary mutter as if she thought you woud take no notice or did not understand it She woud often lift up her eye from her book to see if I was attending & on finding my attention occupied with other things she gave up the criticism after commenting on a few pages she

appeard to be a woman of very little understanding & less learning to help it out—

There were two daughters that were well read in books & of amiable disposition but they had quarreld with her & did not come downstairs while I stayd—the man was of odd tastes & habits & I found that tho a magistrate he woud tell lies—he had written a book with a design of instructing his parishioners in a pompous & long-winded style

He never wishd to be seen ignorant of any[thing] not even in the gossip or news of the village—he woud not bear contradicting & therefore was well quallified for a country magistrate if you told anything at dinner as an interesting story or fact of any kind it woud not seem to move his attention to listen a moment but the next day he would repeat your story word for word as his own & tell it to you with as much gravity as if you had been a stranger to it & never heard it before

He askd me some questions about my patrons in an artless manner as if he did not need inquireys when a day or two afterwards he woud talk about them as if he had been a familiar acquaintance & knew much more about them then I did nay he woud tell me about them as if I knew nothing he askd me about the way in which Lord Milton & Exeter [ ]* & after I had told him he said he woud mention me to them as if they had never known or noticed me he said he was acquainted with Lord Waldegrave & showd me a Vol of my poems which he said Lady Waldegrave had given him—he took me with him to see Falkingham Gaol a good distance from Morton & everyone we met gentle or simple he woud stop to speak to & almost ask them their business nay he woud question those that appeard his inferiors as if they were undergoing an examination in a court of justice—once when we were going to see Belvoir Castle while walking by a plantation a labourer appeard to break into a brisk loud whistle of a song tune & he instantly stopt to listen & swore they were poachers & bade me go on the other side to watch which way they started I tryd to convince him that the whistle was a song tune but it was no use & as soon as the fellow heard or perhaps saw that he was suspected he hid from us

* Omission, but no gap—MS.

A Prophet is nothing in his own Country—

Envy was up at my success with all the lyes it could muster some said that I never wrote the poems & that Drury gave me money to father them with my name others said that I had stole them out of books & that Parson this & Squire tother knew the books from which they were stolen Pretending scholars said that I had never been to a grammer school & therefore it was impossible for me to write anything our parson industriously found out the wonderful discovery that I coud not spell & of course his opinion was busily distributed in all companies which he visited that I was but a middling promise of success but his opinion got its knuckles rapt & then he excusd the mistake by saying he did not read poetry & consequently knew little about it there he was right

the same prophet caught me working a common problem in geometry with the scale & compasses in which I was very fond to dabble & after expressing his supprise at my meddlings in such matters he said we do these things different at Colledge we make a circle without compasses & work a problem without a scale—the solution of this problem was something like a round lye—an old Leicestershire farmer & his family in a neighbouring village was uncommonly against me they declard it was impossible for me to do anything & disbelievd everything but that which was against me—thus every kind loves its own color & on that principal the Indian believes the devil a white spirit & the europeans a black one—the old man had a lubberly son whom he fancied to make a learned one by sending him to school till he was a man & his ten years wisdom consisted of finding that 2 & 2 makes 4 that a circle was round & a triangle had 3 corners & that poetry was nothing in comparison the old man believd & thought likewise

My acquaintance with books is not so good as late oppertunity might have made it for I never coud plod through every book in a regular mecanical way as I met it I dip into it here & there & if it does not suit I lay it down & seldom take it up again but in the same manner I read Thomson's *Seasons* & Milton's *Paradise Lost* thro when I was a boy & they are the only books of poetry that I have regularly read thro As to history I never

met with the chance of getting at yet in novels my taste is very limited *Tom Jones* & the *Vicar of Wakefield* are all I am acquainted with they are old acquaintances & I care not to make new ones tho I have often been offerd the perusal of the Waverley Novels I declind it & the readily remaining in ignorance of them is no trouble yet my taste may be doubted for I hear much in their praise & believe them good—

I read *The Vicar of Wakefield* over every Winter & am delighted tho I always feel dissapointed at the end of it with the partings my mind cannot feel that it ends happily I usd to be uncommonly fond of looking over catalogues of books & am so still they [were] some of the earliest reading that oppertunity alowd me to come at if ever I bought a pennyworth of slate pencils or wafers or a few sheets of paper at Drakards they were sure to be lapt in a catalogue & I considerd them as the most valuable parts of my purchase & greedily lookd over their contents & now in cutting open a new book or Magazine I always naturally turn to the end first & read the book list & take the rest as a secondary pleasure

CHAPTER 10

MY VISIT TO LONDON (1)

MR. GILCHRIST often asked me if I shoud like to see London & as I felt an anxiety he said I shoud go up with him the next time he went which was early in March I started in the old Stamford Coach but I felt very awkward in my dress My mind was full of expectations all the way about the wonders of the town which I had often heard my parents tell storys about by the winter fire when I turnd to the reccolections of the past by seeing people at my old occupations of ploughboy & ditching in the fields by the road-side while I was lolling in a coach the novelty created such strange feelings that I coud almost fancy that my identity as well as my occupations had changd that I was not the same John Clare but that some stranger soul had jumped into my skin—when we passd through Huntingdon Mr. G. shewd me the House at the end of the town were Oliver Cromwell was born & the parsonage with its mellancholy-looking garden at the other were Cowper had lived which was

far the most interesting remembrance to me tho both were great men in the annals of fame I thought of his time here & Johnny Gilpin as we glided along in the heavy sweeing coach I amused myself with catching the varying features of scenery I remember the road about Royston was very dreary the white chalk-like hills opened all round the circle & not a tree was to be seen one mellancholy thorn-bush by the road-side with a bench beneath it was all that my eye caught for miles as we approached nearer London the coachman pointed out 3 large round hills close by the road-side & told a superstition about them which I forget the roads were lined with lamps that diminished in the distance to stars 'This is London!' I exclaimed he laughed at my ignorance & only increased my wonder by saying we were yet several miles from it on the night that we got into London it was announced in the play Bills that a song of mine was to be sung at Covent Garden by Madame Vestris & we was to have gone but it was too late I felt uncommonly pleased at the circumstance we took a walk in the town by moonlight & went to Westminster bridge to see the River Thames I had heard large wonders about its width of water but I was dissapointed thinking I should have seen a freshwater sea when I saw it was less in my eye than Whittlesea Meer I was uncommonly astonished to see so many ladys as I thought them walking about the streets I expressd my surprise & was told they were girls of the town as a modest woman rarely venturd out by herself at nightfall the next morning everything was so uncommon to what I had been used to that the excess of novelty confounded my instinct everything hung round my confused imagination like riddles unsolved while I was there I rarely knew what I was seeing & when I got home my remembrance of objects seemed in a mass one mingled in another like the mosaic squares in a Roman pavement*

I had often heard of the worlds seven wonders in my reading days at school but I found in London alone thousands Octave took me to see most of the curiositys we went to Westminster abbey to see the poets corner & to both Playhouses were I saw Kean & Macready & Knight & Munden & Emery the two latter

* Four fragments have been fitted together to form the beginning of this chapter up to here.



The cottage at Northborough
'. . . To watch the flowers to bud and so to bloom
To reap from pleasant labour added pleasure'



View from Leppit's Hill Lodge, High Beech, Epping
'the Forest and its airey bounds'

pleased me most of all but the plays were bad ones* Burkhardt took me to Vauxhall & made me shut my eyes till I got in the midst of the place & when I opened them I almost fancyd myself in a faireyland but the repetition of the roundabout walk put the Romance out of my head & made it faded reality—these were the scenes that he delighted in & he wishd to take me sometime to see the Beggers Opera a public house so calld the resort of [ ]† but we had no time I had had a romantic sort of notion about authors & had an anxious desire to see them fancying they were beings different to other men but the spell was soon broken when I became acquainted with them but I did not see many save at Taylors Dinner partys were Charles Lamb & young Reynolds & Allan Cunningham & Cary with Wainewright the painter often met & I saw Hazlitt

& from him‡ I had learned some fearful disclosures of the place he used to caution me if ever I happend to go to be on my guard as if I once lost my way I shoud sure lose my life as the street Ladys would inveigle me into a fine house were I shoud never be seen agen & he describd the pathways on the street as full of trapdoors which dropd down as soon as pressd on with the feet & sprung in their places after the unfortunate country-man had fallen into the deep hole as if nothing had been were he woud be robd & murderd & thrown into boiling cauldrons kept continually boiling for that purpose & his bones sold to the doctors—with these terrible jealousys in my apprehension I kept a continual lookout & fancied every lady I met a decoyer & every gentleman a pickpocket & if they did but offer any civility my suspicions were confirmd at once & I felt often when walking behind Gilchrist almost fit to take hold of his coat laps

He took me to see Gifford who the first time we went up was too ill to see us but this time he was rather getting near

* Kean was playing at Drury Lane in *The Hebrew*, a drama based on *Ivanhoe*, Macready at Covent Garden in *Ivanhoe, or The Jewess*, a musical drama on the same theme. Emery and Munden were in the farces accompanying these plays.

† Gap—MS. The 'Beggar's Bush', or 'The Hare and Hounds', was a wild music-hall and inn in Holborn, demolished in 1844.

‡ Burkhardt, Gilchrist's brother-in-law, a London jeweller: not the sensible Gilchrist—and certainly not Hazlitt, though the paragraph follows straight on.

neighbour to health & gave me welcome with a hearty shake of the hand & congratulated me on my last poems which he said were far better than my first he also bade me beware of the booksellers & repeated it several times he was sitting on his sofa surrounded by books & papers of all sorts he chatted awhile to Gilchrist about books & Authors & Pope a lent him a new Satire to read called *The Mohawks** in which he said he was mentioned he supposed Lady Morgan was the Author & after Gilchrist had dipped into it here & there he pronounced it worthless the next day we went to call on Murray in Albemarle Street who flattered me with some compliments on my success & hoped that I would always call on him whenever I was in London he is a very pleasant man he showed us the *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* illustrated with Portraits which we turned over & departed as we got at the door Gifford's carriage drove up & on leaving the shop he gave each of us a copy of his *Translations of Persius*†

On my second visit things became more distinct or separate on my memory & one of my greatest wonders then was the continual stream of life passing up and down the principal streets all the day long & even the night one of my most entertaining amusements was to sit by Taylors window in Fleet Street to see the constant successions throng this way & that way

I did not know the way to any place for a long while but the royal academy & here I usd to go almost every day as Rippingille the painter had told the ticket keeper who I was & he let me come in whenever I chose which I often made use of from necessity altho I had conquered the old notion of kidnappers or men stealers being common‡

& I usd to think that by going into the best looking shops in the most thoroughfare streets I shoud stand the least risk to be

* A satirical poem by Sydney Owenson, later Lady Morgan (1822).

† William Gifford, 'whom God curse', as Lamb wrote to Wordsworth, savage satirist of *The Baviad* and *The Mæviad*, and editor of *The Quarterly Review* from 1809 to 1824, was in private life an amiable man and fond of children.

‡ Surgeons *were* dependent, in the Anatomical schools, on 'resurrection men' or 'body-snatchers'.

cheated so in I went & gave every farthing they set upon the article & fancied I had got a good bargain till experience turned out to the contrary when I first got up being rather spare of articles of dress I went into a shop in Fleet Street & purchased as a first article a pair of stockings for which the man asked 3/6 & on my giving it without a word of contrariety he made a pause & when I asked him the price of another article he told me as he kept nothing but first class articles they were rather high in the price & laying a ready made shirt on the counter he says that is 14 shillings I told him it was too high for me & with that he instantly pretended to reach me another which was the very same article agen this was 6/6 I paid it & found afterwards that the fellows fine cloth was nothing but callicc—I observed it was always a custom in most shops that when you went in to ask for an article the thing they first showed you was always put aside & another recommended as superior which I found was always to the contrary—so experience taught me always in future to take the one thing they did not reccomend—on my last* visit to London I wanted to take something home for Patty & thinking that Waithman† had been a great stickler for freedom & fair dealing among the citizens his newspaper notoreity reccomended me to his shop at the corner of Bridge Street as the hope that I might come upon a fair bargain but here I was more decieved than ever for they kept the best articles aside & reccomended the worst as soon as they found out their customer was of the country When I took the things home I found they were a bad bargain still & a great deal dearer then they might have been bought for at home—so much for Patrons of Liberty & newspaper passports for honest men—I saw more in the way of wonders this time then I did at first but they did not leave such strong impressions on my memory as to be worth remembrance—

* In *John Clare: a Life* this word was printed 'first'. Looking at the MS. again —though the word is debatable—we decide it is more likely 'last'. *The Autobiography*, written between 1821 and 1826, certainly before Clare's fourth—and last—visit to London in 1828, combines impressions of the first three visits—in 1820, 1822, 1824—almost inextricably, though he clearly intended at least two chapters.

† Robert Waithman, linen-draper, political reformer, and Lord Mayor of London in 1823.

I used to go with Thomas Bennion Taylors clerk or head porter about the city when he went out on errands & we very often went into each curiosity that came our way & each & other had names for claptraps to ease the pocket of its burthen I remember going into the Bullock's Mexico* with the editor's ticket that Taylor gave me & the fellows at their several posts for money-catching fancying I dare say that I was the criticizing editor looked with much surprise at my odd clownish appearance & asked me so many pumping questions that I was glad to get out agen without paying much attention to the wonders of the show Tom was very fond of introducing me to the booksellers where he had business who were too busy occupied in their own concerns to take much heed of mine

Lord Radstock at first sight appears to be of a stern & haughty character but the moment he speaks his countenance kindles up into a free blunt good-hearted man—one whom you may expect to hear speak exactly as he thinks he has no notion of either offending or pleasing by his talk & cares as little for the consequences of either there is a good deal of the bluntness & openheartedness of the sailor about him & there is nothing of pride or fashion he is as plain in manner & dress as the old country squire A stranger woud never guess that he was speaking to a Lord though he is one of the noblest familys in England I have often observed this in real titles while a consieted basterd squire expects sir at the end of every word a Lord seems to take no notice how he is talked to—the first is jealous of his gentility & knows that his title is nothing but the breath of words the latter knows that his was born with him & it is a familiar that sits easy on his name—

His Lordship has only one fault & that is a faith that takes every man†
he and Lord Fitzwilliam are the two†

Lord Radstock was my best friend it was owing to him that the first Poems succeeded he introduced them into all places were he had connections got them noticed in newspapers & other[ ]‡ & if it did nothing more it made them known—he

* Exhibition of Mexican curiosities held at the Egyptian Hall.
† Sentences unfinished. ‡ Gap of one word.

kindly undertook to settle my affairs with my publishers which they kindly enough on their part deffered & its not settled yet he wrote Taylor a letter wishing him to draw up an agreement in 'black and white' as his Lordship expressd it as faiths in men were not to be trusted Taylor pretended to be insulted at this & wrote his Lordship a genteel saucey one that setteld the affair in the present confusion of no settlings at all nay they will neither publish my poems or give them up

Lord Radstock introduced me to Mrs. Emmerson she has been & is a warm kind friend of tastes feelings & manners almost romantic she has been a very pretty woman & is not amiss still & a womans pretty face is often very dangerous to her common sense for the notice she received in her young days threw affectations about her feelings which she has not got shut of yet for she fancies that her friends are admirers of her person as a matter of course & acts accordingly which appears in the eyes of a stranger ridiculous enough but the grotesque wears off on becoming acquainted with better qualities & better qualities she certainly has to counterbalance them she at one word is the best friend I found & my expectations are looking no further her correspondence with me began early in my public life & grew pretty thick as it went on I fancied it a fine thing to correspond with a lady & by degrees grew up into an admirer sometimes writing as I felt sometimes as I fancied & sometimes foolishly when I could not account for why I did it

I spent a good deal of time with Rippingille whom I first got acquainted with in meeting him at Mrs. Emmersons he is a rattling sort of odd fellow with a desire to be thought one & often affects to be so for the sake of singularity he is a man of great genius as a painter (I understand a man of great faults as a colourist) & what is better he has not been puffed into notice like the thousands of farthing rush lights (like myself perhaps) in all professions that have glimmered their day & are dead I spent many pleasant hours with him while in London His greatest rellish is punning over a bottle of ale for he is a pleasant fellow over the bottle & a strong dealer in puns we acted many of lifes farces & cracked many jokes together many of them bad ones perhaps & without kernels & we once spent

a whole night at Offley's the Burton Ale house & sat till morning he has some pretensions to rhyme & wrote an 'Address to Echo' which was inserted in the London Mag most of his Trifles in that way are satirical I was to have gone over to Bristol to see him but illness prevented me he affected to be little ta'en with worldly applause & was always fishing for it—he was very careless of money & squandered it away as a thing of no other use but to spend

One of my greatest amusements while in London was reading the booksellers windows—I was always fond of this from a boy —& my next greatest amusement was the curiosity of seeing literary men of these all I have seen I shall give a few pictures just as they struck me at the time some of them I went purposely to see others I met in literary parties that is the confused* contributors dinners at Taylor & Hesseys I had not means of meeting the constellations of Genius in one mass they were mingld partys some few were fixd stars in the Worlds hemisphere others glimmerd every month in the Magazine some were little vapours that were content to shine by the light of others I mean dabbling critics that cut monthly morsels from genius whose works are on the waters free for all to catch at that chuses these bye the bye I coud observe had a self satisfaction about them that magnifyd molehills to mountains I mean that little self was in its own eye a giant & that every other object was mere nothing I shall not mention names here but it is evident I do not alude to friends

Reynolds was always the soul of these dinner parties he was the most good-natured fellow I ever met with his face was the three-in-one of fun wit & punning personified he woud punch you with his puns very keenly without ever hurting your feelings for if you lookd in his face you coud not be offended & you might retort as you pleasd—nothing coud put him out of humour either with himself or others if all his jokes & puns & witticisms were written down which were utterd at two or three of these dinner parties they would make one of the best 'Joe Millers'† that have ever passd under that title he sits as a

* May be 'confounded', or again, 'confessd'—MS.

† Joe Miller was a punster mentioned by Pope. See *John Bull Magazine* (1824).

careless listener at table looking on with quick knapping sort of eye that turns towards you as quick as lightning when he has a pun joke or story to give you they are never made up or studied they are the flashes of the moment & mostly happy he is a slim sort of make something as you may concieve of an unpretending sort of fashionable fellow without the desire of being one he has a plump round face a nose something puggish & a forehead that betrays more of fun than poetry his teeth are always looking through a laugh that sits as easy on his unpuckerd lips as if he were born laughing he is a man of genius & if his talents were properly applied he would do something I verily believe that he might win the favours of fame with a pun —but be as it will wether she is inclind to smile or frown upon him he is quite at home wi content the present is all with him he carries none of the Author about him a hearty laugh which there is no resisting at his jokes & puns seems to be more recompense than he expected & he seems startld into wonder at it & muses a moment as if he turnd the joke over agen in his mind to find the merry thought that made the laughter they drop as it were spontaneously from his mouth & turn agen upon him before he has had time to consider wether they are good or bad he sits in a sort of surprise till another joke drops & makes him himself agen* Reynolds is a near kin to Wainewright† in open-heartedness & hilarity but he is a wit & a punster & very happy & entertaining in both pretentions for with him they are none for they come naturally from his discourse & seem rather to flow from his ink in his pen in his writings than from his

* We have continued straight on from here with Clare's second account of the lively, enigmatic and finally divided John Hamilton Reynolds, whom Keats admired, and whose wit and humour B. W. Procter and Woodhouse have also left records of. We have omitted the conclusion of Clare's first account, since he significantly repeats it in the second '. . . [he] ought to be a poet of the first order himself is his only hindrance . . .' No doubt the reasons in Reynolds's nature for not publishing under his own name may have been linked with his renunciation of poetry. His use of pseudonyms influenced Clare in his adoption of the 'Percy Green' pen-name later, though the remembrance of Thomas Rowley no doubt played its part. See, too, 'The Literary Police Office, Bow Street', an Edward Herbert (Reynolds) article in *The London*.

† T. G. Wainewright, painter, forger, unconvicted poisoner, contributor to *The London*, and friend of Charles Lamb. For further information see Lucas's *Life of Lamb*, Lamb's *Letters*, and J. Curling's *Janus Weathercock*—a life of Wainewright—besides Clare's sketch (seq.).

mind there is nothing studied about them & be the pun as severe as it may his pleasant arch manner of uttering it forbids it to offend & it is always taken in the same goodnatured way as it is intended he has written a good deal in magazines & periodicals of all names & distinctions & is an author of no mean pretentions as to quantity tho he has never acknowledged any with his name he wrote the Poem called 'The Naiad' in imitation of the old Scotch ballad called 'The Mermaid of Galloway' *The Remains of Peter Corcoran The Garden of Florence* & a mock parody on Peter Bell—all full of wit fun & real poetry with a good share of affectation & something near akin to bombast he is one of the best fellows living & ought to be a poet of the first order himself is his only hindrance at present Lord Byron was his first patron & corrected a poem & praised it which has not been published

Hazlitt is the very reverse of this he sits a silent picture of severity if you was to watch his face for a month you would not catch a smile there his eyes are always turnd towards the ground except when one is turned up now & then with a sneer that cuts a bad pun or a young author's maiden table-talk to atoms wherever it is directed I look upon it that it carries the conviction with it of a look to the wise & a nod to the foolish he seems full of the Author too & I verily believe that his pockets are crammed with it he seems to look upon Mr. This & Mr. T'other names that are only living on cards of morning Calls & Dinner Invitations as upon empty chairs as the guests in 'Macbeth' did on the vacancy where Banquo's ghost presided They appear in his eye as nothings too thin for sight & when he enters a room he comes stooping with his eyes in his hand as it were throwing under-gazes round at every corner as if he smelt a dun or thief ready to seize him by the collar & demand his money or his life he is a middle-sized dark-looking man & his face is deeply lined with a satirical character his eyes are bright but they are rather buried under his brows he is a walking satire & you woud wonder were his poetry came from that is scattered so thickly over his writings for the blood of me I coud not find him out that is I shoud have had no guess at him of his ever being a scribbler much more a Genius they say she is an

odd lady & sure enough in him her oddities are strongly personified

Then there is Charles Lamb a long remove from his friend Hazlitt in ways & manners he is very fond of snuff which seems to sharpen up his wit every time he dips his plentiful fingers into his large bronze-coloured box & then he sharpens up his head thros himself backwards on his chair & stammers at a joke or pun with an inward sort of utterance ere he can give it speech till his tongue becomes a sort of packman's strop turning it over & over till at last it comes out whetted as keen as a razor & expectation when she knows him wakens into a sort of danger as bad as cutting your throat but he is a good sort of fellow & if he offends it is innosently done who is not acquainted with Elia & who would believe him otherwise as soon as the cloth is drawn the wine & he become comfortable his talk now doubles & threbles into a combination a repetition urging the same thing over & over again till at last he leaves off with scarsely a 'goodnight' in his mouth & disappears leaving his memory like a pleasant ghost hanging about his vacant chair & there is his sister Bridget a good sort of woman though her kind cautions & tender admonitions are nearly lost upon Charles who like an undermined river bank leans carelessly over his jollity & recieves the gentle lappings of the waves of womans tongue unheedingly till it ebbs & then in the same careless posture sits & recieves it again though it is all lost upon Charles she is a good woman & her cautions very commendable for the New River* runs very near his house & the path for a dark night is but very precarious to make the best of it & he hearty fellow is not always blind to dangers so I hope the advice of his sister Bridget will be often taken in time to retire with the cloth & see home by daylight

And there sits Cary the translator of Dante† one of the most quiet amiable & unassuming of men he will look round the table in a peaceful silence on all the merry faces in all the vacant unconcernment imaginable & then he will brighten up & look

* It is clear from this that Clare wrote the above *after* his 1824 London visit. The Lambs did not move into Colebrook Cottage until 1823.

† See *The Translator of Dante*, by R. W. King (1925) for the full account of Henry Francis Cary, who, more deservedly than Wainewright, had Charles Lamb's admiration.

smilingly on you & me & our next-hand neighbour as if he knew not which to address first & then perhaps he drops a few words like a chorus that serve all together his eyes are not long on a face he looks you into a sort of expectation of discoursing & starts your tongue on tiptoe to be ready in answering what he may have to start upon when suddenly he turns from you to throw the same good-natured cheat of a look upon others he is a tallish spare man with a longish face & a good forehead his eyes are the heavy-lidded sort whose earnest look seems to meet you half closd his authorship & his priesthood sit upon him very meekly he is one of those men which have my best opinions & of whom I feel happy with every opportunity to praise on my second visit to London I spent a very happy day with him at Chiswick (I was then in good health) His wife is a good sort of person & of so young a look in his company that I mistook her a long while for his daughter he lives in the house once occupied by Thornhill the painter & he showed me the window through which Miss Thornhill elopd with Hogarth & over the chimney piece were some heads sketchd on the wall by Hogarth but the servants being left to themselves to white-wash the room in Mr. Cary's absence from home utterly de-faced this precious relic & he greatly regretted the loss when he told me.

I also saw Hogarths painting room at the end of the garden which is now a hayloft you ascend to it by a broad stept ladder it has no prepossessing look about it & you almost feel to doubt memory's veracity when she whispers you this is the spot were Hogarth sat & painted pictures for the royal academy of fame but proof as strong as history writ meets your eye in a corner of the garden two narrow steps of stone stand close to the wall one [to the] memory of a bird with an inscription on it by Hogarth himself & the other to the memory of a dog with an inscription taken from Churchills poetry by Mrs. Hogarth 'Life to the last enjoyed here Pompey lies' The Arbour of honey-suckle or creepers hangs shadowy silence above them & in this corner Mrs Cary pointed out the spot where Hogarth used to play skittles & if my memory wears right impressions the frame is there still & then to wind up the curiosity that such objects had excited we went to see the monument of Hogarth in the

Churchyard I coud not help fancying when I walked about the garden that the roses & cloves & other flowers were old tenants that knew Hogarth & his lady as well as their present occupants bye the bye the Translator of Dante will not diminish the classical memorys of the old mansion with his possession of it Poetry & Painting are sisters

There was Coleridge at one of the Parties he was a man with a venerable white head fluent of speech not a 'silver-tongud Hamilton' his words hung in their places at a quiet pace from a drawl in good set marching order so that you would suppose he had learnt what he intended to say before he came it was a lecture parts of which . . .*

A little artless simple-seeming body something of a child overgrown in a blue coat & black neckerchief for his dress is singular with his hat in his hand steals gently among the company with a smile turning timidly round the room It is De Quincey the Opium Eater & that abstruse thinker in logic & metaphysic X.Y.Z.

Then there is Allan Cunningham (Reynolds calls him the Dwarf) comes stalking in like one of [ ]† black knights but his countenance is open & his look is hearty he hates puns & is fond of Scotch Ballads Scotch Poets & everything Scottish down no doubt as far as Scotch snuff well he is a good fellow & a good poet & when the companys talk is of poetry he is ready to talk two ways at once but when puns are up his head is down over his glass musing & silent—& nothing but poetry is the game to start him into hillarity again . . .‡

Wainewright is a very comical sort of chap he is about 27 & wears a quizzing-glass & makes an excuse for the ornament by complaining of bad eyes he is the Van Vinkbooms Janus Weathercock &c of the Magazine He had a picture in the

* Half-page torn away, alas—MS. 'Silver-tongued' Hamilton, or 'Single-speech' Hamilton, the politician—'tall and handsome . . . dry, sarcastic and clever,' —left nothing to warrant the more-than-Coleridgean reputation for eloquence he acquired during his lifetime.

† Gap—MS. Martin, obviously quoting, though without reference, printed 'Spenser's'—unless he saw another manuscript (which would shake our supposition that Clare made no other copy!). But Spenser had no 'black knights'. Clare is more likely to have meant Scott's much-talked-of (Ivanhoe's) Le Noir Faineant, 'large of size, tall, and to all appearance powerful and strong'—like Cunningham.

‡ MS. torn.

exebition of 'Paris in the Chamber of Helen' & the last time I was in London he had one there of 'The Milkmaid'* from Walton's *Angler*—both in my opinion very middling performances but my opinion is but of itself a middling one in such matters so I may be mistaken he is a clever writer & some of his papers in the Magazine are very entertaining & some very good particularly the beginning of one a description of a Churchyard

I never met [Southey] but I heard something about him by meeting in company two of his wife's sisters at Mrs. Emmersons those 'Pretty milliners of Bath' as Byron calls them but I cannot say much for his judgement if these sisters are to be taken as a sample of the rest they are sharp ready-witted girls but rather plain I learned from them that Southey was a lively sort of man always in gay spirits who wrote both in prose & verse with a great deal of ease but the number of his publications would almost tell us that this is the fact he writes amid the noise of his children & joins in their sport at intervals Wordsworth on the contrary cannot bear a noise & composes with great difficulty I should imagine he prefers a mossy seat on the mountains to the closet for study at least his poems would lead one to think so Southey presents a copy of every work he publishes to his wife & he wrote a copy of *Roderic*† on French green paper on purpose to present to her

Taylor‡ is a man of very pleasant address & works himself into the good opinions of people in a moment but it is not lasting for he grows into a studied carelessness & neglect that he carries into a system till the purpose of so doing becomes transparent & reflects its own picture while it would hide it he is a very pleasant talker & is excessive fluent on paper currency & such politics he can talk on matters with a super-

* Blake thought Wainewright's 1822 Academy picture 'very fine', and Wainewright, who had a lively taste for Fuseli and exoticism in art, was one of the few who admired Blake in his lifetime. † *Roderick, the last of the Goths* (1814).

‡ It is likely that this account of John Taylor, from its tone, belongs, like the account of Lamb, at least partly to the 1824 visit. See *Keats's Publisher* for the most interesting full account of this enigmatic publisher, 'whose importance', says the author, Mr. Edmund Blunden, 'is far greater than that of many writers of whom more account has been taken'. Clare's sketch of Taylor is the only contemporary one except De Quincey's. But see *The Letters of John Clare* for Clare's final assessment of Taylor.

ficial knowledge of them very dexterously & is very fond of arguing about the Latin & Greek poets with the Reverends & the Cambridge [wits] that drop in to his Waterloo house he assumes a feeling & fondness for poetry & reads it well—not in the fashionable growl of mouthing spouters but in a sort of whine he professed a great friendship for me at my first starting & offered to correct my future poems if he did not publish them so I sent all my things up as I wrote them & neither got his opinion or the poems back again—his only opinion being that he had not time to spare from other pursuits to revise & correct them for the press & when I sent for the poems agen he was silent he wrote the Introduction to both my volumes of poems his manner is that of a cautious fellow who shows his sunny side to strangers

He never asks a direct question or gives a direct reply but continually saps your information by a secret passage coming at it as it were by working a mine—like a lawyer examining a witness & he uses this sort of caution even in his common discourse till it becomes tedious to listen or reply he sifts a theory of truth either true or false with much ingenuity & subtlety of argument & his whole table talk is a sort of 'Junius Identified' but his patience carries it to such lengths in seeming consistency till the first end of the ravelled skein which he winds up at the beginning is lost again & unwound in looking for the other to sum up his character he is a clever fellow & a man of genius & his 'Junius Identified' is the best argument on circumstantial evidence that ever was written

Stopt about 3 weeks* this time & hastened home to get Rip ready some Lectures on painting which he intended to deliver at the Bristol Institution & he sent home for these that we shoud look over them together but no time was found for the purpose except one morning after breakfast

* In the *Life* we took this jotting to refer to the 1824 visit, but on that occasion Clare stayed nine weeks in London. It must refer to the 1822 visit, even though the same manuscript has a heading for '3rd Visit to London', and the account of Taylor probably belongs to 1824.

CHAPTER 11

MY VISIT TO LONDON (ii)

NOTHING SET DOWN IN MALICE

A JOURNEY for pleasure is a precarious sympathy soon robbed of its enjoyment by unforseen disasters but a journey for the improvement of ill-health undertaken by that smiling encourager hope hath little to make it palatable though the joys of the one are as much to be relied on as the other Upon this last matter my journey to London was made I went for the benefit of advice to a celebrated Scotch physician Dr Darling the complaint lay in my head & chest I was very ill when I first went but I gradually received benefit Some recollections of this visit shall be the subject of this chapter they are observations of men & things thrown together in a miscellaneous manner this was the third time I had been up so the vast magnitude of that human ant-hill that strikes every stranger with wonder had lost its novelty

On this my last* visit I amused my illness by catching the most beautiful women faces in the crowd as I passed on in it till I was satiated as it were with the variety & the multitude & my mind lost its memory in the eternity of beautys successions & was glad to glide on in vacancy with the living stream

When I used to go anywhere by myself especially Mrs. E's I used to sit at night till very late because I was loath to start not for the sake of leaving the company but for fear of meeting with supernatural [agents] even in the busy paths of London though I was a stubborn disbeliever of such things in the daytime yet at night their terrors came upon me tenfold & my head was as full of the terrible as a gossip's thin death-like shadows & goblins with saucer eyes were continually shaping on the darkness from my haunted imagination & when I saw anyone of a spare figure in the dark passing or going on by my side my blood has curdled cold at the foolish apprehensions of his being a supernatural agent whose errand might be to carry me away at the first dark alley we came to

* Third, of course.

I could not bear to go down the dark narrow street of Chancery Lane It was as bad as a haunted place to pass & one dark night I decided to venture the risk of being lost rather than go down though I tried all my courage to go down to no purpose for I could not get it out of my head but that I should be sure to meet death or the devil if I did so I passed it & tried to find Fleet Street by another road but I soon got lost & the more I tried to find the way the more I got wrong so I offered a watchman a shilling to show me the way thither but he said he would not go for that & asked a half-a-crown which I readily gave him

I went with Hessey to visit a very odd sort of character at the corner of St. Paul's Churchyard he was a very good sort of man with a troublesome sort of fondness for poetry which was continually uppermost he wrote rhymes himself which he thrust into anyone's notice as readily as if they were another he had two daughters who seemed to be very amiable girls one of which kept an album in which her father's productions were very prominent he seemed to be very fond of translating David's Psalms into ryhme he was a friend & acquaintance to Miss Williams to whom he had sent a copy of my poems at his house I met with Etty the painter he was a man of a reserved appearance & felt as awkwardly situated I daresay as myself when Mr. Viney* proposed healths & expected fine speeches in reply for tho Etty replyed he did it very shortly & when mine was drunk I said nothing & though the company's eyes were expecting for some minutes I coud not say a word tho I thought of some several times & they were wishes that I was out of the house Mr. Viney appeared to be a sort of patron of Etty

I got acquainted this time with Van Dyk† a young man whose

* 'Viney' was given as 'Vowler' in *John Clare: a Life*, on the evidence of Hessey's letter (10 May 1825). 'You remember Etty whom we met at Mr. Vowler's . . .' Further scrutiny of the MS. confirms 'Viney', but there was no one except Harry Vint, Mayor of Colchester, whom Etty met in Naples, with a name anything like Viney. Clare must therefore have meant 'Vowler'—unless it was Hessey who was remembering an acquaintance's name inexactly.

† See *Letters of Clare* for further knowledge of Harry Stoe Van Dyk, who helped Taylor to edit *The Shepherd's Calendar* from 1824 to 1825, but died in poverty in 1828 himself, after having published *English Romances* and *Songs of the Six Minstrels*.

literary manners sat very quietly about him he was of a very timid & retreating disposition before strangers but to a friend he was very warm-hearted he published a little volume of Poems called *Theatrical Portraits* he was very ready at writing an impromptu which he would often do very happily he went back with me to Mrs. E's where we met with Lord R. who was very friendly with him

After I had been in London a while Rippingille came down from Bristol with Mr. Elton & as I was much improved in health under Dr. Darling I indulged in some of the town amusements with my old comrade for he was fond of seeking after curiosity & traversing about the town he was always for thinking that last exercise taking all weathers rough & smooth as they came was the best phisic for a sick man & a glass of Scotch Ale only served to strengthen his notions the first jaunt we took together was to see 'The art of Self-defence' practised at the fives court it was for the benefit of Oliver* & I caught the mania so much from Rip for such things that I soon became far more eager for the fancy than himself I watch'd the appearance of every new Hero on the stage with as eager curiosity to see what sort of fellow he was as I had before done the poets & I left the place with one wish strongly uppermost & that was that I was but a Lord to patronize Jones the Sailor Boy who took my fancy as being the finest fellow in the Ring

Went with Rippingille & Elton to see Deville the Phrenologist† a very clever fellow in his own profession we found him After he found who I was he instantly asked my permission to take my bust in plaster which I consented to as Rippingille & Elton wanted a copy—the operation was stifling & left a strong dislike on me not to do it again—he is a kind simple-hearted good-humoured man Phrenology is with him something more than a System it seems the life & soul of his speculations he is never weary of talking about it or giving Lectures on heads Strangers of all exceptions—Poets Philosophers Mathematicians & humble unknowns beings that with the world have

* Tom Oliver, one of the 'old ones' in 1825, was entitled to annual benefit.

† Deville was one of the most respected 'professional'—not scientific—phrenologists in London, in the 1820s, 30s, and 40s.

no name are all welcomd up his stairs & led to his matchless head-gallery while he with smiling politeness satisfyes every eager enquiry as readily as it is askd for they have only to pull off their hats & drop half-hints & then the lecture on heads commences he mostly begins with 'Why Sir I should say heres order very strong—or vice versa the want of it heres plenty of constructiveness I should say you're fond of mathematics & heres ideality I should say that you had a talent for poetry I dont say that you are a poet but that you have a tallent for it if applied heres the organ of color very strong I shoud say you are fond of fine colours & vice versa where theres the organ of form without colour nothing showy is liked of here is benevolence very prominent I shoud say you seldom pass a beggar or street-sweeper without dropping a copper heres veneration very high I shoud say you are religious the head perhaps is worldly minded & remains silent I dont say you're a Christian mind but you have a veneration for the deity thats sufficient for our system heres combativeness very large I should say you are not slow at avenging an insult particularly if it be offerd to a female for the amorous propensitys are large also I shoud say you have a love for the fair sex but not so as to make it troublesome aye aye sir now I look again heres order very strong sure enough I shoud say that things being put out of order displeases you very much & that you are often tempted while at table to put a spoon or knife or fork in its place I shoud say its the most likely thing to create disturbances in your family heres form very strong I shoud say you are a painter or that you have talents for painting if applied Heres construction very large I shoud say you are fond of mathematics & I shoud say you have a great talent that way if the mind was turned to it heres ideality too (he is a poet) no I shoud not say that I shoud say he has a talent for it if put into action are you a poet sir (yes) aye aye the systems right but I shoud not venture so far as to decide upon that as many heads develop poetry very strongly where it has never been applied Well sir you see the system is correct he then in smiling silence waits your decision of his remarkable prophecy & hard & earthlike is that soul who can return an harsh & unbelieving opinion on the system but I believe he is seldom paid so unkindly for his good-naturd

trouble His predictions are so cautiously utterd with so many causes for the likelihood of failures in nice points that even failures themselves in his lectures strike as convictions When he lectured on my head I coud not help likening him to a boy (perhaps he had no existance but in my friend Reynolds fancy for it was he that told the story) who was so cautious as not to be out in anything he was once askd wether the earth went round the sun or the sun round the earth the boy said he believd they took it by turns the one going round one day & the other the next—Deville then leads your eye to his collection points out on particular heads the most convincing proofs of his system in the characteristics of Murderers Poets Painters Mathematicians & little actors of all work where his vice versas become very frequent he then takes you below where the apparatus is always ready to bury you in plaster if you chuse & of Literary men & Artists he politely hints that he should like a cast they cannot do less than comply & the satisfaction of adding fresh materials to his gallery doubly repays him for all his trouble

Rippingille also introduced me to Sir T.L.* who was a very polite courteous & kind man which made the other matter sit very agreeably about him & just as we got to the door Prince Leopold was going in to sit for his picture—we took a turn up the Square for a while & did not offer to venture till we saw him depart Rip sent in his card & we were instantly sent up into his painting gallery where we amused ourselves till he came & kindly shook me by the hand & made several enquiries about me He paid Rip several fine compliments about his picture of the Breakfast at an Inn & told him of his faults in a free undisguised manner but with the greatest kindness after he had showed us about the painting-room & chatted a considerable time we proffered to start when he followed us & said he coud not let us go without showing me a brother poet & took us into another room were a fine head of Walter Scott stood before us—I left his house with the satisfied impression that I had

* Sir Thomas Lawrence, president of the Royal Academy since 1820—and painter of more crowned heads in Europe than any other English artist before or since.

never met with a kinder & better man than Sir T.L. & I daresay Rip was highly gratified with the praise he had recieved for Sir T. L. told him that the Royal family at a private view of the Exhibition before it opened to the public took more notice of his picture then all the rest But Rip would not own it for he affects a false appearance of such matters

we went to F. Freelings* the same day who had expressed a desire to have a copy of his picture of the 'Post Office' but he was 'not at home'—so I had not the pleasure of seeing him & when Rip went the next day I coud not go with him

Rip was very fond of talking & looking at things of which he understood nothing & with this feeling we went 2 or 3 times to the French Playhouse in Tottenham Court Road none of us understood a word of french & yet we fancied ourselves delighted for there was a very beautiful actress that took our fancys & Rip drew a sketch of her in pencilling for me which was something like her though he stole none of her beauty to grace it

we also went to Astley's Theatre were we saw morts of tumbling

When I was in London the melancholy death of Lord Byron was announced in the public papers & I saw his remains borne away out of the city on its last journey to that place where fame never comes His funeral was blazed in the papers with the usual parade that accompanies the death of great men I happened to see it by chance as I was wandering up Oxford Street on my way to Mrs Emmerson's when my eye was suddenly arrested by straggling groups of the common people collected together & talking about a funeral I did as the rest did though I could not get hold of what funeral it could be but I knew it was not a common one by the curiosity that kept watch on every countenance By & by the group collected into about a hundred or more when the train of a funeral suddenly appeared on which a young girl that stood beside me gave a deep sigh & uttered 'Poor Lord Byron' I looked up at the young girl's face it was dark & beautiful & I could almost feel in love with her for the sigh she had uttered for the poet it was worth all the newspaper

* Sir Francis Freeling (1764–1836), besides being a book-collector, ably filled the offices of Surveyor, Joint Secretary, and Sole Secretary to the General Post Office for nearly half a century.

puffs & magazine mournings that ever were paraded after the death of a poet The common people felt his merits & his power & the common people of a country are the best feelings of a prophecy of futurity they are the veins & arteries that feed & quicken the heart of living fame The breathings of eternity & the soul of time are indicated in that prophecy They felt by a natural impulse that the mighty was fallen & they moved in saddened silence the streets were lined on each side as the procession passed but they were all the commonest of the lower orders the young girl that stood by me had counted the carriages in her mind as they passed & she told me there were sixty three or four in all they were of all sorts & sizes & made up a motley show the gilt ones that led the procession were empty the hearse looked small & rather mean & the coach that followed carried his embers in an urn over which a pall was thrown I believe that his liberal principles in religion & politics did a great deal towards gaining the notice & affections of the lower orders Be as it will it is better to be beloved by those low & humble for undisguised honesty than flattered by the great for purchased & pensioned hypocrisies

Things will fall out in their season wether they are wanted or expected or not Autumn seldom passes away without its tempest & friendship begun upon speculation & self-interest is sure to meet with a shock as chance & changes fall out the man that built his house upon the sand was near drownd by the tide—my friendship is worn out & my memorys are broken

THE JOURNAL

1824–25

THE JOURNAL

1824–25

Mon. 6 Sept. 1824. I have determind this day of beginning a sort of journal to give my opinion of things I may read or see & set down any thoughts that may arise either in my reading at home or my musings in the Fields & this day must fill up a sort of Introduction for I have nothing else to set down all I have read today is Moore's Almanack for the account of the weather which speaks of rain tho it's very hot & fine

Tues. 7 Sept. 1824. I have read Foxes *Book of Martyrs* & finished it today & the sum of my opinion is Tyranny & Cruelty appear to be the inseparable companions of Religious Power & the aphorism is not far from truth that says: 'All priests are the same' the great moral presept of a meek & unoffending teacher was 'Do as ye would be done by' & 'love those that hate you' if religious opinion had done so her history had been praise-worthy

Wed. 8 Sept. 1824. The rainy morning has kept me at home & I have amused myself heartily sitting under Walton's Sycamore tree hearing him discourse of fishponds and fishing what a delightful book it is the best English pastoral that can be written the descriptions are nature unsullied by fashionable tastes of the times they are simply true & like the Pastoral Ballads of Bloom-field breath of the common air & the grass & the sky one may almost hear the water of the river Lea ripple along and the grass and flags grow & rustle in the pages that speak of it I have never read a happier Poem in my time *

* It is perhaps worth reminding ourselves here that Clare's love of Walton remained with him in his asylum days—as far as we know—unmixed with delusion. See letter for Feb. 1848 in *The Letters of John Clare.*

Thur. 9 Sept. 1824. Took a pleasant walk today in the fields but felt too weak to keep out long 'tis the first day of shooting with the sportsmen & the poor hares partridges & pheasants were flying in all directions panic struck they put me in mind of the inhabitants of a Village flying before an invading enemy the dogs run with their sleek dappled sides rustling in the crackling stubbs & their noses close to the ground as happy as their masters in the sport tho they only 'mumble the game they dare not bite' as Pope says I was forced to return home fearing I might be shot under the hedges & wrote 2 letters One to Cunningham.*

Fri. 10 Sept. 1824. My health woud permit me to do nothing more than take walks in the garden today what a sadly pleasing appearence gardens have at this season the tall gaudy holliock with its melancholy blooms stands bending to the wind and bidding the summer farewell while the low asters in their pied lustre of red white & blue bends beneath in pensive silence as tho they mused over the days gone by & were sorrowful the swallows are flocking together in the skies ready for departing & a crowd has dropt to rest on the wallnut tree where they twitter as if they were telling their young stories of their long journey to cheer & check fears

Sat. 11 Sept. 1824. Written an essay today on 'The sexual system of plants' & began one on 'The Fungus Tribe' & on 'Mildew, Blight Etc' intended for 'A Natural History of Helpstone' in a series of letters to Hessey† who will publish it when finished I did not think it woud cause me such trouble or I shoud not have begun it Recievd a kind letter from C. A. Elton‡ & read the september no. of the London Mag: Only 2 good articles in it—'Blakesmoor in H—shire' by Elia &

* The letter to Cunningham has not survived. The other was to H. F. Cary, in which Clare asked Cary to write a biographical article on Bloomfield, like that he had done on Chatterton, for *The London Magazine.*

† These three are among the thirteen of the Natural History Letters still in America. See note on the second Letter dated 'Feb. 7'.

‡ Clare had already met Charles Abraham Elton, poet, scholar, translator of Hesiod, contributor to *The London*, whose house Clevedon was a literary centre, and whose poems, *The Brothers* (1820) and *Boyhood and Other Poems* (1832), have not received their due of praise.

'Review of Goethe' by De Quincey* these are excelent and sufficient to make a bad no. interesting

Sun. 12 Sept. 1824. A wet day wrote a letter to Rippingille & to H. F. Cary & finished another page of my Life which I intend to bring down to the present time as I did not keep a journal earlier I have inserted the names of those from whom I have recievd letters & to whom I have written in cronological order as near as I can reccolect 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 imagines that God created the sun moon & stars those mysterious hosts of heaven for no other purpose than its use 'the greater light to rule the day & the lesser light to rule the night' and the stars also 'to give light upon the earth' it is a harmless and universal propensity to magnify consequences that appertain to ourselves & woud be a foolish thing to try the test of the scriptures upon these groundless assertions—for it contains the best poetry & the best morality in the world

Mon. 13 Sept. 1824. Wrote 2 or 3 more pages of my Life—read some of the Sonnets of Shakespear which are great favourites of mine & lookd into the Poems of Chatterton to see what he says about flowers & have found that he speaks of the lady-smock:

> *So have I seen the lady-smocks so white*
> *Bloom in the morning and mowed down at night*

as well as my favourite line of

> *The kingcups brasted with the morning dew*

Tues. 14 Sept. 1824. Continued the reading of Chatterton in search for extracts to insert in my natural history inserted them in the Appendix—I was struck with the many beautifull & remarkable passages which I found in them what a wonderful boy was this unfortunate Chatterton I hate the name of Walpole for his behaviour to this Genius & his sneering & cold-blooded mention of him afterwards when his gossiping fubble had

* A brilliant refutation of Goethe's claim to a place beside Homer and Shakespeare.

discovered them to be forgeries why did he not discover the genius of the author no because they surpassed his Leadenhall forgery of 'Otranto'*

Wed. 15 Sept. 1824. Finished the reading of Chatterton admire his tragedy of 'Ælla' and 'Battle of Hastings' noticd a good description of a Thunder-storm in the 'Ballad of Charitie' inserted it in Appendix & a beautiful one of a ladye Chatterton seemd fond of taking his similes from nature his favourite flower seems to be the 'kynge-coppe' & his favourite bird the 'pied chelandrie' red-cap the only trees he speaks of are the oak & elm

Thur. 16 Sept. 1824. Had a visit from my friend Henderson of Milton who brought *Don Juan* in his Pocket I was very ill & nursing my head in my hand but he revivd me & advisd me to read *Don Juan* we talked about books & flowers & butterflys till noon & then he descanted on *Don Juan* which he admird very much I think a good deal of his opinion & shall read it when I am able

Fri. 17 Sept. 1824. Began *Don Juan* 2 verses of the Shipwreck very fine & the character of Haidee the best I have yet met it is very beautiful the hero seems a fit partner for Tom & Jerry fond of getting into scrapes & always finding means to get out again forever in the company of ladys who seem to watch at night for every oppertunity for everything but saying their prayers perhaps they are as good as their neighbours nay better they do without that fashionable veil hypocrisy

Sat. 18 Sept. 1824. Bought the John Bull Magazine out of curiosity to see if I was among the black sheep It grows in dullness that's one comfort to those that it nicknames 'Humbugs' I have seen a boy grope in a sink for the hopes of finding a lost halfpenny but I have been worse employed than that boy for I have dabbled in filth & found nothing abuse without wit is

* Quite apart from Walpole's bidding Chatterton 'make a fortune' before he 'might unbend' himself trying to publish the Rowley romance, the authorship of Walpole's novel *The Castle of Otranto* was not declared till a second edition was called for within a year of its publication in 1764. Walpole had pretended the work was a translation from an Italian MS. of 1529. The completely unreal story richly deserves Clare's contemptuous epithets of commercial falsity.

dullness double-distilld the John Bull News is keen and witty & in consequence entertaining have writ 5 letters T. Henderson Rev. Mr. Cary A Cunningham H. S. Van Dyk & Hessey

Sun. 19 Sept. 1824. I wish I had kept a journal sooner not of facts only but opinions of books when one rises fresh from the reading & thoughts that may rise at the moment for such a collection woud be an entertaining medley of the past out of which tho there might be a many weeds one might cull a few flowers if not candidates for eternity yet too good to be totally lost in the blank unreckonings of days gone bye took a walk about the fields a deep mist in the morning hid everything till noon returnd & read snatches in several poets & the 'Song of Solomon' thought the supposd allusions in that luscious poem to our Saviour very over-strained far-fetched and conjectural it appears to me an eastern love-poem & nothing further but an over-heated religious fancy is strong enough to fancy anything I fancy that the Bible is not illustrated by that supposition tho it is a very beautiful Poem it seems nothing like a prophetic one as it is represented to be

Mon. 20 Sept. 1824. A very wet day: an occurrence has happend in the village tho not very remarkable yet very singular for I have not heard of a former one in my day 'tis a gipsies' wedding Israel Smith & Lettyce Smith what odd names these people have they are more frequently from the Bible than the Testament for what reason I know not & more common from their own fancys than either the fiddle accompanyd them to Church & back the rest of it was nothing different to village weddings—Dancing & Drinking wrote a song for them being old friends

Tues. 21 Sept. 1824. The Statute* & a very wet day for it the lasses do not lift up their gowns to show taper ankles & white stockings but on the contrary drop them to hide dirty ones wrote a poem on the 'Statute'† last year lookd it over & think it a good one Taylor is of another opinion & thinks it not but it is true like the 'Lodge house'† & others he dislikes & I shall

* Statute Sessions were established in 1351 for magistrates to regulate in every shire in England farm-servants' wages and allot work to all. In 1824 'statute' had become only the agricultural holiday-feast for re-hiring at Michaelmas.

† See *Collected Poems* (1935). 'The Lodge House' is still unpublished.

one day publish them & others he has in his possession under the title of 'A Living Poet's Remains'

Wed. 22 Sept. 1824. Very ill & did nothing but ponder over a future existence & often brought up the lines to my memory said to be utterd by an unfortunate nobleman when on the brink of it ready to take the plunge

In doubt I lived in doubt I dye
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

Thur. 23 Sept. 1824. A wet day did nothing but nurse my illness coud not have walkd out had it been fine very disturbd in conscience about the troubles of being forced to endure life & dye by inches & the anguish of leaving my children & the dark porch of eternity whence none returns to tell the tale of his reception

Fri. 24 Sept. 1824. Tryd to walk out & coud not have read nothing this week my mind almost overweights me with its upbraidings & miseries my childern very ill night & morning with a fever makes me disconsolate & yet how happy must be the death of a child it bears its suffering with an innocent patience that maketh man ashamd & with it the future is nothing but returning to sleep with the thoughts no doubt of waking to be with its playthings again

Sat. 25 Sept. 1824. Read some of the Odes of Collins think them superior to Grays there is little pomp about them & much luscious sweetness I cannot describe the pleasure I feel in reading them neither can I possess discrimination enough in Criticism to distinguish the different merits of either both are great favourites of mine yet their perusal gives me different pleasures I find in the same Vol Odes by a poet of the name of Ogilvie* 'full of pomp & fury signifying nothing' they appear to me bold intruders to claim company with Gray & Collins

* John Ogilvie (1733–1813), poet and divine, wrote *The Day of Judgment*, *Rona* (a poem in seven books), *Britannia* (a national epic in twenty books), besides much else.

Sun. 26 Sept. 1824. Took a Walk in the fields heard the harvest Cricket & shrew-mouse uttering their little chickering Songs among the crackling stubbles the latter makes a little ear-piercing noise not unlike a feeble imitation of the skylark & I verily believe this is the noise said to be made by the little swift-footed bird calld the cricket lark Came home & read a chapter or two in the New Testament I am convinced of its sacred design & that its writers were inspird by an almighty power to benefit the world by their writings that was growing deeper & deeper into unfruitful ignorance like bogs & mosses in neglected countrys for want of culture—but I am far from being convincd that the desird end is or will be attaind at present while cant & hypocrisy are blasphemously allowd to make a mask of religion & to pass as current characters I will not say that this is universal God forbid

Mon. 27 Sept. 1824. Read in Milton his account of his blindness is very pathetic & I am always affected to tears when I read it the opening & end of Paradise Lost I consider sublime & just as the beginning & finish of an Epic poem shoud be I never could read Paradise regaind through tho I have heard it praisd highly 'Comus' & 'L'Allegro' & 'Il Penseroso' are those which I take up oftenest what beautiful description at the shut of evening is this

what time the laboured ox
In his loose traces from the furrow came
And the swinkt hedger at his supper sat

Tues. 28 Sept. 1824. Wrote another chapter of my Life read a little in Grays Letters great favourites of mine they're the best letters I have seen & I consider Burns very inferior to all the collections I have met with tho they have gaind great praise they appear to me when I read them as the letters of a man who was looking further than his correspondent & straining after somthing fine till he forgets both his boast of independence is so often dwelt upon till it becomes tiresome & seems more like the despair of a dissapointed man than the content of a happy one

Wed. 29 Sept. 1824. Took a walk in the fields saw an old wood stile taken away from a favourite spot which it had occupied all

my life the posts were overgrown with Ivy & it seemd so akin to nature & the spot where it stood as tho it had taken it on lease for an undisturbd existance it hurt me to see it was gone for my affections claims a friendship with such things but nothing is lasting in this world last year Langley Bush was destroyd an old whitethorn that had stood for more than a century full of fame the gipsies shepherds & Herdmen all had their tales of its history & it will be long ere its memory is forgotten

Thur. 30 Sept. 1824. Looked over The Human Heart* the title has little connection with the contents it displays the art of book making in half-filld pages & fine paper 'The Murderer's Death-bed' is very poor—the worst thing in the Newgate Calendar is as interesting 'Thou shalt do no Evil, etc' is a new version of Colonel Kirk's Cruelty better told in history than prose-poetry 'Amy Welton' is an imitation of the Scotch novelists & of course inferior 'The Lucrece of France' is good

Fri. 1 Oct. 1824. Had a new will made as the old one was not right proving nothing that I wishd & everything contrary this I don't like I leave C. Mossop E. T. Artis & J. A. Hessey executors & all monies arising from book profits &c. in their trust with that in the Funds & whatever may be put out to interest the money in the Funds to be drawn out & shared equally among my children when the youngest is 21 I don't understand the expression in it of my 'Son & daughters *& their respective Representatives* & shall have it alterd—it was signed by W. Bradford & Taylor

Sat. 2 Oct. 1824. Read the poems of Conder† over a second time like some of them very much there is a great many & unpretentious beautys among them the Imitations of the Psalms are good the Ode to the Nightingale is good but the expression Sir Nightingale is bad & spoils it The principal poem is like many such attempts poor the best poems on religion are those found in the Scriptures which are inimitable & therefor all imitations cannot but be inferior—the first sonnet on autumn is a good

* An anonymous collection of short tales (1824).

† Taylor and Hessey had just published Josiah Conder's poems *The Star in the East*. Conder also edited *The Eclectic Review*. See Letter to Taylor for 17 Nov. 1827, in *The Letters of John Clare*.

one & the Song 'Twas not when early flowers was springing' is beautiful I am much pleased with many more which I shall read anon

Sun. 3 Oct. 1824. Began to read again *The Garden of Florence* by Reynolds it is a beautiful simple tale with few conseits it begins prettily 'In the fair city of Florence there did dwell & ends sweetly 'The lovely nightingale & watching star At evening ever their companions are' there is a many beautys in it 'The Romance of Youth' is too romantic that is the youth it describes is not a general character yet there are several beautys in it of true poesy the redcap is a beautiful comparison 'Itself a feather'd flower' the comparing the white stem of the Birch to a serpent is bad taste something like the serpents wreathing round the artificial trees in Vauxhall Gardens verse 32 about the king-fisher turns on a consiet & verse 66 about the fairys bodice is a worse consiet still—'May the rose of months the violet of the year' is very pretty the volume is full of beautys of the best sort the verse about the 2 children is another addition to the many from Chantreys monument* let C. Mossop take my new Will home with him for lawyer Taylor to alter—Read in the Testament the Epistle of St. John I love that simple-hearted expression on little children it breathes of brotherly affection & love

Mon. 6 Oct. 1824. I have again reflected over my new will & I believe the expression of 'and their respective legal repre-sentatives' is wrong so I shall alter it as soon as it is returned—I had several memorandum which I intended to have inserted in the will but I was told it woud cost too much in proving if it was long so I will insert them in the Appendix that my desires may be known & as I am anxious hope attended too tho it often happens otherwise theres little trust in the world to leave faith behind us upon promises

Tues. 5 Oct. 1824. One can scarcely trust fame or credit in these days of misrepresentation and deception this morning a PlayBill was thrown into my house with this pompous Blunder on the face of it

* One of Chantrey's masterpieces was the *Sleeping Children*, in Lichfield Cathedral.

THEATRE MARKET DEEPING

On Thursday Evening Oct. 7 1824 'Will be published the
popular new comedy (never acted here) calld
Pride shall have a fall or the Twentieth Huzzar
written by the Rev. G. Groby and now performing
in the Theatre Royal Covent Garden with
increased attraction & applause
(advt. in the Times)

In the Times Telescope they rechristened me Robert Clare: there went the left wing of my fame.

Wed. 6 Oct. 1824. Recieved the London Magazine by my friend Henderson who brought it from town with him a very dull no. the worst of magazines is waste-paper repetition for humbug is editor of them all in the June no. De Quincey had a paper on 'False Distinctions' which contended quite right enough that women had an inferior genius to men in July 'Surrey' put up a little clever petition against it which read very well but proved nothing in the 'Lion's Head' a little Unknown stuck a letter to the Editor on the same side in August another popt a plea for female genius between the two opinions of middling stuff in September 'Surrey' popt in another push for his opinion & in October the middling middle one is pushing a go-between again when will it end the article on Byron carries ignorance on the face of it recievd a letter from Cary

Thur. 7 Oct. 1824. Got a parcel from London Elton's *Brothers* & Allen's *Grammar* gifts of the authors & Erskine's *Internal Evidences of Religion* the gift of Lord Radstock one of my best friends a very sensible book this passage stuck me I first opened 'To walk without God in the world is to walk in sin & sin is the way of danger men have been told this by their own consciences & they have partially or occasionally believed it but still they walked on too true recievd 3 letters from Van Dyk Mrs Emmerson & Hessey done nothing

Fri. 8 Oct. 1824. Very ill today & very unhappy my 3 Childern 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 & more convinced that I cannot recover I will make a memorandum of

my temporary concerns for next to the Spiritual they ought to come & be attended to for the sake of those left behind I will insert them in the Appendix neglect is the rust of life that eateth it away & layeth the best of minds fallow & maketh them desert done nothing

Sat. 9 Oct. 1824. Observed today that the Swallows are all gone when they went I know not saw them at the beginning of the week a white one was seen this season by Mr Clark in the fields while out shooting Patty has been to Stamford & brought me a letter from Ned Drury who came from Lincoln to the mayor's Feast on Thursday it revives old reccolections poor fellow he is an odd one but still my reccolections 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 & forks & to see a throng of blank faces about me chattering & stuffing 'that boast no more expression than a muffin'

Sun. 10 Oct. 1824. A wet day have finished the life of Savage in Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* it is a very interesting piece of biography but the criticisms are dictated by friendship that too often forgets judgment ought to be one of the company to leave this & turn to the life of Gray what a contrast it almost makes the mind disbelieve criticism & to fancy itself led astray by even the wisest of men I never take up Johnson's Lives but I regret his beginning at the wrong end first & leaving out those beautiful minstrels of Elizabeth had he forgot that there had been such poets as Spenser Drayton Suckling &c &c but it was the booksellers' judgment that employd his pen & we know by experience that most of their judgments lye in their pockets so the Poets of Elizabeth are still in cobwebs & mystery read in the afternoon Erskine's *Evidence of Revealed Religion** & find in it some of the best reasoning in favour of its object I have ever read I think a doubting Christian may be set aright at a first perusal & a reasoning Deist loose doubts sufficient to be half a Christian in some of the originals & a whole one ere he get to the end

* *Remarks on the Internal Evidence of Revealed Religion* (1820), by Thomas Erskine, author of many other theological works.

Mon. 11 Oct. 1824. I have been dipping into *The Miseries of Human Life** here & there the petty troubles are whimsical enough & the thing a novel one which is sufficient to ensure success now & I understand it ran through a many editions & that the Authors made £1,500 by it clear profit so much for fashion Collins's poems would not pay for the printing & the price Milton got for his Paradise Lost is well known so fashion's taste is still the same her outside only alters—out upon her foolery.

Tues. 12 Oct. 1824. Began to learn a poor lame boy the common rules of arithmetic & find him very apt & willing to learn
Began an enquiry into the life of Bloomfield with the intention of writing one & a criticism on his genius & Writings a fellow of the name of Weston pretended to know a great deal about him but I must enquire into its authenticity Capel Lofft† did not improve on the account given by his brother George by altering it—Editors often commit this fault

Wed. 13 Oct. 1824. Feel rather worse lookd over the Magazine for amusement for Magazines are the best things in Literature to pass away a melancholy hour their variety & the freshness of their subjects whether good or bad never fail of amusement to reccomend them Blackwood's has had a hard hit on Taylor there are no more Editor Scotts at present to check them The letter on Macadamizing is good the review on *Walladmor*‡ is 30 pages long I wish De Quincey had better subjects for his genius tho there are some parts of the novel that seems alive with action

Thur. 14 Oct. 1824. Wrote a letter to Lord Radstock—Read some passages in the Poems of Tannahill§ some of his Songs are beautiful particularly 'Loudon's bonny woods & braes' 'We'll meet beside the dusky glen' & 'Jessey' his poems are

* 'Or the Groans of Samuel Sensitive and Timothy Testy, with a few supplementary sighs from Mrs. Testy' (new edition, 1806).

† The Suffolk squire by whose exertions *The Farmer's Boy* was published in 1800. See entry for 8 Mar. 1825.

‡ A novel attributed to Sir Walter Scott, but actually by G. W. Haering.

§ Robert Tannahill, the Paisley weaver (1774–1810), published his volume of poems and songs in 1807. His songs have a popularity second only to that of some of Burns's.

poor & appear as if they were written by another the epithet 'virgin voice' is odd & this line sounds namby pambily '& therefore love I thee' the Scotch poets excel in song-writing because they take their images from common life where nature exists without affectation

Fri. 15 Oct. 1824. Read in Elton's Poems some passages in *The Brothers* are very good & appear to be the utterance of feeling the small poems are middling 'Rob Roy' & 'A Father's Reverie' are two of the best—there is a pleasant sound lingers on the ear whilst reading these lines:

—the bare trees with crashing boughs aloft
Rock & re-echo & at whiles are hush'd:
I commune with my spirit & am still

Sat. 16 Oct. 1824. Wrote 2 more pages of my life find it not so easy as I at first imagind as I am anxious to give an undisguisd narrative of facts good & bad in the last sketch which I wrote for Taylor I had little vanitys about me to gloss over failings which I shall now take care to lay bare for readers if they ever are published to comment upon as they please in my last 4 years I shall give my likes & dislikes of friends & acquaintances as free as I do of myself—

Sun. 17 Oct. 1824. Recievd a letter from Mrs Gilchrist—read some passages in my Shakspear took a walk the hedges look beautiful with their hips & glossy sloes lookd into the poems of Coleridge Lamb & Lloyd Coleridge's monody on Chatterton is beautiful but his sonnets are not happy ones they seem to be a labour after exelence which he did not reach some of those by his friend Lloyd are excelent & seem to have attained it without trouble 'To Craig Millar Castle' & 'To November' are the best in my opinion—Lamb's best poetry is in Elia tho 'tis a sufficient fame in a late harvest—I wish he woud write on

Mon. 18 Oct. 1824. Lookd again into *Don Juan* like it better & feel a wish that the great poet had livd to finish it tho he appears to have lost his intended plan on setting out & to have continued it with any purpose that came uppermost—Don Juan's visit to England reads tiresome & one wishes at the end that he had

met with another shipwreck on his voyage to have sent him elsewhere

Tues. 19 Oct. 1824. Lookd over a New vol of provincial poems by a neighbouring poet Bantons—*Excursions of Fancy* & poor fancies I find them there is not a new thought in them 4 years ago a poet was not to be heard of within a century of Helpstone & now there is a swarm Roses *Early Muse* Wilkinsons *Percy* both of Peterbro Messing's *Rural Walks* of Exton Adcock *Cottage Poems* of Oakham—Bantons *Excursions of Fancy* of Teigh—Strattons *Poems* of Abbots Ripton &c &c & all of a kin wanting in natural images &c*

Wed. 20 Oct. 1824. Workd in the garden at making a shed for my Auriculas the Michaelmas daisey is in full flower both the lilac-blue & the white thick-set with its little clustering stars of flowers I love them for their visits in such a melancholy season as the end of autumn—the Horse chestnut tree is losing large hand-shaped leavs that litter in yellow heaps round the trunk the walnut is compleatly bare & the leavs are tand brown & shriveld up as if scorchd the elms are as green & fresh as the oaks

Thur. 21 Oct. 1824. Recievd a letter from Hessey & wrote one took a walk in the fields gatherd a bunch of wild flowers that lingerd in shelterd places as loath to dye—the ragwort still shines in its yellow clusters & the little heath-bell or harvest-bell quakes to the wind under the quick banks & warm furze—clumps of wild Marjoram are yet in flower about the mole-hilly banks & clumps of meadow-sweet linger with a few bushes yet unfaded

Fri. 22 Oct. 1824. Read Hazlitt's Lectures on the Poets I admire his mention of the daisy as reminding him of his boyish days when he usd to try to jump over his own shadow he is one of the very best prose-writers of the present day & his works are always entertaining & may be taken up whenever one chouses or feels the want of amusement his political writings are heated & empty full of sound & fury I hate politics & therefore I may be but a poor judge

* None of these now retains even local fame.

Sat. 23 Oct. 1824. Continued to read Hazlitt I like his Lectures on the Poets better than those of the comic writers & on Shakespear his View of the English Stage is not so good as either they might have remained in their first places without any loss to the world viz the Newspapers for which they were written his other works I have not seen read in Shakespear 'the Midsummer Night's Dream' for the first time I have still got 3 parts out of 4 of the plays to read & I hope I shall not leave the world without reading them

Sun. 24 Oct. 1824. Recievd a letter from Lord Radstock— finished another chapter of my life read some passages in Blair's *Sermons* lookd into Maddox on the culture of flowers & the *Flora Domestica** which with a few improvements & additions would be one of the most entertaining books ever written if I live I will write one on the same plan & call it 'A Garden of Wild Flowers' as it shall contain nothing else with quotations from poets & others an English Botany on this plan woud be very interesting & serve to make Botany popular while the hard nicknaming system of unuterable words now in vogue only overloads it in mystery till it makes it darkness visible

Mon. 25 Oct. 1824. Old Shepherd Newman dyed this morning an old tenant of the fields & the last of the old shepherds the fields are now left desolate & his old haunts look like houses disinhabited the fading woods seem mourning in the autumn wind how often hath he seen the blue skye the green fields & woods & the season's changes now he sleeps unconscious of all what a desolate mystery doth it leave round the living mind the end of Gray's 'Elegy' might well be applied to this tenant of the fields—'Oft have we seen him'

Tues. 26 Oct. 1824. Recievd a letter from Allan Cunningham— looked into Pope I know not how it is but I cannot take him up often or read him long together the uninterrupted flow of the verses wearys the ear there are some fine passages in the 'Essay on Man' the Pastorals are nicknamed so for daffodils breathing flutes beachen bowls silver crooks purling brooks &

* Taylor had just published this book by Leigh Hunt's sister-in-law, Elizabeth Kent. Clare's letters to her have not, so far, come to light.

such like everlasting singsong does not make pastorals his prologue to the Satires is good but that celebrated Epitaph on Gay ends hurlesquely* [4 words we have failed to decipher.]

Wed. 27 Oct. 1824. I have been much stuck with some passages in the Poems of Aaron Hill* with many happy expressions & original images I have inserted a few of them in Appendix he seems to struggle to free his ideas from the turnpike hackney-isms of sounding rhymes & tinkling periods then in fashion for most of the rhymers of that day seem to catch their little inspirations from Pope

Thur. 28 Oct. 1824. Wrote a letter to Mrs Gilchrist read some passages in Shakespear turnd over a few leaves of Knox's Essays† read Bacon's essay on the idea of a compleat garden divided into every month of the year in which the flowers bloom what beautiful Essays these are I take them up like Shakespear & read them over & still find plenty to entertain me & new thoughts that strike me as if for the first time

Fri. 29 Oct. 1824. Read some poems of Wordsworth his 'Lucy Gray' or Solitude 'The Pet Lamb' 'We are Seven' the Oak & broom 'the Eglantine & the Fountain' Two April Mornings are some of my greatest favourites When I first began to read poetry I dislikd Wordworth because I heard he was dislikd & I was astonishd when I lookd into him to find my mistaken pleasure in being delighted & finding him so natural & beautiful in his 'White Doe of Rylstone' there is some of the sweetest poetry I ever met with tho full of his mysteries

Sat. 30 Oct. 1824. Recievd a present of 2 Volumes of Sermons On the Doctrines & Practice of Christianity from Lord Radstock he is one of my best friends & not of much kin with the world the chrysanthemums are just opening their beautiful double flowers I have 6 sorts this year the claret-coloured the

* One wonders why Clare found the ending of the epitaph on Gay 'burlesque', but it *is* in keeping that he saw beyond the dullness of Hill who earned himself a place in *The Dunciad*.

† *Essays Moral and Literary*. See Letter to Octavius Gilchrist, Sept. 1820, when Clare was already reading Knox.

buff the bright yellow the paper-white the purple & the rose-coloured lost one—the chocolate or coffee-color—promisd more from Milton

Sun. 31 Oct. 1824. Took a walk got some branches of the spindle tree with its pink-colord berrys that shine beautifully in the pale sun found for the first time 'the herb true love' or 'one berry' in Oxey Wood* brought a root home to set in my garden—lookd into the 2 Vols of *Sermons* from Lord Radstock the texts are well selected & the sermons are plain & sensibly written they are in my mind much superior to Blairs popular Sermons & that is not going great lengths in their praise for Blairs are quiet & cold & his study seems more in the eloquence & flow of Style then in the doctrine of religion for the language is beautiful but it is studied like Dr Johnson's musical periods

Mon. 1 Nov. 1824. Took a walk to Lolam Brigs to hunt for a species of fern that usd to grow on some willow tree heads in Lolham lane when I was a boy but coud find none got some of the yellow water-lily* from the pits which the floods had washed up to set in an old water-tub in the garden & to try some on land in a swaily corner† as the horse-blob thrives well which is a water flower listend in the evening to Glinton bells at the top of the garden I always feel mellancholy at this season to hear them & yet it is a pleasure

I'm pleased & yet I'm sad

Tues. 2 Nov. 1824. Set some box edging round a border which I have made for my collection of ferns read some passages in Blair's *Grave* a beautiful poem & one of the best things after the manner of Shakespear its beginning is very characteristic of the subject there are crowds of beautiful passages about it who has not markd the following aged companions to many such spots of general decay

* Herb Paris is not now found in Oxey Wood, nor the fly orchis in Harrison's pailgrounds, nor the spider orchis anywhere in the Clare country. But the bee and the butterfly orchises, the moth mullein, and the yellow waterlily grow still where Clare found them. See Natural History Letter for 25 March, 1825, for further mention of orchises and mullein (goldilocks).

† Shady. See *Glossary of Northamptonshire Words and Phrases.*

. . . a row of reverend elms,
Long lashd by the rude winds. Some rift half down
. . . others so thin atop
That scarce two crows could lodge in the same tree.

Wed. 3 Nov. 1824. Took a walk with John Billings to Swordy Well to gather some 'old man's beard' which hangs about the hedges in full bloom its downy clusters of artificial-like flowers appear at first as if the hedge was litterd with bunches of white cotton went into Hilly Wood & found a beautiful species of fern on a sallow stoven in a pit which I have not seen before there are 5 sorts growing about the woods here the common brake the fox fern the hart's tongue & the polypody 2 sorts the tall & the dwarf

Thur. 4 Nov. 1824. Recievd a letter & prospectus from a Schoolmaster of Surfleet wishing me to become a correspondent to a periodical publication calld *The Scientific Receptacle* what a crabbed name for poesy to enlist with its professes to be a kinsman to *The Leeds Correspondant* & the *Boston Enquirer* the latter of which I remember to have been much pleasd with— in which was a pretty song by Scott

Fri. 5 Nov. 1824. Read in Bishop Percy's poems the *Reliques of Ancient Poetry* take them up as often as I may I am always delighted there is so much of the essence & simplicity of true poetry that makes me regret I did not see them sooner as they woud have formed my taste & laid the foundations of my judgment in writing & thinking poetically as it is I feel indebted to them for many feelings

Sat. 6 Nov. 1824. Took a walk in the fields the oaks are beginning to turn reddish brown & the winds have stripped some nearly bare the underwood's last leaves are in their gayest yellows thus autumn seems to put on bridal colours for a shroud the little harvest-bell is still in bloom trembling to the cold wind almost the only flower living save the 'old man's beard' or travellers joy on the hedges

Sun. 7 Nov. 1824. Recievd a packet from London with the Magazine & some copies of MSS that come very slowly & a letter very friendly worded but I have found that saying & doing

is a wide difference too far very often to be neighbours much less friends recievd a letter too from Van Dyk lookd into Wordsworth poems & read Solomons Song & beautiful as some of the images of that poem are some of them are not reconsilable in my judgment above the ridiculous I have inserted them in a blank verse fashion in the Appendix yet the more I read the Scriptures the more I feel astonishment at the sublime images I continually meet with in its poetical & prophetic books nay everywere about it all. other authors diminishes to dwarfs by their sides

Mon. 8 Nov. 1824. Read over the Magazine the review of Lord Byrons Conversations is rather entertaining the pretending letter of James Thomson* is a bold lye I dislike these lapt-up counterfeits mantled in truth like a brassy shilling in its silver washings those Birmingham halfpence passed off as matter of fact monies Elia can do better the rest of the articles are motley matters some poor & some middling Magazines are always of such wear

Tues. 9 Nov. 1824. Read Shakespears 'Henry the Fifth' of which I have always been very fond from almost a boy I first met with it in an odd volume which I got for sixpence yet I thought then that the Welsh officer with 2 other of his companions were tedious talkers & I feel that I think so still yet I feel such an interest about the play that I can never lay it down till I see the end of it

Wed. 10 Nov. 1824. Read 'Macbeth' what a soul-thrilling power hovers about this tradegy I have read it over about 20 times & it chains my feelings still to its persual like a new thing it is Shakespears masterpiece the thrilling feelings created by the description of Lady Macbeths terror-haunted walkings in her sleep sink deeper than a thousand ghosts—at least in my vision of the terrible she is a ghost herself & feels with spirit & body a double terror

Thur. 11 Nov. 1824. Recievd a letter from Inskip the friend of Bloomfield† full of complaints at my neglect of writing what

* The letter was *genuinely* Thomson's.

† But later, Thomas Inskip, author of *Cant, A Satire* (1843) was an inspiriting friend during Clare's first eight years in the asylum at Northampton.

use is writing when the amount on both sides amounts to nothing more than waste paper I have desires to know something of Bloomfields latter days but I can hear of nothing further than his dying neglected so its of no use enquiring further for we know that to be the common lot of genius

Fri. 12 Nov. 1824. Burnt a will which Taylor of Deeping made for me by Mossops orders as it was a jumble of contradictions to my wishes—wrote the outline for another in which I meant to leave everything both in the copyright & fund money &c &c of all my Books M.S.S. & property in the power of my family at least in the trust of those I shall nominate trustees & Lord Radstock is one that I shoud like to trouble for the purpose

Sat. 13 Nov. 1824. Lookd into Thomson's 'Winter' there is a freshness about it I think superior to the others tho rather of a pompous cast how natural all his descriptions are nature was consulted in all of them the more I read them the more truth I discover the following are great favourites of mine & prove what I mean describing a hasty flood forcing through a narrow passage he says

> *It boils & wheels & foams & thunders through*
> *Snatch'd in short eddies plays the wither'd leaf*
> *& on the flood the dancing feather floats*

Sun. 14 Nov. 1824. Read in old Tusser* with whose quaint rhymes I have often been entertaind he seems to have been acquainted with most of the odd measures now in fashion he seems to have felt a taste for enclosures & Mavor that busy note-maker & book-compiler of schoolboy memory has added an impertinent note to Tussers opinion as an echo of faint praise so much for a parsons opinion in such matters I am an advocate for open fields & I think that others experience confirm my opinion every day there is 2 pretty sonnets in Tusser & some natural images scatterd about the book the 4 following lines are pretty

* Mavor's edition of the estimable Essex-bred Tusser's *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry* was 1812. The original *Hundreth Good Pointes of Husbandrie* (1557) was in 1573 amplified to *Five Hundreth Points of Good Husbandry United to as Many of Good Huswifery*, to which was prefixed an autobiography in verse.

The year I compare as I find for a truth
The Spring unto Childhood the Summer to Youth
The Harvest to Manhood the Winter to Age
All quickly forgot as a play on a stage

Some of the words in the glossary have different meanings with us—to addle means to earn wages—eddish with us is the grass that grows again as soon as it is mown—staddle* bottom of a stack &c &c

Mon. 15 Nov. 1824. Went to gather pootys on the roman bank for a collection found a scarce sort of which I only saw 2 in my life I pickd up under a hedge at Peakirk town-end & another in Bainton meadow its color is a fine sunny yellow larger than the common sort & round the rim of the base is a black edging which extends no further than the rim it is not in the collection at the British Museum

Tues. 16 Nov. 1824. My friend Billings told me that he saw 4 swallows about the second of this month flying over his house he has not seen them since & forgot to tell me at the time—now what becomes of these swallows for the winter that they cannot go into another country now is certain & that they must abide or perish here is certain but how or were is a mystery that has made more opinions then proofs & remains a mystery†

Wed. 17 Nov. 1824. The Chrysanthemums are in full flower what a beautiful heart-cheering to the different seasons nature has provided in her continual successions of the bloom of flowers—

* See Elizabeth Baker's *Glossary of Northamptonshire Words and Phrases*, as well as Wright's *Dialect Dictionary*. The English Dialect Society's edition of the *Five Hundred Points* (1878) gives 'addle' as 'to increase', 'edish' as 'stubble after corn is cut', and 'staddles' as young growing trees left after cutting underwood.

† White himself remained undecided between the weight of Pennant's opinion *for* migration, and the more fanciful theories of Barrington for hibernation. He returned again and again to the idea, from observation of odd birds left behind, that house swallows particularly might winter in the mud of river- and pond-banks. It was these stragglers—that undoubtedly perish—which puzzled Clare. He was in no real doubt that swifts, swallows, and martins *were* birds of passage, in spite of Cowley:

In thy undiscover'd Nest
Thou dost all the winter rest.

See Appendix II.

ere winters bye the little acconite peeps its yellow flowers then the snowdrop & further on the crocus dropping in before the summer multitude & after their departure the tall hollyhock & little aster bloom in their showy colors then comes the michaelmas daisey & lastly the chrsanthemum while the China roses

all the year
Or in the bud or in the bloom appear.

Thur. 18 Nov. 1824. Read in Southeys *Wesley* he has made a very entertaining book of it but considering the subject I think he might have made more of it the character of Wesley is one of the finest I have read of they may speak of him as they please but they cannot diminish his simplicity of genius as an author & his piety as a Christian I sincerely wish that the present day coud find such a man

Fri. 19 Nov. 1824. Had a visit from my friend Henderson & I felt revivd as I was very dull before he had pleasing News to deliver me having discoverd a new species of Fern a few days back growing among the bogs on Whittlesea Mere & our talk was of Ferns for the day he tells me there is 24 different species or more natives of England & Scotland one of the finest of the latter is calld the maidenhair growing in rock-clefts

Sat. 20 Nov. 1824. Went out to hunt the harts tongue species of fern & fell in with the ruins of the old castle in Ashton Lawn but found none its commonest place is in Wells in the crevices of the walls but I have found it growing about the badger-holes in Open Copy Wood got very wet & returnd home finishd the 8th chapter of my life

Sun. 21 Nov. 1824. Paid a second visit to the old castle in Ashton Lawn with my companion Billings to examine it—we strum* it & found it 20 yards long fronting the south & 18 fronting eastward we imagind about 12 foot of the walls still standing tho the rubbish has entirely coverd them except in some places were about a foot of the wall may be seen it is coverd within & without with blackthorn & privit & spurge laurel so that it is difficult to get about to view it I broke some

* Connected with 'straum,' 'strime,' 'strome'—to 'stride', but obviously used here by Clare to mean 'measure', with approximately foot- or yard-long steps.

of the cement off that holds the stones together & it appears harder then the stones itself brought some home in my pocket for my friend Artis there is some rabbits hants* it & the earth they root out of their burrows is full of this cement & perishd stone—part of the moat is still open

Mon. 22 Nov. 1824. Lookd into Miltons Paradise Lost I once read it through when I was a boy at that time I liked the Death of Abel better what odd judgments those of boys are how they change as they ripen when I think of the slender merits of the Death of Abel against such a giant as Milton I cannot help smiling at my young fancys in those days of happy ignorance

Tues. 23 Nov. 1824. Some months back I began a system of profiting by my reading at least to make a show of it by noting down beautiful odd or remarkable passages—immitations in the poets & prosewriters which I read & I have inserted some likenesses [?] of Lord Byrons about which there has been much nattering & ink shed I never saw some of them

Wed. 24 Nov. 1824. I have often been struck with astonishment at the tales old men & women relate in their remembrances of the growth of trees the elm grooves in the Staves Acre Close at the town-end were the rooks build & that are of giant height my old friend Billings says he remembers them no thicker than his stick & saw my fathers uncle set them carrying a score on his back at once I can scarcely believe it

Thur. 25 Nov. 1824. Recievd a letter from Hessey I have not answerd his last & know not when I shall the worlds friendships are counterfeits & forgeries on that principle I have provd it & my affections are sickened unto death my memories are broken while my confidence is grown to a shadow in the bringing out of the second edition of the Minstrel they were a 12month in printing a title-page.

Fri. 26 Nov. 1824. Went to see if the old hazel nut tree in Lea Close was cut down & found it still standing it is the largest hazel tree I ever saw being thicker then ones thigh in the trunk & the height of a moderate Ash—I once got a half peck of nuts

* As with 'shoy,' 'shy', Clare spelt 'haunts' as he pronounced it.

when in the leaves of its branchs when a boy—the Inclosure has left it desolate its companion of oak & ash being gone

Sat. 27 Nov. 1824. Recievd a parcel of Ferns & flowers from Henderson the common polipody growing about the Thorp Park wall the harts tongue growing in a well at Caistor the Lady fern growing at Whittlesea Meer* & tall White Lychnis with 7 new sorts of Chrysanthemums—the Paper White the bright lemon 3 sorts of lilac & 2 others—I love these flowers as they come in the melancholy of nature

Sun. 28 Nov. 1824. A gentleman came to see me today whose whole talk was of Bloomfield & Booksellers he told me to put no faith in them & when I told him that all my faith & MSS. likewise was in their hands already he shook his head & declared with a solemn bend of his body 'Then you are done by God They will never print them but will dally you on with well-managed excuses to the grave & then boast that they were your friends when you are not able to contradict it as they have done to Bloomfield' he then desired me to get my MSS. back by all means & sell them at a market-price at what they woud fetch he said that Bloomfield had not a £100 a year to maintain 5 or 6 in the family why I have not £50 to maintain 8 with This is a hungry difference

Mon. 29 Nov. 1824. Lent Henderson 5 Nos. of *London Mag.* from July to November & *The Human Heart*

Tues. 30 Nov. 1824. An excessive wet day read the *Literary Souvenir*† for 1825 in all its gilt & finery what a number of candidates for fame are smiling on its pages what a pity it is that time shoud be such a destroyer of our hopes & anxietys for the best of us are but doubts on fames promises & a century will thin the myriad worse than a plague

Thur. 2 Dec. 1824. One of the largest floods ever known is out now an old neighbour Sam Sharp out last night at Deeping Gate on attempting to get home was drownd

Fri. 3 Dec. 1824. Found a very beautiful fern in Oxey Wood suppose it the white maidenhair of Hill it is very scarce here

* See Natural History Letter for 25 March 1825, too, about ferns.
† See entry for 20 August 1825, and note.

Sun. 5 Dec. 1824. I have been thinking today of all the large trees about our neighbourhood & those that have curious historys about them—there was a walnutt tree (now cut down) stood in Groves yard at Glinton of which this is the history—old Will Tyers now living says while going to Peakirk one day when a boy he pickd up a walnutt & took it home to set in his garden were it throve well & bore nutts before he left the house its present occupier got great quantitys of nutts most seasons & a few years back it was cut down & the timber sold for £50

Tues. 7 Dec. 1824. Another gipsy wedding of the Smith family fiddling & drinking as usual

Wed. 8 Dec. 1824. Found the common Pollypody on an old Willow tree in Lolham Lane & a small fern in Hilly Wood scarcely larger than some species of moss & a little resembling curld parsley I have namd it the dwarf maidenhair & believe it is very scarce here

Fri. 10 Dec. 1824. Began to take the *Stamford Mercury* Newspaper with Bradford & Stephenson

Mon. 13 Dec. 1824. Bought a Moore's Almanack with its fresh budget of wonderful predictions on the weather & the times alterd with such earnest ambition of pretending truth that one shoud think the motto 'the voice of the heavens' &c means nothing more or less then the voice of Moors Almanack &c—saw 2 Will o' Whisps last night

Tues. 14 Dec. 1824. A coppled crownd Crane shot at Billings's pond in the Green—'Twas 4 foot high from the toes to the bill on the breast & rump was a thick shaggy down full of powder which seem to be a sort of pounce-box to the bird to dress its feathers with to keep out the wet its neck & breast were beautifully staind with streaks of watery brown its wings & back was slate-grey the down on its head was of the same color

Wed. 15 Dec. 1824. Went to Milton saw a fine edition of Linnaeus's Botany with beautiful plates & find that my fern which I found in Harrisons close dyke by the wood lane is the thorn-pointed fern saw also a beautiful book on insects with the plants they feed on by Curtis found Artis busy over his fossil

plants & Roman antiquitys but his complaints of the deceptions of publishers are akin with mine

Thur. 16 Dec. 1824. Saw Henderson's collection of Ferns which is far from compleat tho some of them are beautiful learnd from him of a singular instinct in plants of the creeping or climbing kind some having a propensity to twine to the left in their climbing & others to the right—the woodbine seems to twine to the left & the travellers joy to the right but this is not an invariable fact

Wed. 22 Dec. 1824. A coppled crownd hen pheasant shot very large & colord about the breast & back like the cock but the head was plain

Thur. 23 Dec. 1824. Recievd a letter from Mrs Emmerson & the *Observer* after a long absence in France—wrote a letter to Mrs. E & to Francis Freeling Esqr—

Fri. 24 Dec. 1824. Recievd a letter from Lord Radstock

Sat. Christmas Day. Gatherd a handful of daiseys in full bloom —saw a woodbine & dogrose in the woods putting out in full leaf & a primrose root full of ripe flowers what a day this usd to be when a boy how eager I usd to attend the church to see it stuck with evergreens (emblems of Eternity) & the cottage windows & the picture ballads on the wall all stuck with ivy holly Box & yew such feelings are past—& 'all this world is proud of'

Sun. 26 Dec. 1824. Found at the bottom of a dyke made in the roman bank some pootys of varied colors & the large garden ones of a russet color with a great many others of the meadow sort which we calld 'badgers' when I was a schoolboy found nowere now but in wet places—there is a great many too of a water species now extinct—the Dyke is 4 foot deep & the soil is full of these shells have they not [lain] here ever since the romans made the bank & does the water sorts not imply that the fields were all fen & under water or wet & uncultivated at that time I think it does—I never walk on this bank but the legions of the roman army pass by my fancys with their mysterys of nearly 2000 years hanging like a mist around them what

changes hath passd since then—were I found these shells it was heath land above Windy Well

Wed. 29 Dec. 1824. Went with neighbour Billings to Southey Wood & Gees Holt to hunt ferns—found none—met with a new species of moss fern stripd growing on a common species like the mistletoe on a thorn it is a sort of moss mistletoe—preservd a specimen—saw a branch of blackthorn dogrose & eldern in full leaf all in one hedgerow—saw a bumbarrel* with moss as if building a nest

Thur. 30 Dec. 1824. Recievd an answer from F Freeling to my enquiry wether the charge of a penny is legal at Deeping office for post paid & frankd letters & Newspapers & I find that it is for letters but no mention is made about newspapers so I am as ignorant as ever on that head but I will enquire further

Fri. 31 Dec. 1824. Recievd a letter from Hessey containing a Draft for £20 being the fund money & Earl Spencers half yearly salary—nothing further about my new poems is mentiond—wrote to Rev. H. F. Cary—Gatherd a cornflower in full bloom

Sat. 1 Jan. 1825. Saw a Reciept to mend broken China in the *Stamford Mercury*—Gloucestershire cheese softend by warm water & mixd with quick lime is a good cement for China ware &c &c—Newspapers have been famous for Hyperbole & the *Stamford Mercury* has long been one at the head of the list of extravagance—in an article relating an accident at Drury Lane Theatre is the following—'A large piece of timber fell on Miss Poveys head & wounded her severely she was of course incapable of performing &c who woud not of course believe Miss Poveys head harder than a Statues after this

Sun. 2 Jan. 1825. Recievd a parcel from Mrs Emmerson took a walk to Simons Wood found 3 distinct species of the 'Bramble' or Mulbery—Henderson will have it there is but 2 but I am certain he is wrong & believe there is 4 the common one that grows in the hedges the larger sort that grows on commons bearing larger fruit calld by childern 'blackberry' the small

* See Nature Letter for 7 February for further description of the long-tailed tit.

creeping dewberry that runs along the ground in the land furrows & on the brinks of brooks & a much larger one of the same kind growing in woods botanists may say what they will for tho these are all of a family they are distinctly different there are 2 sorts of the wild rose the one in hedges bearing blush-colord flowers & the other much smaller in woods with white ones

Wed. 5 Jan. 1825. Jiliflowers Polyanthuses Marigolds & the yellow yarrow are in flower & the double scarlet Anemone nearly out crocuses peeping out above ground swelling with flower the authoress Miss Kent of the *Flora Domestica* says the snowdrop is the first spring flower she is mistaken the yellow winter aconite is always earlier & the first on the list of spring

Thur. 6 Jan. 1825. My dear boy Frederick is 1 year old this day

Fri. 7 Jan. 1825. Bought some cakes of colors with the intention of trying to make sketches of curious snail horns Butterflys Moths Sphinxes Wild flowers & whatever my wanderings may meet with that are not too common

Sat. 8 Jan. 1825. A rhyming schoolmaster is the greatest bore in literature the following ridiculous advertisement proves the assertion taken from the *Stamford Mercury*

'Boston
'Mr Gilberts boarding & day school will reopen on
Monday January 17th 1825
'For fervours past his heart must flow
& Kind regard to youth shall show
That Gilbert feels & grateful will
The noble art to learn instill

Sun. 9 Jan. 1825. Newspaper Miracles Wonders Curiositys &c &c under these heads I shall insert anything I can find worth reading & laughing at—2 extraordinary large eels were last week taken upon the Saltings at Steeple in Dengre hundred Essex—these monsters of their species (& there is every reason to believe them freshwater silver eel)—one was seven feet in length twenty-one inches in surcumference & weighd fifty-

seven pounds the other was six feet long larger round then the former & weighd sixty-two pound—twenty years back one was taken nearly six feet long close to Portman marsh wall—in Essex a quarter of a mile from Maldon bridge—a part of one of the eels was eaten by our correspondent who speaks highly of its flavour—*Essex herald* A parish clerk 115 years old is now able to read without spectacles & dig graves &c &c—*Stamford Mercury*

Mon. 10 Jan. 1825. Saw a whitethorn bush yesterday in Oxey wood in the leaf all over & by next Sunday no doubt the knots of May may be seen—the winter ackonite just peeping out with its yellow flowers—the arum just appearing under the hedges as in April & the Avens (a common hedgerow plant) has never lost its leaves but appears as green as at Spring

Tues. 11 Jan. 1825. Began to fetch maiden earth from molehills for my flower beds—heard the Mavis thrush sing for the first time this winter it often sings earlier & has been heard on Christmas day when the weather has been open

Thur. 13 Jan. 1825. Helpd Billings to take in Beans

Fri. 14 Jan. 1825. A scarlet daisey in flower in the Garden—Recievd a letter from C. A. Elton who tells me there is a many plants & ferns about Bristol downs & valleys & 'some rathe[r] peculiar to the country' I hope I shall be able to go in Spring

Sat. 15 Jan. 1825. This day is my Fathers birthday who is 60 years old—'Thus runs the world away'

Sun. 16 Jan. 1825. Took a walk in 'Porters snow Close' to hunt ferns in the morning & in Turnills 'heath wood' in the afternoon found nothing but the foxfern which is the commonest of all about here—Receivd a letter from Mrs Emmerson & answerd it

Wed. 19 Jan. 1825. A slight storm of snow for the first time this winter—just compleatd 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 & send it to Mongomery's paper the *Iris* or the *Literary Chronicle* under that character

Thur. 20 Jan. 1825. Wrote a letter to Hessey

Fri. 21 Jan. 1825. A robin whistling on the plumb trees by the window I never heard one so early before

Sat. 22 Jan. 1825. 'A new Vegetable called the Asparagus Potatoe' has been introduced into this country it comes into season just as the asparagus goes out'—'So little wind prevails in Italy that not a windmill is to be seen in any part of it there were two in Venice but were taken down as usless for want of wind'—'An elm tree supposd to be a thousand years old was blown down near Ludlow castle' 'A blackbirds nest with four young ones was found a few days ago in Yorkshire—*Stamford Mercury*

Sun. 23 Jan. 1825. Newspaper wonders 'There is now living at Barton an old lady of the name of Faunt who has nearly attaind the great age of 105 years—she has lafely cut new teeth to the great surprise of the family—*Stamford Mercury* took a walk to Hilly Wood brought home another plant of the white maiden-hair fern that grows on a sallow stoven in a sort of spring wrote to Mr Sharp of the dead letter office—finishd my '2 ballads to Mary' which I intend to send to the *Literary Gazette* as also my 3 sonnets to Bloomfield & I am weary of writing

Tues. 25 Jan. 1825. A fine day the bees were out busily flying as if seeking flowers the sky was hung with light flying clouds & the season appeard as if the beginning of April

Wed. 26 Jan. 1825. Fetchd some soil from Cowper green for my ferns & flowers—the sharpest frost for this winter which woud not bare a boy to slide on—from what cause sprung the superstition of making the No. 3 a fatal No.?—it is so much so—that ghosts use it & never pay a visit without giving their (fashionable) signal of 3 raps to announce their arrival

Thur. 27 Jan. 1825. Receivd a letter from Mr Sharp & one from Lord Radstock—& answerd his Lordships sending in it the 'Vanitys of Life' a poem—heard the buzz of the black beetle or cockchafer* that flyes about in the autumn evenings & early in

* The brown beetle with leaf-like antennae of early summer is far more commonly called the cockchafer. Here Clare surely means the 'shardborne' dor-beetle.

spring it is different to the brown or summer beetle which is described by Collins

the beetle winds
His small but sullen horn

& is not so common

Mon. 30 Jan. 1825. Receivd a letter from Mrs Emmerson & a *Litterary Gazette* from somebody in which is a Review of an unsuccessful attempt to reach Repulse Bay &c by Captain Lyon from which the following curious incident is extracted he says 'Near the large grave was a third pile of stones covering the body of a child which was coiled up in the same manner. A snow bunting had found its way thro the loose stones which composed this little tomb & its now forsaken neatly built nest was found placed on the neck of the child. As the Snow bunting has all the domestic Virtues of our English Redbreast it has always been considerd by us as the Robin of these dreary wilds & its lively chirp & fearless confidence have renderd it respected by the most hungry sportsmen—I coud not on this occasion view its little nest placed on the breast of Infancy without wishing that I possesed the power of poetically expressing the feelings it excited'

Mon. 31 Jan. 1825. Went to Simons Wood for a sucker of the Barberry bush to set in my Garden—saw the Corn tree putting out into leaf—a yellow crocus & a bunch of single snowdrops in full flower—the mavis thrush has been singing all day long Spring seems begun the woodbines all over the wood are in full leaf

Tues. 1 Feb. 1825. A beautiful morning took a walk in the fields saw some birch poles in the quick fencing & fancyd the bark of birch might make a good substitute for Paper it is easily parted in thin laiers & one shred of bark round the tree woud split into 10 or a dozen sheets I have tryd it & find it recieves the ink very readily

Wed. 2 Feb. 1825. Went to walk in the fields & heard Ufford bells chiming for a funeral when I enquird I found it was for poor old John Cue of Ufford a friend of mine with whom I

workd some seasons at turnip-hoeing for which he was famous he knew my Grandfather well & told me many reccolections of their young day follys John Cue was once head Gardener for Lord Manners of Ufford Hall—he was fond of flowers & books & possessed a many curious ones of the latter among which was Parkinson

Thur. 3 Feb. 1825. Recievd a letter from Hessey with £5 enclosed & a parcel containing 2 Nos. of the new series of *London Mag*, and *Walladmor* a German-Scotch novel if Job was living now he woud stand a chance to gain his wish 'O that mine enemy woud write a book' for this is the age of book making– & like the small-pox almost everybody catches the plague

Fri. 4 Feb. 1825. The first winters day a sharp frost & a night fall of snow drifted in heaps by a keen wind—there has been a deal of talk about the forwardness of this season—but last season was not much behind—on the third of this month I found an hedge-sparrows nest in Billings Boxtrees before the window with 3 eggs in it I lookd again in March & found 2 young ones pen-featherd starved to death she laid again in the same nest & brought off a fledged brood in April Recievd a joint letter from Lord Radstock & Mrs Emmerson under a Frank which was put into post too soon for which a charge of 1 py was made— Knaves in office watch chances as the cat watches mice & are of that species of animal that catch their prey by supprise Recievd a letter from Dr Darling

Sun. 6 Feb. 1825. Recievd a letter from Mrs Gilchrist—heard by Ned Simpson of Stamford that a bird of the hawk kind was shot at a fountain in Hollywell Park of a large size which he calls the 'hair legd falcon' Heard by the same of a white mole being caught in Stamford field

Read in the *Examiner* the Bankrupt of W. Baynes & Son so there goes £5 which I was to have had for writing in the *Amulet*

Mon. 7 Feb. 1825. Greatly distressed today & uncommonly ill O what a blessing is health we know not how to prize it till we loose it Dr. Darling restored me to health but my foolish follys has compelled her to leave me again & I fear for ever

Wed. 9 Feb. 1825. Went to Stamford today with Patty in great distress to Dr Cooper I have set it down here to see if I shall live till 1829 to see it again I fear not but so be it I am not my own maker

Thur. 10 Feb. 1825. Fine day the bees are out & busily seeking for wax among the little flowers of the yellow acconite—a sparrow is building its nest in a hole in the old wallnut tree in the Taylors' garden

Fri. 11 Feb. 1825. Saw the first young Lamb this season—saw a blue violet on the Ivy bank next the lane in Billings Close

Sat. 12 Feb. 1825. Receivd a letter from Van Dyk in which he appears as the Editor of my Poems they chose who they please this time but my choice comes next & I think I shall feel able to do it myself he wishes me to alter the title of my song written in imitation of Peggy Band to Peggy Bland because the old ballad is bad I did it in memory of the music & shall not alter it

Sun. 13 Feb. 1825. Recievd a letter from Dr. Darling an odd sort of fellow came today with a bag full of old school summing books wanting me to buy them & vowing he was the author of them & that I might make a good bargain by publishing them what odd characters there are in the world the fellow fancyd that I was excessive ignorant to palm such ignorant impudence upon me for truth after he found his scheme would not take he begged 2 pence & departed he is the son of an odd fellow at Baston he is a little foolish by nature & they put him a long while to school to compleat what she began—

my dear Anna taken very ill

Mon. 14 Feb. 1825. Wrote to Vandyk & Dr Darling in my letter to Van Dyk I inserted the tune of 'Peggy Band' there is a many beautiful tunes to these provincial ballads such as the 'White Cockade' 'Wars Alarms' 'Down the Burn Davy' old & new 'Thro the wood Laddy' 'Dusty Miller' 'Highland Laddie' & a very beautiful one I forget the title it begins 'A witherd old gipsey one day I espied who bade me shun the thick woods & said something beside' but the old woman that sung it is gone

the old 'Guardian Angels' 'Banks of Banna' & a thousand others

Tues. 15 Feb. 1825. Heard the blackbird sing in Hilly Wood recievd a Valentine from Mrs Emmerson my Anna is something better

Wed. 16 Feb. 1825. Heard the Skylark sing at Swordy Well saw a piece of bayonet & gun barrel found while digging a stone pit this proves the story that superstition tells of a battle fought here by the rebels in Cromwells time—it is said were there is smoke there is fire & I often think were superstition lingers with her storys there is always some truth in them—brought home a bush of Ling or heath to plant in the garden

Thur. 17 Feb. 1825. Saw a large bunch of blue violets in flower & a root of the Bedlam cowslip

Sat. 19 Feb. 1825. Recievd a Newspaper from Montgomery* in which my poem of the Vanitys of Life was inserted with an ingenius & flattering comment past upon it praise from such a person as Montgomery is heart stirring & its the only one from a poet that I have met with—went to Turnills Heath close to get some furzebushes to set in the Garden

Sun. 20 Feb. 1825. Found several pieces of Roman pot in Harrisons top close on the hill over which the road crosses to the Tindhills at the north-east corner of Oxey Wood 1 piece was the lettered & Artis says they are Roman & I verily believe some Roman camp or pottery was made there

Mon. 21 Feb. 1825. A robin busy at building its nest in the Garden

Tues. 22 Feb. 1825. A hedge sparrow building its nest in one of Billingss Box trees

Sat. 26 Feb. 1825. Recievd a Letter from Lord Radstock filld with scraps of Newspaper Poetry among which was a pretty valentine by Mongomery & some verses said to be written by Lord Byron they are in his manner—the rest after the persual

* James Montgomery, editor of *The Sheffield Iris* for thirty-one years, from time to time gave Clare an acceptable meed of praise.

of the Newspapers are 'nothing'—when his Lordship sees anything he fancys better then the rest he always attributes it to Mrs Emmerson or some of his friends as he has done now one to her & one to Van Dyk

Sun. 27 Feb. 1825. Recievd a letter in rhyme from a John Pooley—a very dull fooley—who ran me 10d further into debt as I had not money to pay the postage

Tues. 1 Mar. 1825. Saw today the largest piece of Ivy I ever saw in my life mailing a tree which it nearly surpassd in size in Oxey Wood it was thicker than my thigh & its cramping embraces seemd to diminish the tree to a dwarf—it has been asserted by some that ivy is very injurious to trees & by others that it does no injury at all—I cannot decide against it—the large pieces were coverd all over with root-like fibres as thick as hair, & they representd the limbs of animals more than the bark of a tree

Wed. 2 Mar. 1825. Found a Mavis Thrushes nest with 3 eggs these birds always build early they make a nest like a black-birds but instinct has taught them a lesson against the cold which the other has no occasion for & that is they never line their nests without wool which keeps the nest warm at this early season they always begin to sing as soon as the male blossoms of the hazel or (Trails) make their appearance & build their nests when female flowers put forth their little crimson threads at the end of the buds to recieve the impregning dust of the male dangling trails

Thur. 3 Mar. 1825. This is Pattys Birthday

Fri. 4 Mar. 1825. Went to Ailsworth to fetch ling or common heath & furze bushes to set in my garden—went in Bates spinney to hunt the black maiden hair found none but saw some of the largest furze & common brakes I had ever seen my friend Billings measured a furze bush which was 11 foot & a ½ high & a brake branch—9 foot & a ¼—found a curious sort of Iris or flag growing in a pond in the wood & fancy it not a common one brought a bit home to set

Sat. 5 Mar. 1825. Recievd a letter from Lord Radstock & Mr

Emmerson also one from a Mr Weston the Editor of poor Bloomfields Letters & Remains requesting me to send him the letters I have of the poet & asking permission to publish those of mine poor Bloomfield I wish that death had left me a little longer the pleasure of his friendship—Went to see the fox cover on Etton field sown with furze some years ago which now present a novel appearance & thrive better than on their native heath tho the place is low ground

Sun. 6 Mar. 1825. Recievd a parcel from Hessey with the magazine & a leaf of the new poems also a present of Miss Kents *Sylvan Sketches* she seems to be a regular book maker Parish Officers are modern savages as the following will testify 'Crowland Abbey—certain surveyors have lately dug up several foundation stones of the Abbey & also a great quantity of stone coffins for the purpose of repairing the parish roads'—*Stamford Mercury* Anna taken again for the worse yesterday had a terrible fever all night & remains in a doubtful state

Mon. 7 Mar. 1825. Wrote to E. T. Artis—Mrs Gilchrist & Mrs Emmerson—enclosing one in Artis's Letter (to get it Franked) for Mrs W. Wright of Clapham requesting her to give me a bulb of the 'Tyger Lily' & a sucker of the 'White Province Rose'

Tues. 8 Mar. 1825. Wrote to Hessey & to Jos Weston of 12 Providence Row Finsbury Square London enclosing my letters of Bloomfield for his use in a forthcoming vol of his Corespondence*—went to Royce Wood to get some Service trees to set in Billings close

Wed. 9 Mar. 1825. I had a very odd dream last night & I take it as an ill omen for I dont expect that the book will meet a better fate I thought I had one of the proofs of the new poems from London & after looking at it awhile it shrank thro my hands like sand & crumbled into dust the birds were singing in Oxey Wood at 6 o clock this evening as loud & various as at May

* J. Weston's *Remains of Robert Bloomfield* (1825).

Thur. 10 Mar. 1825. Heard an Anecdote yesterday of Dr Dodd* which is well known & considerd authentic among the common people it is said that Dr Dodd was taunted on his way to the place of execution by a lady who had envied his popularity & looking out of a window as he passd she exclaimed 'Now Dr Dodd weres your God' when he bade her look in the last chapter of Micah & read the 8th 9th & 10th verses for an answer which she did & dyd soon afterwards of a broken heart

Fri. 11 Mar. 1825. Intend to call my Natural History of Helpstone 'Biographys of Birds & Flowers' with an appendix on Animals & Insects†—The frogs have began to croke & spawn in the ponds & dykes

Sat. 12 Mar. 1825. Recievd the first Proof of the Shepherds Calendar from Hessey to correct & a letter from Lord Radstock in which he seems to be offended at a late opinion of mine of some Newspaper Poems that he sent me as specimens of the beautiful & he thanks his stars that his taste is not so refined as to make him above admiring them—the word refinement has lost its original use & is nothing more than a substitute for fashionable coquette which I thank *my* stars for keeping me too ignorant to learn

Sun. 13 Mar. 1825. Recievd a letter from the Editor of Bloomfields Correspondence enclosing the return of my letter of Bloomfield & a scrap of his handwriting written in his summer house at Shefford an Inscription in it which I hear is now defaced what a sad thing it is to see the relics of such poets destroyed who woud not have made a pilgrimage to have seen the summer house & its inscription as left by the Bard—in the same letter was a pretty unaffected letter from Hannah Bloomfield his daughter she seems to inherit the gentle unassuming manners of feelings for which her father was loved & esteemed —lent Henderson 3 Nos. of the New *London Mag: & Review*‡

* William Dodd (1729–77), a forger who yet preached 'very eloquently and touchingly', says Horace Walpole. He wrote *Thoughts in Prison* while under sentence of death.

† This reached no further state of completion than the Natural History Letters and Notes included in this book. See Introduction.

‡ John Taylor had handed over the editing of *The London* to Henry Southern in a last effort to revive that once flourishing magazine.

took a walk to Open Copy to see the Nutt trees in flower which promise a great nutting season

Mon. 14 Mar. 1825. My double Scarlet anemonie in full flower —A sharp frosty morning

Tues. 15 Mar. 1825. I have been reading over Mrs Barbaulds *Lessons for Childern* to my eldest child who is continually teasing me to read them I find by this that they are particularly suited to the tastes of childern as she is never desirous of hearing anything read a second time but them*

Wed. 16 Mar. 1825. Took a walk to hunt pootys about Royce Close & the Tindhills—went to visit an old favourite spot in Oxey Wood that used to be smotherd with Ferns—got some sallow trees to set in Billings close & a stoven of Black alder to set in my garden

Thurs. 17 Mar. 1825. Recievd a letter & present of Books from Lord Radstock containing Hannah Mores *Spirit of Prayer*†— Bishop Wilsons *Maxims*‡ Burnets *Life of God in the Soul of Man* 'A New Manual of Prayer'§ & Watsons 'Answer to Paine'‖ a quiet unaffected defence of the Bible & an example for all controversialists to go bye were railing has no substitute for argument I have not read Tom Paine but I have always understood him to be a low blackguard

Fri. 18 Mar. 1825. The sharp frosty mornings still continue

Sat. 19 Mar. 1825. Had from Drakards a folio blank book price 9/- to insert the best of my poems in that Hessey says he will send down

* The educationalist, Anna Letitia Barbauld's *Lessons for Children from Two to Three Years Old* was published in 1778.

† Hannah More wrote this on her death-bed. She was one of those learned ladies who had known Johnson.

‡ Thomas Wilson (1663–1755), Bishop of Sodor and Man, wrote *Maxims of Piety and Christianity*, among many other devotional manuals.

§ Gilbert Burnet (1643–1715), was Bishop of Salisbury, with broad views both on politics and religion. *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, or 'The Nature and Excellency of the Christian Religion; with the Method of attaining the Happiness it possesses' (1677), was without the name of the author.

‖ Richard Watson, Bishop of Llandaff, wrote his *Apology for the Bible . . .* Letters to Thomas Paine, in 1796. This answer to the 'low blackguard' was eagerly read in America as well as in England.

Sun. 20 Mar. 1825. Still sharp frosty mornings—Recievd a letter from Mrs Emmerson with an Ode to Spring—Spring is a wonderful mother for ryhmes

Mon. 21 Mar. 1825. Had a double Polyanthus & single white Hepatica sent me from Stamford round which was rapped a curious prospectus of an 'Everyday Book' by W. Hone if such a thing was well got up it woud make one of the most entertaining things ever published—& I think the prospectus bids fair to do something there is a fine quotation from Herrick for a Motto how delightful is the freshness of these old poets it is meeting with green spots in deserts

Wed. 23 Mar. 1825. Recievd a parcel from Holbeach with a Letter & the *Scientific Receptacle* from J. Savage—they have inserted my poems & have been lavish with branding every corner with 'J. Clares'—How absurd are the serious meant images or attempts at fine writing in these young writers one of them concludes a theme on a dead schoolmaster with a very pathetic & sublime wish as he fancys perhaps 'wishing that the tear he leaves on his grave may grow up a marble monument to his memory'—This is the first crop of tears I have ever heard of sown with an intention to grow

Thur. 24 Mar. 1825. Recievd a letter from Lord Radstock with a packet of Newspapers from Mrs Emmerson

Sun. 27 Mar. 1825. This is Palm Sunday—I went to the woods to seek some branches of the sallow palm for the childern calld by them 'geese & goslings' & 'Cats & Kittens'—Susan Simpson & her brother came to see me—lent her the 2 Vols of *Walladmor**

Wed. 30 Mar. 1825. Recievd a letter from Van Dyk which proves all my suspicions are well founded I suspected that he had not seen those M.S.S. which I considerd my best poems & he says in his letter that he has not [4 lines scored out & indecipherable]

* Probably Clare's edition was *Walladmor*, 'Freely translated into German from the English of Sir Walter Scott, and now freely translated from the German into English', by Thomas De Quincey. Taylor and Hessey (1825).

Thur. 31 Mar. 1825. Artis & Henderson came to see me & we went to see the Roman Station agen Oxey Wood which he says is plainly roman—he told me that he went three times & sent oftener for the M.S.S. which they did not send at last [*3* lines scored out & indecipherable]

Fri. 1 April 1825. My Sister Sophy is 27 year old today Recievd from Wilson Vyse's *Tutor's Guide* 2 Vols.*

Sat. 2 April 1825. 'The Langfield & Crowhurst choir sung several select pieces from Handel in the Cavity of a yew tree in the church yard of the latter place the tree is *36* feet in Circumference & is now in a growing state—the hollow was filled up like a room & sufficiently large to contain the performers—on cleaning out the interior of the tree some years since a 7 lb cannon ball was discovered which no doubt had been fired into it; it was cut out from the solid part of the tree—' *Stamford Mercury*

Sun. 3 April 1825. A cold wintry day 2 gentlemen came to see me from Milton one of them appeared to be a sensible & well informed man he talkd much of the poets but did not like Wordsworth & when I told him I did he instantly asked me wether I did not like Byron better I don't like these comparisons to knock your opinions on the head with I told him that I read Wordsworth oftener than I did Byron & he seemd to express his supprise at it by observing that he coud not read Wordsworth at all

Fri. 8 April 1825. Recievd a letter from Lord Radstock & one from Mrs Emmerson with an offer that Mr Clutterbuck the Attorney will draw up my will if I chuse which oppertunity I shall certainly take hold of

Sun. 10 April 1825. Found a branch of white thorn in Porters Snow close knotted & nearly in flower it is considerd very early if a branch of May as it is calld can be found on the first of new May

Wed. 13 April 1825. The black thorn showing flower

* 'Being a Complete System of Arithmetic; with various branches in the Mathematics' by Charles Vyse (1772).

Thur. 14 April 1825. My mother is 67* years old this day she has been afflicted with a dropsy for this 20 years & has for all that outlived a large family of brothers & sisters & remains 'the last of the flock' the Snakehead or fritillary in flower also the light-blue pink & white Hyacinths—Bluebell or Harebell in flower the Primrose Violet & Bedlam Cowslip fading out of flower

Fri. 15 April 1825. Recievd a letter from Lord Radstock in which his Lordship says that Van Dyk is going out of town for a while this is the man that was to get my new book thro the press in 6 weeks & with the assistance of Taylor & Hessey has been a month about one proof of it [2 lines scored out and indecipherable.]

Sat. 16 April 1825. Took a walk in the field a birds nesting & botanizing & had like to have been taken up as a poacher in Hilly wood by a meddlesome conseited keeper belonging to Sir John Trollop he swore that he had seen me in act more than once of shooting game when I never shot even so much as a sparrow in my life—what terrifying rascals these woodkeepers & game-keepers are they make a prison of the forrests & are its gaolers

Sun. 17 April 1825. I have waited 3 weeks for a new proof of the *Shepherds Calendar* & nothing has come which was to be in 3 days—I have sent for some rough copys of Poems which I sent up to Taylor when the *Village Minstrel* was in the press & I have not got them yet & never shall I expect—I want them to finish some for a future publication & correct others—[4 lines scored out and indecipherable] I have never as yet had a settling—Recievd a letter from Dr. Darling—no proofs yet—saw a solitary Field fare in Oxey wood I never observed one so late before—wrote to Hessey in a manner that I am always very loath to write but I coud keep my patience no longer

Mon. 18 April 1825. Resumd my letters on Natural History in good earnest & 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

* Ann Stimson was baptized 17 April 1757—Registers of Castor Parish.

Tues. 19 April 1825. The Swallows have made their appearance I saw one to-day & I heard by a cowboy that they were come 3 days ago

Wed. 20 April 1825. Recievd a letter from Taylor* in answer to mine to Hessey of last Sunday—He is very pettish respecting my anxiety & irritation & says that if my friends who gave me the advice & cautions &c respecting the neglect & mystery of booksellers or myself can find a Publisher who can do better by them than he does he will readily return the M.S.S.—but he throws a river in the way for me to cross by saying that tho none of their distrust can do no good it may do harm—now if it can do harm to find fault with actions that can find no commendation I am sure it can do no good to speak in their praise

Thur. 21 April 1825. Heard the Nightingale for the first time this season in Royce wood

Fri. 22 April 1825. Went to Milton—Saw the red-headed brown linnet smaller than the brown do—saw a Pettichap or hoverbird†—& a large flock of Fieldfares—brought home a white Primrose heard a many Nightingales—in the evening I heard a bird make a long continued noise for a minute together like a childs skriecker or a cricket but much louder‡—Henderson promises to give me some information respecting the birds about Milton

* See note to entry for 3 May 1825.

† From the entry for 10 May (q.v.) it is clear that Clare had identified the chiffchaff among the leaf-warblers. But it is just as clear, from his group of poems on Birds' Nests (q.v.), that his pettichap's nest is the willow-warbler's *there*, while to the description of the chiffchaff's he gives no name. White called the chiffchaff the 'smallest willow-wren', the willow-warbler the 'middle willow-wren', and the wood-warbler the 'largest willow-wren'. Clare's 'willow-biter' (see Appendix II) is the willow-warbler, but its nest described there the tree creeper's. It seems clear that Clare had not recognized these three warblers—all in abundance in his district now—but only the two, nor had he certified which nest belonged to which.

‡ Lord Lilford states, in his *Birds of Northamptonshire*, that the grasshopper-warbler was 'formerly very abundant' in the Fens. This was Clare's 'cricket-bird'. But see entry for 6 May. *That*, since he heard it in Royce Wood, and the grasshopper-warbler frequents open country, was the wood-warbler, whose note, described by White of Selborne, is 'a sibilant grasshopper-like noise'. But see also Appendix II, Clare's List of Northamptonshire Birds, compiled probably *after* the Journal.

Sat. 23 April 1825. Saw the redstart or Firetail today & little Willow wren the blackthorn tree in full flower that shines about the hedges like cloaths hung out to dry—Saw in the Stamford paper that the lost leaf of Domesday book was found & had no time to copy out the account

Sun. 24 April 1825. No Proofs of the New Poems yet—Recievd a Letter from Lord Radstock & Mrs Emmerson

Mon. 25 April 1825. Heard a terrible kick-up with the Rats in the ceiling last night & might have made up a tollerable faith to believe them ghosts—A thunderstorm several claps very loud in the distance came from SouthWest

Tues. 26 April 1825. This used to be 'Breakday' when the fen commons used to be broke as it was calld by turning in the stock it used to be a day of busy note with the villages but Enclosure has spoiled all

Wed. 27 April 1825. Heard the Cuckoo for the first time this Season—it was said to be heard a week back by a Shepherd—Saw the large Grey Wagtail* I think it a bird of passage as I have never seen it in winter—some young Plants of Ash & Maple showing leaf—Saw a bird with a dark line over each ear I think it one of the fly catchers

Thur. 28 April 1825. Hedge-Sparrow finished her nest in Billing's Box-tree & laid 1 egg—Walnutt showing leaf—Sycamore & Horse-chestnutt nearly coverd I observed a snail on his journey at full speed & I marked by my watch that he went 13 inches in 3 minutes which was the utmost he coud do without stopping to wind or rest It was the large garden snail

Fri. 29 April 1825. The hedge-Sparrow in the Box tree has been about 12 days building her nest the Robin in the wall about 14 & the Jenny-wren near 3 weeks heard all through last night the sort of watch-ticking noise calld a death-watch I observed there was 1 on each side the chamber & as soon as one finished ticking the other began I think it is a call that the male & female use in the time of cohabiting a Jenny wrens nest with the outside just built I mean to see how long she is about the lining

* The reasons for the curious partial migrations of this species between the south of England and Scotland are still a puzzle.

Sat. 30 April 1825. Recievd another letter from the editor of Bloomfields Correspondence requesting me to alter a line in my sonnet on Bloomfield 'Thy injured muse & memory need no sigh' & asking permission to publish only 2 of them which I shall not agree with either way Editors are troubled with nice amendings & if Doctors were as fond of amputation as they are of altering & correcting the world woud have nothing but cripples

Sun. 1 May 1825. 'A Salmon *near* 20 lbs weight was caught about a fortnight ago by Robt Nassau Sutton Esq while trouting in the river Trent near Kelham Hall—' *Stamford Mercury*

Mon. 2 May 1825. Bradfords Club feast next door never went into the yard to see them a thing I never did in my life before—illness makes the merriest pastimes of life as tiresome fooleries & turns the sweetest offerings of pleasure to gall—

Tues. 3 May 1825. Wrote a letter to Taylor* & one to Mrs Emmerson

Fri. 6 May 1825. Coud not sleep all night got up at 3 o clock in the morning & walked about the fields the birds were high in their songs in Royce Wood & almost deafening I heard the Cricket-bird again in full cry in Royce Wood it is just like a childs 'screeker' saw a Hawk-like bird that made an odd noise like one of the notes of the Nightingale as if to decoy his prey into sight

Sat. 7 May 1825. Sent some Pootys & Ferns to Henderson yesterday

Sun. 8 May 1825. Went to walk in the fields saw the white thorn in some places about the hedges covered over with May & the wilding or Crab also was smothered with blossom the Maple was in full flower

Mon. 9 May 1825. Wrote another portion of my Life & took a Walk to seek a Nightingales nest—found a Song thrushes in

* Clare had written, in answer to Taylor's 'Better to terminate the connection than continue it in Distrust', 'I have no desire to seek another publisher, neither do I believe any other woud do as well for me as you may do much less better'.

bushy close by the side of a young oak with 4 eggs never saw 1 of this kind in such a place before

Tues. 10 May 1825. Saw a male & female of the Tree-sparrow (as I supposed them) in Royce Close hedge next the lane the cockbird had a very black head & its shades of brown were more deep & distinct then the house sparrow the female when flying showd 2 white feathers in her tail they seemed to have a nest in the hedgerow but I coud not find it saw a Pettichap in Bushy close its note is more like 'chippachap' it keeps in continual motion on the tops of trees uttering its note

Wed. 11 May 1825. Recievd a letter last night from Henderson with a plant of the Double Marsh marigold—the male flowers of the Wallnutt ripe & falling off

Thur. 12 May 1825. It is often reported that the Sky lark never sings but on the wing this report is worth little truth like a many others I saw one this morning sing on the ground

Fri. 13 May 1825. Met with an extraordinary incident today while walking in Open Wood to hunt a Nightingales nest I popt unawares on an old Fox & her 4 young cubs that were playing about she saw me & instantly approached me growling like an angry dog I had no stick & tried all I coud to fright her by imitating the bark of a fox-hound which only irritated her the more & if I had not retreated a few paces back she woud have seized me when I set up an halloo she started

Sat. 14 May 1825. Recievd the April & May Magazine from London with a letter from Hessey & one from Van Dyk that has lain ever since 15th of March the Magazine is very dull a Note also from Miss Kent accompanied the parcel to request my assistance to give her information for her intended History of Birds* but if my assistance is not worth more than 12 lines it is worth nothing & I shall not interfere

Sun. 15 May 1825. Extracts from the *Stamford Mercury*

Coals were first used in England in the reign of Edward

* The 'History of Birds' was not made a companion volume to Elizabeth Kent's *Flora Domestica* and *Sylvan Sketches*, as far as we know.

the 1st the smoke was supposed to corrupt the air so much that he forbad the use of them'—

A fellow who passes himself off on the ignorant by telling them that a flying serpent will come to destroy them against whose venom he sells spells that will ensure their safety—' the delusion respecting the flying serpent still continues: The fatal days were stated to be Thursday last the 18th & 28th The Prophet has been travelling through Dorset & the adjoining counties offering his charms for sale & has not found a deficiency of dupes yet of those who demur he asks 'If you will not recieve the servants how will you recieve the master when he comes'

Tues. 18 May 1825. At a meeting of Florists held at the old King's Head at Newark last week prizes were adjudged as follows:

Auriculas

First	Grimes Privateer	—	Mr. Ordoynd
Second	Stretches Alexander	—	Mr. Ordoynd
Third	Wild's Black & Clear	—	Mr Welby

Polyanthus

First	Twineys Princess of Wales	—	Mr Ordoynd
Second	Frillings Names Tantoraria	—	Mr Taylor
Third	England's Defiance	—	Mr Clark

Sun. 22 May 1825. Newspaper Odditys

'A spirited London bookseller announces that he is printing the Duke of York's Speech against the Catholics in *Letters of Gold*'—This is shining fame at least—'The total population of America is 34,280,000 of which 11,287,000 are Protestants 22,177,000 Roman Catholics & 820,000 Indians not Christians' 'At Wieland in Poland the imagination is confounded at the idea of finding after a descent of 850 steps in the salt mines vast Halls (The Hall of Klosky is 3100 feet high & 180 feet wide) stabling for 80 horses storehouses offices for Clerks & three chappels the whole of the fittings altars crucifixes tables desk & seats worked in salt!' *Stamford Mercury*—Recievd a letter from Lord Radstock with one enclosed of a Mr Boileau with a flattering compliment on my poems calling me a pretty flower

Mon. 23 May 1825. More Wonders from the *Mercury*

'A Clergyman of the established Church name Benson now attracts larger congregations at St Giles Church then the celebrated Mr Irving once did at the Caledonian Mr Benson's chief characterization is calm & dignified reasoning Mr Irving's powerful eloquence & vehement action' * '211 Stage Coaches pass weekly through Daventry Northamptonshire'—*Stamford Mercury*

Tues. 24 May 1825. The Catholics have lost their bill once more & its nothing but right they shoud when one beholds the sacred humbugs which their religion hurds up & sanctifys—'A list of Catholic relics in a church at Dobberan in Mecklenburg'—From Nugent's *Travels*—'A small quantity of flax which the Virgin Mary had for spinning—A bundle of hay which the three wise men of the east had for their cattle & left behind them at Bethlehem—a bone of Ignatius Loyola the founder of the Jesuits—A piece of poor Lazaruses Garment—a bone of St. Christopher & first joint of his thumb—a piece of linnen cloth which the Virgin Mary wove with her own hands—a piece of the head belonging to the fish mentioned in Tobit—The napkin which the bridegroom made use of at the marriage of Cana in Galilee—a hair of St. Jerome's mustachios—Part of Judas bowels which gushed out as he burst asunder—the Sissors with which Delila cut off Samson's hair—a piece of the apron which the butcher wore when he killed the calf upon the return of the prodigal son—one of the five smooth stones which David put into his bag when he went to encounter the giant Goliath—a branch of the tree on which Absalom hung by the hair—The Deeds of St Thomas as the Apostle of St Paul & of St Peter—A piece of St Peters fishing net—the priest told the traveller that one of the relics had been stolen in the last Century & it was no less than a quill from the Angel Gabriel's wing

Thur. 26 May 1825. Took up my hyacinth bulbs & laid them in ridges of earth to dry made a new frame for my Auriculas found a large white orchis in Oxey Wood of a curious species & very rare I watched a Bluecap or Blue Titmouse feeding her

* It is interesting that already, by 1825, Christopher Benson, with his eloquence and pathos, was stealing the vast audiences of the striking and enigmatic Edward Irving.

young whose nest was in a wall close to an Orchard she got caterpillars out of the blossoms of the apple trees & leaves of the plumb—she fetchd 120 caterpillars in half an hour now supposing she only feeds them 4 times a day a quarter of an hour each time she fetches in no less than 480 caterpillars & I shoud think treble that number

Fri. 27 May 1825. Recievd a letter & a packet of Newspapers yesterday from Mrs Emmerson in which she promises to send me some Polyanthuses from Bath & Carnations also—

Sat. 28 May 1825. Found the old Frog in my garden that has been there this 4 years I know it by a mark which it recievd from my spade 4 years ago I thought it woud 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 & bluebells I am glad to see it has recoverd in Winter it gets into some straw in a corner of the garden & never ventures out till the beginning of May when it hides among the flowers & keeps its old bed never venturing further up the garden—

Sun. 29 May 1825. The following Advertisment is from the *Observer* of Sunday May 22 1825 'Just published The Speech of his Royal Highness the Duke of York in the House of Lords the 25 April 1825 Printed by J. Whittaker (with the same splendour as the account of the Coronation of his Majesty) in letters of Gold on the finest cord paper price 10/6 Sold by Septimus Prowett 23 Old Bond Street' Well done Septimus Prowett the speech is an open & honest one & well deserves it—Heard the most severe thunderclap yesterday that I ever heard in my life it was heard instantly (only 3 pulses) after the flash—Found a very scarce & curious orchis of an iron grey color or rather a pale rusty tinge with a root like the pilewort I cannot make out its name—I found last week a fine white piegon orchis* which is seldom found

* In his copy of Isaac Emerton's *Treatise on the Culture of the Auricula*, Clare has written a list of 'orchis's counted from privet hedge'. But among the twenty he mentions there is no 'pigeon' (Clare's usual spelling for 'pigeon') orchis. Nor has Mr. Ernest Colman, the Peterborough botanist, ever heard, locally, of 'pigeon' orchis. The only white orchis is, of course, butterfly orchis, though sometimes spotted orchis is white, with small coloured markings. Or had Clare misheard Henderson's possible abbreviation of pyramidal—'pyram' (pyramidal orchis is occasionally nearly white, too) and not yet seen it written?

Mon. 30 May 1825. Took a walk yesterday to Bassetts close at the bottom of the wormstalls to see the Ash trees that the lightning struck on Saturday it took off the large top & splintered the body to atoms driving large pieces of it in all directions round the tree to the distance of fifty yards the stump of the trunk left standing was pilled of the bark all round & split to the bottom I never saw such terrible power of lightning in my life before: people came to see it from all the neighbouring villages & took away the fragments as curiositys

Tues. 31 May 1825. My dear child Eliza was taken ill of a fever on Sunday night & is as yet no better sent a letter & parcel to Mrs Emmerson with 'The Parish' & my new will for Mr Clutterbuck to draw up Mrs Bellairs of Woodcroft Castle came to see my garden—Artis told me he fancied that the place in Harrisons close was a Roman pottery I have since reccolected that there used to be a large hole about 2 stones throw from it called 'Potters Hole' when I was a boy & filled up since the Enclosure this may go far for his opinion

Thur. 2 June 1825. This is my darling Anna's birthday who is 5 years old a weakling flower fast fading in the bud—withering untimely Recievd a parcel from Hessey with the Mag: & the first proof agen corrected for good with a note from Hessey & a long letter from Taylor very kindly worded in which he speaks of dissolving partnership with Hessey on Midsummer next

Fri. 3 June 1825. Finishd planting my Auriculas—went a-botanizing after ferns & orchises & 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 gipsey & pricked another sweet tune without name as he fiddled it

Sat. 4 June 1825. Saw 3 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 & spoil my solitudes after the Enclosure they will despoil a boggy place that is famous for Orchises at Royce Wood end

Sun. 5 June 1825. Returned the proof to Hessey wrote a note to Hessey & one to Mrs Wright of Clapham accompanied with some flowers viz—'Lilies of the Valley' 'Shepherds Goldilocks' 'Jerusalem Cowslips' 'Yellow flowerd yarrow' 'Lilac flowerd Cranesbill' 'Black flowered Cranesbill' & 'Pencil flowered Do. —Read a continuation of a good paper in the London on 'A poor Students struggles thro Cambridge &c' the rest are moderates among the middlings*

Mon. 6 June 1825. Went to see Mrs Bellairs's garden at Woodcroft with Anna saw a Scarlet Anemonie & white peony both very handsome the Mote round the Garden has a very fine effect & the long Bridges that cross it [are] made of planks & railed with crooked pieces of oak I thought of the time of Cromwell while walking about it & felt the difference Swallows had several nests under the bridge

Tues. 7 June 1825. Recievd another parcel from Hessey with another proof of the Poems Viz the 'Sorrows of Love' Taylor has cut out a good deal & some things which I think might have stood the parcel also brought a present of Ayton's *Essays*† a young writer of great promise which was killed in the bud these Essays are exellent & contain a great deal more of the human heart than an affectedly written book with that Title

Wed. 8 June 1825. Poor old Coz Day the Mole-Catcher dyd tonight after a short illness he has been a tenant of the meadows & fields for half-a Century

Thur. 9 June 1825. Recievd a letter from Mrs Emmerson & wrote an answer to it—Returned the proofs of January & the Broken Heart & wrote to Taylor—sent some flowers to Mrs Bellairs & am promised the 'Scarlet Anemonie' 'White Peony' & Pink Brompton Stocks

Fri. 10 June 1825. Saw the blue-grey or lead-colord Fly-catcher for the first time this season they are calld 'Egypt Birds' by the common people from their note which seems to

* 'Struggles of a Senior Wrangler' is what Clare is referring to. The tale of misfortunes by one of independent views and ways struck at his sympathy. There was, however, 'The Wedding', by Elia, in the June *London*, too.

† *Essays and Sketches of Character.*

resemble the sound of the word 'Egypt' they build in old walls like the redstart & Grey Wagtail

Mon. 13 June 1825. My dear Eliza is 3 years old today I feel anxious to insert these memorandums of my affections as Memory though a secondary is the soul of time & life the principal but its shadow—Observed an Eclipse or some other phenomenon of the Sun this morning not noticed in the Almanack I first saw it about half past 4 & it continued till after 5 it had exactly the same appearance as an Eclipse & I believe it was nothing else

Sun. 19 June 1825. Recievd a letter from Taylor in which he says that there is twice as much more as he wants for the *Shepherds Calendar* a few months back one of his causes for delay was that there was not enough to begin on nothing has made a wide difference here by time & left a puzzling Paradox behind it—which tells that he is a very dillatory chap recievd a letter from Mrs Emmerson with a Parcel containing a present of a waistcoat & some fine Polyanthus Brompton Stock & Geranium Seed

Tues. 21 June 1825. Wrote a letter to Taylor—found a birds nest in the thatch of a hovel gable-end in Billings yard think it a Flycatchers it resembles in color & shape something of the chat or whitethroat or more like the sedgebird than either the female sits hard & the cock feeds her with catterpillars from the leaves of trees

Thur. 23 June 1825. Wrote to Mrs Emmerson & sent a letter to Hone's Everyday book with a poem which I fatherd on Andrew Marvel*

Sat. 2 July 1825. Recievd a letter from Hessey with the Dividend or half yearly payments of the money in the funds & Lord Spencers Annuity—they always send it in written drafts to be drawn on their bankers for what reason I cannot tell unless it is to make a safe carrying I wanted £10 more than my

* 'Death.' But see seq. (27, 31 July, 2 August), Letter to Hone (2 August 1825) and Notes in *Letters of John Clare*, as well as *John Clare: a Life*, for Clare's excursions among the Elizabethans.

sallarys but they have not sent it this time & have only sent me the £15 which belongs me—Wrote to Mrs Emmerson & sent some verses in imitation of the old Poets to Hone's *Everyday Book* 'On Death'—The Baloon with Mr Green Miss Stocks passed over our garden opposite the walnutt tree

Sun. 3 July 1825. Today is Helpstone Feast Wrestling & fighting the ploughmans fame is still kept up with the usual determind spirit

Thurs. 7 July 1825. Wrote an answer to Hesseys letter of the 30th of June which contained a draft for my dividend & salary & enquired after the stoppage of the new poems also was forced to solicit them anew to send me £10 which I want to pay off my half-yearly accounts

Sat. 9 July 1825. Mr Sharp* from London called on me

Sun. 10 July 1825. Recievd a letter from Hessey with the £10 which I wanted more then my Sallary came to—& with the News also that they have sold the *London Mag*:

Mon. 11 July 1825. Started to Milton—a very pleasant morning saw a bird that was an entire stranger to me about the size & shape of a green linnet with wings of a brown grey color & the crown of the head a deep black that extended downward no further than the eyes it had an old appearance & tho Artis looked thro Pennant he coud not find anything resembling it & believes it to be an unnoticed species of the linnet tribe†

Tues. 12 July 1825. Went today to see Artis found him busy over his antiquitys & 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 3 twigs of the fir branch & it glues the eggs at the bottom of the nest with the gum out of the tree to keep them from being blown out by the wind which often turns them upside-down without injury

* The 'Gentleman of the General Post Office', referred to in a letter of Clare's to John Taylor (17 Feb. 1821). Sharp helped Clare a great deal, later, in Clare's dealings with editors of *Annuals*.

† See Appendix II.

Wed. 13 July 1825. This day I am 30 (or 33 I am not certain which)* & my health was drunk at Milton by 2 very pretty girls Mrs P—r & Mrs B—n who wishd I might treble the number but I did not drink it in return [3 lines scored out] Henderson has promised me a curious 'Everlasting Pea' a climbing Rose the Monkey Flower Feather Hyacinth & some chrysanthemums

Thur. 14 July 1825. Recievd a letter from Lord Radstock in which his Lordship has made another troublesome request for his letters which he has written to me I cannot hunt them up at present

Fri. 15 July 1825. Recievd a letter from Mrs Emmerson in which she tells me that Rippingille is come up & she wants me to start to-morrow—this is one of the hottest days I have known & all my ferns is nearly scorchd up—Began to teach Eliza Holmes the common rules of Arithmetic at the restless request of her parents who are anxious for me to learn her

Sat. 16 July 1825. Still uncommonly hot.

Thurs. 21 July 1825. Paid Stevenson for the *Stamford Mercury* & gave it up as too expensive

Sun. 24 July 1825. Found a species of Broom in Bushey Close of a dwarf kind the like sort grows in great quantitys on Casterton Cowpasture—the weather changed very cold but still dry

Mon. 25 July 1825. 'A hive of Bees natives of New South Wales has been recently brought to this country—The Bees are very small & have no Sting but their honey is peculiarly firm'—*Stamford Mercury*

Wed. 27 July 1825. Recievd the 28 No. of the Every Day book in which is inserted a poem of mine which I sent under the assumed name of James 'Gilderoy' from Surfleet as being the production of Andrew Marvel & printed in the Miscellany of the Spalding Antiquarys—I shall venture again under another name—Viz. 'Poem on Death'

* Wrong both times. He was thirty-two.

Fri. 29 July 1825. Recievd a proof from Taylor—the plan is again altered* & he now intends to print the Months only & leave out the Tales this plan is one that puts the worst first & leaves the best for a future oppertunity—this proof contains 'February' & 'April' the last is good for nothing & is not worth troubling the printers with the poem on Spring is the best in the bundle & woud supply its place well

Sat. 30 July 1825. Sharp came to bid me goodbye before he started to London A young Lady was with him of very amiable & pleasing manners who was very fond of poetry & flowers

Sun. 31 July 1825. Recievd a letter from Mrs Emmerson in which she has discovered me to be the Author of the Verses on Death in the *Every Day book* signed Marvel she has oftener been wrong in her guesses & I think if I had not given her some hints of it before I sent it she woud not have found it out now

Mon. 1 August 1825. Heard an old Fen Farmer say to-day that on his farm he finds a great deal of wood particularly Oak Hazel & Yew in the earth he says that the earth is actually nothing else but a decomposition of wood & that it will grow nothing but Oats he says that the Hazel will burn well as fire wood but the Oak dyes out unless continually blown—he also talked of great quantitys of shells being found as white as Dogs teeth

Tues. 2 Aug. 1825. Wrote a Letter to William Hone's *Every Day book* signed Roberts with a copy of Verses which I have titled 'A Farewell & Defiance to Love' & fathered on Sir John Harrington but I dont suppose they will get inserted

Wed. 3 Aug. 1825. A person of the name of Clay came to see me the 'Editor of the *Scientific Receptacle'* he stopt with me all the rest [of the] day he talked much of poetry & Poets but

* Taylor was now demanding, as Mr. Blunden says, 'a mechanical set of compositions', which Clare found difficulty in supplying. Nor did Clare and Taylor see eye to eye about what was good and what was poor in Clare's poetry. Taylor, however, was on the verge of going down with brain-fever. When recovered, he defended himself against Clare's accusations by saying 'The Poems are not only slovenly written, but as slovenly composed'. Clare had to set about rewriting for *The Shepherd's Calendar*, which eventually came out in 1827.

the latter were such names that nobody knew but himself the correspondents of Dewey's *Mathematical Companion* &c &c— he told me an odd circumstance of the farmer in the fen growing nothing but 'Teazles' for the purpose of cording a nap on cloth they are stronger he says then the wild made so perhaps by cultivation

Thur. 4 Aug. 1825. Recievd a letter from Mrs Gilchrist in which she says that Barron Field* has offered to edit Octave's miscellaneous papers

Tues. 9 Aug. 1825. Sowed my Anemonie & Bath Polyanthus seed—lent Mrs Fanny Knowlton Bloomfields *Hazlewood Hill* & *Remains* & Aytons *Essays*—Got a look at Giblead[?] of Spaldings *Alworth Abbey* & I never saw such a heap of unrational absurdities & ridiculous attempts at wit & Satire strung together in my reading existance

Wed. 10 Aug. 1825. A Newspaper lye of the first order—Mr Gale of Holt[?] in the parish of Bradford Wilts has at present a Pear of the jargonel kind in his possession which was taken by himself from the tree in 1776, *49 years ago & is now as sound as at the first moment it was gathered.* It is hung up by the stalk & no means whatever has been adopted to preserve it—' it must have been a wooden one

Sat. 13 Aug. 1825. Went to Milton wrote a Letter to Miss Kent—& corrected & sent the Proof back to Taylor—saw the transactions of the Horticultural Society

Sun. 14 Aug. 1825. Returned from Milton brought home some flower seeds & roots—saw 2 very large catterpillars which a man found among the Potatoes in his garden one was about 3 inches long & the other 4 the smaller one was green with triangular marks of black, light blue, & yellow, the other was yellow with triangular marks of the same colors as the other save that were the other was yellow this was white

* Field projected a life of his friend Lamb, and also offered to do one of Wordsworth. Wordsworth dissuaded him. And Field's editing of Gilchrist's papers did not materialize.

Sat. 20 Aug. 1825. Wrote a letter to Henderson & sent one with it to get frankd for A. A. Watts Esq* Editor of the *Literary Souvenir* with a Ballad 'First Loves Reccolections' for insertion in that book

Sun. 21 Aug. 1825. Recievd a letter from Mr Emmerson which tells me that Lord Radstock dyed yesterday he was the best friend I have met with tho he possessed too much of that simple-heartedness to be a fashionable friend or hypocrite yet it often led him to take hypocrites for honest friends & to take an honest man for a hypocrite

Tues. 23 Aug. 1825. Found a beautiful Deaths head Moth catterpillar in Billings potatoes it is about four & a half inches long of most beautiful rainbow colors

Fri. 26 Aug. 1825. Recievd a letter from the Editor of a new Almanack of the Muses or Souvenir or Forget me not or some such thing intended to be published by Messrs. Baynes & Son of Paternoster Row requesting me to send a contribution.

Sat. 27 Aug. 1825. James Billings shot a Cuckoo to-day on one of his Plumb trees—it was very like the sparrow hawk in color but it had a strait bill & very thin short yellow legs neither of which seemed able to turn assailants in its own defence for it had only its wing broke & lived a long while it peckd at the hand that was held to it but it could not peck so hard as a blackbird—the inside of its mouth was of a fine red which led us to think it was a cuckoo

Sun. 28 Aug. 1825. Yesterday I found another of those deaths head Moth Catterpillars in Billings Potatoes

Mon. 29 Aug. 1825. Went to Milton turned out a very wet day took the 2 large catterpillars which I had found in Billings Potatoes & found they *are* the Deaths Head Moth

Tues. 30 Aug. 1825. The account of Lord Radstocks death was thus mentioned in *Bells Weekly Messenger* of August 29th—On the 17th Instant Admiral Lord Radstock was seized at his house

* See *Letters* for Clare's correspondence with Watts, also Biographical Memoranda, in that volume, on Watts himself.

in Portland Place with a sudden attack of appoplexy—The strength of his constitution struggled with that of the malady till the 20th when the hopes which had been entertained of his recovery vanished & his Lordship expired—Admiral Lord Radstock G.C.B. aged 72 was the second son of John third Earl of Walgrave by the Lady Elizabeth Leveson Gower sister of the Marquis of Stafford'

Fri. 2 Sept. 1825. Recievd a letter from Mrs Emmerson

Sun. 4 Sept. 1825. Wrote a letter to Mrs Emmerson & one to Mrs Gilchrist & one also to Baynes & Son Publishers in Paternoster row respecting some contribution solicited for a new Poetical Almanack

Wed. 7 Sept. 1825. Recievd a letter from Hessey telling me that Taylor has been very ill also one from Messrs Baynes & Son & one from Alaric A. Watts of Manchester recievd in October* a letter from J. Power of the Strand requesting permission to publish 'Broomsgrove' with music for which he gave 2 sovereigns

Thur. 8 Sept. 1825. Met old Dacon, the Jew of Cliff at Billings who has the odd notion to believe himself the saviour of the world & in spite of all this is a very sensible & remarkable man about 5 feet 10 inches high with a pleasing countenance his hair & beard is never cut or shaved

Sun. 11 Sept. 1825. Went to meet Mr & Mrs Emmerson at the New Inn at Deeping & spent 3 days with them

* It looks as if Clare was writing up the entry later. We know from his letters, and from the B.M. Correspondence, that Power's letter enclosing £2 was 29 September, 1825.

NATURAL HISTORY LETTERS, & NOTES
CRITICAL ESSAYS, & FRAGMENTS
THE DREAM
EXCURSION WITH 'THE ANGLER'

1824–37

NATURAL HISTORY LETTERS

Feb 7

I ALWAYS think that this month the prophet of spring brings many beautys to the landscape tho a carless observer woud laugh at me for saying so who believes that it brings nothing because he does not give himself the trouble to seek them—I always admire the kindling freshness that the bark of the different sorts of trees & underwood asume in the forest—the foulroyce twigs kindle into a vivid color at their tops as red as woodpiegons claws the ash with its grey bark & black swelling buds the Birch with it 'paper rind' & the darker mottled sorts of hazle & black alder with the greener hues of sallow willows & the bramble that still wears its leaves with the privet of a purple hue while the straggling wood briar shines in a brighter & more beautiful green even then leaves can boast at this season too odd forward branches in the new laid hedges of whitethorn begin to freshen into green before the arum dare peep out of its hood or the primrose & violet shoot up a new leaf thro the warm moss & ivy that shelters their spring dwellings the furze too on the common wear a fairer green & ere & there an odd branch is coverd with golden flowers & the ling or heath nestling among the long grass below (coverd with the witherd flowers of last year) is sprouting up into fresh hopes of spring the fairey rings on the pastures are getting deeper dyes & the water weeds with long silver green blades of grass are mantling the stagnant ponds in their summer liverys I find more beautys in this month then I can find room to talk about in a letter

The mavis thrush begins to build its nest it is about as large as the fieldfare & not much unlike it Its song is very stint & unvaried & seems like the song of a young bird while learning

to sing but the season at which it sings always makes it welcome & beautiful for it begins very early & if its an open winter it may be heard at the end of December & the beginning of January it loves to frequent at this season old orchards & hedge borders in houses that stands near the village when it can get shelter & cover as if it loved to treat the village with a song at such a dreary season as the spring advances its song ceases & it disappears to its more solitary haunts of woods & forrests were it generaly builds its nest beside a large tree on the twigs & water grains that shoot from the body its nest is made of the blades of dead grass moss & cow dung lined with warmer materials of wool & a finer sort of grass intermixd it often lays six eggs much like the blackbirds but larger & of a deeper blue green dusted with burn colored spots its nest has been often mistaken for the black birds but it is easily distinguished by the more curious observer as the blackbird uses moss on the outside & lines the inside with fine twitchy roots & hair while the mavis never forgets her dead ramping grass for the outside covering & a plentiful supply of wool within the wool is what birds nesting boys know it bye—the Thrush celebrated for its fine song is a small bird not much larger than a ground lark it does not begin its varied song till May which is said by some to equal the nightingales which it very much resembles tho it is not so various it builds its nest about the latter end of April & makes the outside of green moss & lines the inside with touchwood from decayd trees & cowdung which it plasters round in a very workmanlike manner & makes it as round as the spoon of a ladle that dryes as hard as brick after it is finished

Tho this may be thought to be a hard bed for the young it uses no other lining it lays 5 & sometimes six eggs smaller then the blackbirds of a beautiful blue like the hedgesparrows but thinly mottled at the large end with inky spots

It mostly nay I might say always chuses the whitethorn to build on & seeks the most retired places of the wood seldom venturing to hazard its nest in the hedge or near the side I have often remarkd an odd surcumstance respecting these birds in laying time which I never coud account for which is the frequent desertion of their nests after they were finished not only of one but of 19 out of twenty as if the birds had by a natural impulse

joind their minds to leave their new made dwellings & migrate to other countys this does not appear to be the case every season but when it is so it seems to be general the year before last I found twelve nests in Oxey Wood all left in this manner as if they all left off at the same instant it was before the cuckoo had made her appearance or I shoud have laid the blame to her when this general desertion takes place the nests are always more numerous then at other times—but there are a many of natures riddles not yet resolved—The long taild Titmouse calld with us Bumbarrel & in Yorkshire pudding-bags & feather-pokes is an early builder of its nest it makes a very beautiful one in the shape of an egg leaving an entrance on one side like the wren it forms the outside of grey moss & lines it with great quantitys of feathers it lays a great number of very small eggs I have found them with 18 they are very small of a white color sprinkled with pink spots at the larger end one might think they woud multiply very vast* but on the contrary they are not half so plentiful as other birds for the small hawks make a terrible havock among their young broods as soon as they leave their nests—its song is low & pretty the young ones that escape the schoolboy & hawk live in familys till the next spring—they may be seen to the number of 20 in winter picking somthing off the twigs of the whitethorn in the hedgerows

March

We are now meeting with the pleasing indications of spring the birds have left the barn doors & are chirping about in the thickets as if making up their minds to chuse partners & prepare for building—the beast & young colts are running races round the straw yards & rubbing at the gates anxious to greet the sprouting grass & loathing their winter food the chaffinch or pink (so calld for its note) is busy over its little pleasing note of 'pink pink' that speaks of summer weather & is a joyous prophecy of leaves & sunshine & flowers—it is one of the plainest of the Finch tribe it builds a beautiful round nest its outside is made of grey moss & lind with cowhair it lays five eggs of a dark ash colour blotchd at the large end with ruby colored spots it is very fond of its young & if the nest be taken out & put in a fresh place it will still feed them & bring them

* Unintentional slip, surely, for (fast.)

up the cock bird is not an unhansome bird it is a tootling song of 2 or 3 notes which it sings to cheer its mate while hatching her young whom it assists & takes alternate sittings—the Bullfinch is a beautiful bird the plumage is fine & its shape tho rather heavy is commanding & noble it begins to build in may its nest is an odd curious one nearly flat made in a negligent manner of small sticks & lined with morsels of fine twitch & roots it generally builds in a thick clump of briars or black-thorn its eggs are about as large as the hedge sparrows of a greenish or watery white freckled at the thick end with pale lilac & dark brown spots not much unlike the green linnets its song is rather varied & pretty it is a great destroyer of the buds of fruit trees in winter like the black & blue Titmouse & its fine plumage & pretty song cannot make any petition for its crime to the enraged gardener who shoots it with the others undiscriminatly—in winter it frequents gardens & orchards & in spring it returns to its wild solitudes of woods & commons were it can feed in saftey

The goldfinch is well known its song & beautiful plumage like the fair face of woman proves its enemy & is the cause of making it a prisoner for life it is among the most frequent & commonest of cage birds it builds its nest on the eldern or apple tree & makes its outside of grey moss like the pinks which it greatly resembles but its lining is different & instead of cowhair it prefers thistle down it lays 5 pale eggs thinly sprinkled with faint red spots in spring it pleasures the cottager with its song beside his door in the eldern tree & apple by the orchard pails it feeds in summer on the groundsel seeds & the broad leafd plantain when it has raind its family they all live happily together parents & children till the next spring & may be seen in such companys in winter tracing the common & the fallow fields were the thistles are in plenty on the seed of which it feeds till summer returns with its other food—it is not uncommon while walking down a green lane in early spring to see it perched on the top of a thistle picking out the seed or pulling the soft down for its nest & flying into the neighbouring hedge at the approach of a passer bye the poet saw it in this manner when he paid it one of the finest compliments that it ever met with from poetry

Up springs the Goldfinch from the cowering grass
& wings its way into the nearest bower
& there it sits within the mass
Of playful leaves were the blythe roseys cower
*Like fairey buds itself a feathered flower.**

Bird catchers have a trap cage to decoy the old birds into it & when they take a nest of young ones they hang it up were they take the nest for the old birds to come & feed them which they will do till they are ready to flye & then when they find there is no means for their escape they bring some food that poisons them I have heard this asserted for a fact by more than one & the bird catchers always contrive to take them away soon enough to prevent it

You asked me last summer wether we had a bird about us calld the spider catcher we have not but there is a scarse bird with us calld the Flycatcher it is not unlike the blue titmouse in its colour & shape but larger I think its a bird of passage & rather a scarce one for I dont see a pair of them for 3 or 4 years together they seem to feed on insects & may be seen squatting about old walls & peeping into crevices & running up trees like the woodpecker it builds in walls & old trees two boys brought me a nest last year which they found in the eaves of an old wheat hovel it was most curiously made of long straws & cobwebs wove together on the outside & lind with finer materials of straw & cobwebs within it had 5 eggs of a dirty brown or burn color somthing like the robins but more slender & of a deeper color they describd the bird as being like the bluecap but larger†

'Will with a Whisp' 'Jinny Whisk' Jack with a lanthorn in this november month they are often out in the dark misty nights on 'Rotten Moor' 'Dead Moor' Eastwell Moor—Bainton Green end Lolham Briggs Rinedyke & many other places in the Lordship I have myself seen them in most of these spots—one dark night I was coming across the new park when a sudden

* From *The Garden of Florence*, by John Hamilton Reynolds. See Journal entry for 3 October 1824.

† Surely the bird Clare and the boys describe is the nuthatch, but the nest the spotted flycatcher's. But see Appendix II, where he has these two birds clearly listed.

light wild & pale appeared all round me on my left hand for a hundred yards or more accompanied by a crackling noise like that of peastraw burning I stood looking for a minute or so & felt rather alarmed when darkness came round me again & one of the dancing Jack a lanthorns was whisking away in the distance which caused the odd luminous light around me— crossing the meadow one dark sunday night I saw when coming over the Nunton bridge a light like a lanthorn standing on the wall of the other bridge I kept my eyes on it for a while & hastened to come up to it—but ere I got half over the meadow it suddenly fell & tumbled into the stream—& when I got on the bridge I looked down it & saw the will o whisp vapour like a light in a bladder whisking along close to the water as if swimming along its surface but what surprised me was that it was going contrary to the stream

March 6

The little Robin has begun his summer song in good earnest he was singing at my chamber window this morning almost before daylight as he has done all this week & at nightfall he comes regularly to his old plumb tree & starts again—there is a plaintive sweetness in the song of this bird that I am very fond of it may be calld an eternal song for it is heard at intervals all the year round & in the Autumn when the leaves are all fled from the trees there is a mellancholy sweetness in it that is very touching to my feelings—the Robin is one of the most familiar birds that a village landscape posseses & it is no less beloved for even children leave its nest unmolested but the Wren & the Martin are held in the like veneration with a many people who will not suffer their nests to be destroyed—the Robin seems to be fond of the company & haunts of men it builds its nest close to his cottage in the hovel or outhouse thatch or behind the woodbine or sweetbriar in the garden wall nor does it seem to make any secret of its dwelling were its only enemy is the cat to whom its confidence of saftey often falls a prey—& it seeks its food by his door on the dunghill or on the garden beds nay it will even settle on the gardeners spade while he is at work to watch the worm that he throws up & unbares & in winter it will venture into the house for food & become as tame as a chicken—

we had one that usd to come in at a broken pane in the window three winters together I always knew it to be our old visitor by a white scar on one of the wings it grew so tame that it woud perch on ones finger & take the crumbs out of the hand it was very much startld at the cat at first but after a time it took little notice of her further than always contriving to keep out of her way—it woud never stay in the house at night tho it woud attempt to perch on the chair spindles & clean its bill & ruffle its feathers & put its head under its wing as if it had made up its mind to stay but somthing or other always molested it when it suddenly sought its old broken pane & departed when it was sure to be the first riser in the morning

What I observed most remarkable in its manner was that it never attempted to sing all the time it visited us what became of it at last I never knew but I suppose some cat destroyd it—it has been a common notion among heedless observers that the robin frequents nowhere but in villages but this is an erroneous one for it is found in the deepest solitudes of woods & forrests were it lives on insects & builds its nest on the roots or stools of the underwood or under a hanging bank by a dyke side which is often mistook for that of the nightingales. I have often observed its fondness for man even here for in summer I scarcely cross a wood but a Robin suddenly falls in my path to court my acquaintance & pay me a visit were it hops & flutters about as if pleasd to see me & in winter it is the woodman's companion for the whole day & the whole season who considers it as his neighbour & friend

It is not commonly known that the robin is a very quarrelsome bird it is not only at frequent warfare with its own species but attacks boldly every other small bird that comes in its way & is generally the conqueror I have seen it chase the house sparrow which tho a very pert bird never ventures to fight it hedgesparrows linnets & finches that crowd the barn doors in winter never stand against its authority but flye from its interferances & acknowledge it the cock of the walk & he always seems to consider the right of the yard is his own

The Wren is another of these domestic birds that has found favour in the affections of man the hardiest gunner will rarely attempt to shoot either of them & tho it loves to haunt the same

places as the Robin it is not so tame & never ventures to seek the protection of man in the hardest winter blasts it finds its food in stackyards & builds its nest mostly in the roof of hovels & under the eaves of sheds about the habitations of man tho it is often found in the cowshed in closes & sometimes aside the roots of underwood in the woods its nest is made of green moss & lind with feathers the entrance is a little hole in the side like a corkhole in a barrel it lays as many as 15 or 16 white eggs very small & faintly spotted with pink spots it is a pert bird among its fellows & always seems in a conceited sort of happiness with its tail strunted up oer its back & its wings dropping down—its song is more loud than the Robins & very pleasant tho it is utterd in broken raptures by sudden starts & sudden endings it begins to sing in March & continues till the end of Spring when it becomes moping & silent

The hedge Sparrow may be called one of these domestic birds for it is fond of frequenting gardens & homesteads near villages it is a harmless peaceable bird & not easily alarmed at the approach of man its song is low & trifling it builds its nest early in the Spring in hedges & close bushes green about gardens of moss lined with fine wool & cowhair it lays 5 eggs of a very fine blue nay it may be calld a green blue they are clear without spots it feeds on insects & small seeds & is frequently robd of its eggs by the cuckoo who leaves one of her own in its stead which the hedgesparrow hatches & brings up with an unconscious fondness & if she lays any more eggs of her own after the cuckoo has deposited hers it is said that the young cuckoo has the instinct to thrust the young sparrows out of the nest to occupy it himself wether this be true or not I cannot say for I never witnessd it tho I have found a young cuckōo in the hedgesparrows nest & in the wagtails also but in no other birds beside these two seem to be the selected foster parents of its young The hedgesparrow is very early at building its nest I found one last year in a box tree with three eggs on the 3rd of February the birds had built in the same bush 3 years together—a sharp blast happend when the young was just hatchd & perishd them & she brought off another brood in the same nest

. . . . .

I have often wondered how birds nests escape injury which are built upon the ground—I have found larks nests in an old cart rut grassed over & pettichaps close on the edge of a horse track in a narrow lane where two carts could not pass & two oxen would even have difficulty in doing so but yet I never found a nest destroyed providence was their protector—& on the cow pasture I have often seen an hungry ox sturt its head on one side making a snufting noise & cease eating for a minute or two & then turn in another direction—& on going to see what it turned from I have started up the old bird & found its nest often by this sign

I believe that the habits of the landrail or landrake & the Quail are little known in fact I know but little of them myself but that little is at your pleasure were is the schoolboy that has not heard that mysterious noise that comes with the spring in the grass & green corn I have followd it for hours & all to no purpose it seemd like a spirit that mockd my folly in running after it the noise it makes is a low craking very much like that of a drake from whence I suppose it got the name of Landrake I never started it up when a boy but I have often seen it flye since About two years ago while I was walking in a neighbours homstead we heard one of these landrails in his wheat we hunted down the land & accidentily as it were we started it up it seemd to flye very awkard & its long legs hung down as if they were broken it was just at dewfall in the evening it flew towards the street instead of the field & popt into a chamber window that happend to be open when a cat seizd & killd it it was somthing like the quail but smaller & very slender with no tail scarcly & rather long legs it was of a brown color they lay like the quail & partridge upon the ground in the corn & grass they make no nest but scrat a hole in the ground & lay a great number of eggs My mother found a landrails nest once while weeding & they were not sat on they were short eggs made in the form of the partridges but somthing smaller staind with large spots of a dark color not much unlike the color of the plovers I imagine the young run with 'the shells on their heads' as they say by partridges & plovers for most of these ground hatchd birds do—what time they leave this country or wether they leave it at all I cannot say they are known to remain

here very late in the year the year before last I was helping to carry yauned beans which are shorn with a hook instead of being mown with a scythe, & stoukd in shoves like wheat as I was throwing one of these shoves upon the waggon somthing ran from under it very quick & squatted about the land I mistook it at first for a rat as it hastend bye me & struck at it with my fork but on percieving my mistake I stoopd down to catch when it awkardly took wing & settld in a border of bush I found it was a landrail by its legs dangling down as it flew I remember it was a very cold day near the beginning of November I was supprisd at the discovery & almost doubted wether they were birds of passage at all* The quail is almost as much of a mystery in the summer landscape & comes with the green corn like the landrail tho it is seen more often & is more easily urgd to take wing it makes an odd noise in the grass as if it said 'wet my foot wet my foot' which weeders & haymakers hearken to as a prophecy of rain & believe in it as an infallible sign they are less than the partridge & rise not unlike them when they take wing they lay on the ground & seem to prefer the meadow grass to the cornfields as their nests are oftenest found in the meadows while the landrakes taste seems the contrary the quail like the other lays a great quantity of eggs I have found them with 16 they are smallish for the size of the bird & very nearly the color of the Morehens but not half so large being about the size of the small thrushes I understand they grow very bold while in the act of sitting my father tells me while writing this that he has often mown over them in haytime when the bird woud not flye up but run about the swatts† and squat down as if on her nest several times ere she took to wing—beautiful as these two images are in the book of nature the poets have hardly mentioned them Allan Cunningham speaks of the 'Corncrake' in his poems by which name I understand him to mean our Landrail & he is for all I know to the contrary the only poet that has deemd them worthy of notice I think an able Essay on objects in nature that woud beautifye descriptive poetry might be entertaining & useful to form a right taste in pastoral poems that are full of nothing but the old threadbare epithets of 'sweet singing cuckoo' 'love lorn nightingale' 'fond

* Corncrakes *are* birds of passage, of course. Could this have been a water-rail?
†Clare usually gave rows of cut grass the more common form of the name—'swaths'.

turtles' 'sparkling brooks' 'green meadows' 'leafy woods' &c &c these make up the creation of pastoral & descriptive poesy & everything else is reckond low & vulgar in fact they are too rustic for the fashionable or prevailing system of rhyme till some bold inovating genius rises with a real love for nature & then they will be considerd as great beautys which they really are

Helpstone

I forgot to say in my last that the Nightingale sung as common by day as night & as often tho its a fact that is not generaly known your Londoners are very fond of talking about the bird & I believe fancy every bird they hear after sunset a Nightingale I remember while I was there last while walking with a friend in the fields of Shacklwell we saw a gentleman & lady listening very attentive by the side of a shrubbery & when we came up we heard them lavishing praises on the beautiful song of the nightingale which happend to be a thrush but it did for them & they listend & repeated their praise with heartfelt satisfaction while the bird seemed to know the grand distinction that its song had gaind for it & strove exultingly to keep up the deception by attempting a varied & more loûder song the dews was ready to fall but the lady was heedless of the wet grass tho the setting sun as a traveller glad to rest was leaning his enlarged rim on the earth like a table of fire & lessening by degrees out of sight leaving night & a few gilt clouds behind him such is the ignorance of Nature in large Citys that are nothing less than overgrown prisons that shut out the world and all its beautys

The nightingale as I said before is a shoy bird if any one approaches too near her secret haunts its song ceases till they pass when it is resumd as loud as before but I must repeat your quotation from Chaucer to illustrate this

The new abashèd nightingale
That stinteth first when she beginneth sing
When that she heareth any herde's tale
Or in the hedges any [wight] stirring
*& after siker doth her voice outring**

* As far as we know, Clare did not help to clear up the age-old error, repeated in *Troilus and Creseyde*, of the female bird's singing. See Clare's group of poems on Birds' Nests, too.

As soon as they have young their song ceases & is heard no more till the returning may after they cease singing they make a sort of gurring guttural noise as if calling the young to their food I know not what its for else but they make this noise continually & doubtless before the young leave the nest I have said all I can say about the Nightingale—In a thicket of blackthorns near our village called 'bushy close' we have great numbers of them every year but not so many as we used to have like the Martins & Swallows & other birds of passage they seem to diminish but for what cause I know not

As to the cuckoo I can give you no further tidings that what I have given in my last Artis has one in his collection of stuffed birds (but I have not sufficient scientific curiosity about me to go & take the exact description of its head rump & wings the length of its tail & the breadth from the tips of the extended wings these old bookish descriptions you may find in any natural history if they are of any gratification

for my part I love to look on nature with a poetic feeling which magnifys the pleasure I love to see the nightingale in its hazel retreat & the cuckoo hiding in its solitudes of oaken foliage & not to examine their carcasses in glass cases yet naturalists & botanists seem to have no taste for this practical feeling they merely make collections of dryd specimens classing them after Linnaeus into tribes & familys & there they delight to show them as a sort of ambitious fame with them 'a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush' well everyone to his hobby

I have none of this curiosity about me tho I feel as happy as they can about finding a new species of field flower or butterflye which I have not seen before yet I have no desire further to dry the plant or torture the butterflye by sticking it on a cork board with a pin—I have no wish to do this if my feelings woud let me I only crop the blossom of the flower or take the root from its solitudes if it woud grace my garden & wish the fluttering butterflye to settle till I can come up with it to examine the powderd colours on its wings & then it may dance off again from fancyd dangers & welcome) I think your feelings are on the side of Poetry for I have no specimens to send you so be as it may you must be content with my descriptions & observations I always feel delighted when an object in nature

brings up in ones mind an image of poetry that describes it from some favourite author you have a better opportunity of consulting books than I have therefore I will set down a list of favourite Poems & Poets who went to nature for their images so that you may consult them & share the feelings & pleasures which I describe—your favourite Chaucer is one Passages in Spenser Cowley's grasshopper & Swallow Passages in Shakespear Milton's Allegro & Penseroso & Parts of Comus the Elizabethan Poets of glorious memory Gay's Shepherds Week Green's Spleen Thomson's Seasons Collins Ode to Evening Dyer's Grongar Hill & Fleece Shenstone's Schoolmistress Gray's Ode to Spring T. Warton's April Summer Hamlet & Ode to a friend Cowper's Task Wordsworth Logans Ode to the Cuckoo Langhorne's Fables of Flora Jago's Blackbirds Bloomfield Witchwood Forest Shooters hill &c with Hurdis's Evening Walk in the village Curate & many others that may have slipped my memory*

it might seem impertinent in me to advise you what to read if you misunderstood my meaning for I dont only do it for your pleasure but I wish you to make extracts from your readings in your letters to me so that I may feel some of my old gratifications agen—a clown may say that he loves the morning but a man of taste feels it in a higher degree by bringing up in his mind that beautiful line of Thomsons 'The meek eyd morn appears mother of dews' The rustic sings beneath the evening moon but it brings no associations he knows nothing about Miltons description of it 'Now comes still evening on & twilight grey hath in her sober livery all things clad' nor of Collins Ode to Evening

the man of taste looks on the little Celandine in Spring & mutters in his mind some favourite lines from Wordsworths address to that flower he never sees the daisy without thinking of Burns & who sees the taller buttercup carpeting the closes in

* The library at Milton helped Clare's loneliness before Artis's departure in 1826. What he implies here is true. The pastoral tradition, in spite of being too inertly tied to the heroic couplet, was never really broken in England in the eighteenth century. Clare himself helped to free it, but his essential contribution was to invest it with an emotional particularity and a pureness of vision unparalleled. Bloomfield's poem was 'Whittlebury Forest' (1831). It was Thomas Warton's 'The Hamlet' which was written in Whichwood Forest, Oxfordshire.

golden fringe without a remembrance of Chatterton's beautiful mention of it if he knows it 'The kingcup brasted with the morning dew' other flowers crowd my imagination with their poetic assosiations but I have no room for them the clown knows nothing of these pleasures he knows they are flowers & just turns an eye on them & plods bye therefore as I said before to look on nature with a poetic eye magnifies the pleasure she herself being the very essence & soul of Poesy if I had the means to consult & the health to indulge it I should crowd these letters on Natural History with lucious scraps of Poesy from my favourite Minstrels & make them less barren of amusement & more profitable of perusal In my catalogue of poets I forgot Charlotte Smith whose poetry is full of pleasing images from nature—Does Mr. Whites account of the Cuckoo & Nightingale agree with mine look & tell me in your next

I am yours etc

JOHN CLARE

P.S. I can scarcely believe the account which you mention at the end of your letter respecting the mans 'puzzling himself with doubts about the Nightingales singing by day & about the expression of his notes whether they are grave or gay'—you may well exclaim 'what solemn trifling' it betrays such ignorance that I can scarcely believe it—if the man does but go into any village solitude a few miles from London next may their varied music will soon put away his doubts of its singing by day*—nay he may get rid of them now by asking any country clown the question for its such a common fact that all know of it—& as to the 'expression of its notes' if he has any knowledge of nature let him ask himself whether Nature is in the habit of making such happy seeming songs for sorrow as that of the Nightingales—the poets indulgd in fancys but they did not wish that those matter of fact men the Naturalists shoud take them for facts upon their credit—What absurditys for a world that is said to get wiser and wiser every day—yours &c

J. CLARE

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* Nightingales are very abundant in the Clare country today. Half a dozen may be heard along any favourable woodside in mid-afternoon of the windless days they prefer.

The Fern Owl or Goatsucker or Nightjar or nighthawk while several more or's might be added to fresh names is a curious bird they are found about us in summer on a wild heath calld Emmingsales* & I believe that is the only spot which they visit they make an odd noise in the evening beginning at dewfall & continuing it at intervals all night it is a beautiful object in poetic Nature—(nay all nature is poetic) from that peculiarity alone one cannot pass over a wild heath in a summer evening without being stopped to listen & admire its novel & pleasing noise it is a trembling sort of crooing sound which may be nearly imitated by making a crooing noise & at the same time patting the finger before the mouth to break the sound like stopping the hole in a German flute to quaver a double sound on one note this noise is generally made as it descends from a bush or tree for its prey it is said to feed on insects that breed on the fox fern whence its name it is a beautiful mottld bird variously shadowd with the colours of black & brown it appears of the hawk tribe its eye is keen its bill hookshapd & its mouth very wide with long bristle like hairs growing at each corner my friend Artis has one in his collection of specimens & knows a great deal more about its habits than I do there was a nest of one of these birds found on Emmingsales last year by the cow keepers with 3 eggs in it wether the whole number I cannot say they was describd to me as short & smallish eggs blotchd with umber colord spots I believe the nest was found among the brakes it was sent to Dr Skrimshire of Peterbro who is a curious man & collects the eggs of English birds I never found a nest of these birds in my life so I cannot say were they build but the next time I visit Artis or Henderson I will enquire & send you further particulars as beautiful an object as this bird must have been in the summer dewfall rambles of Poets I have never read one that mentions it except Mrs Smith in her Sonnets which I had the pleasure to meet with last summer in a friends bookcase her poems may be only pretty but I felt much pleasd with them because she wrote more from what she had seen of nature than from what she had read of it therefore those that read her poems find new images which they have not read of before tho they have often felt them & from those associations

* Elsewhere Clare writes this 'Emmonsales', 'Emmonsailes'. See sketch map.

poetry derives the power of pleasing in the happiest manner when I workd at Casterton I met with another nocturnal bird calld a 'nighthawk' I say another because I am certain it was not the Fern owl it was larger I have started it in the night from among the short stumpy bushes on the cow pasture but could not distinguish the colour or make of the bird all I could tell of it was that it seemd very swift on the wing & from that I imagind it of the hawk kind—My Love rambles then made me acquainted with many of the privacys of night which she seemd wishing to keep as secrets I was then the companion of the Evening & very often the morning Star Patty's Lodge stood in a lone spot & the very path seemed to lose itself in the solitudes & was glad to take the direction of rabbit tracks ere it could lead one to the door nature revelld in security this bird was one of her curiositys it very often startld me with its odd noise which was a dead thin whistling sort of sound which I fancied was the whistle call of robbers for it was much like the sound of a man whistling in fear of being heard by any but his companions tho it was continued much longer than a man could hold his breath it had no trembling in it like a gamekeepers dog whistle but was of one thin continued sound I was supprised when I mentiond it to them to find it was the noise of a bird & of one very common about there it was not only heard in summer but at all seasons of the year they knew no other name for it than that of the Nighthawk & they supposd it preyd on the young rabbits by night & made their burrows its hiding place by day as it was never seen after the morning twilight began it made no noise when it was startld up in my hearing so I supposd from that it was mostly sitting when it made its fear creeping & danger haunting cry—Querie—May it not be very natural to suppose that the frequent whistles which people have heard while crossing wild heaths under the horrible apprehensions of being pursued by robbers came from this bird—I know not wether Naturalists are acquainted with this curious circumstance neither have I read sufficiently to know what opinions they give of it if they are I firmly believe it is a different species from the night jar of the hawk tribe who like the owl is a nocturnal plunderer that hides in the day from the

light & glaring of the sun*—If you have read of anything that resembles this bird I shall be glad to hear of it I think the noise cannot be unknown to curious observers in nature tho it lives at a time when the Naturalist & Poet are not expected to be on their rambles unless by accident which is often the friend & cause to new discoverys for the time when its call is the most often repeated is at the dead of night between the hours of eleven & one before & after this it is but seldom heard—what a beautiful night picture are these glow worms I have wrapt them up in leaves & taken them home to examine them by daylight but they was nothing then but a dead shriveld insect I never could find how that illuminating principal coud exist which hangs at the end like a drop of dew filld with a sun beam that daylight had left behind it there are several insects that have a shining quality in the dark & one often calld a 'glowworm' by night & the 'Forty legd worm' by day has this property but different to the above it is of a more silvery hue which will cling to the object that is put to touch it as tho it was some powder or substance adhering to the skin this insect is of a red colour by day with a great number of legs—touchwood is possesd of an illuminating property in the dark in a great degree—but I must stop my sheet is full

Yours

JOHN CLARE

I do not know how to class the venemous animals further than by the vulgar notion of putting toads common snakes black snakes calld by the Peasantry Vipers Newts (often calld eartherms) & a nimble scaly looking newt-like thing about the heaths calld Swifts by the furze kidders & cow keepers all these we possess in troublesome quantitys all of which is reckond poisonous by the common people tho a many daring people has provd that the common snake is not for I have seen men with whom I have workd in the fields take them up & snatch them out of joint as they calld it in a moment so that when they

* Surely the stone-curlew, now rare in Northamptonshire. But Clare's mixture of observed fact and country hearsay makes us pause, as usual. The stone-curlew was not thought, then, to winter there.

was thrown down they could not stir but lay & dyd others will take them up in one hand & hold the other agen that double pointed fang which they put out in a threatening manner when pursued & which is erroneously calld their sting & when it touches the hand it appears utterly harmless & turns agen as weak as an horsehair yet still they are calld poisonous & dreaded by many people I myself cannot divest my feelings of their first impressions tho I have been convincd to the contrary we have them about us in great quantitys they even come in the village & breed in the dunghills in farmyards & harbour in old walls they are fond of lying rolld up like a whipthong in the sun they seem to be always jealous of danger as they never lie far from their hiding places & retreat in a moment at the least noise or sound of approaching feet they lay a great number of eggs white & large the shell is a skinny substance & full of a glutinous matter like the white in birds eggs they hang together by hundreds as if strung on a string they lay them on the south side of old dunghills were the heat of the sun & the dung together hatches them When they first leave the shells they are no thicker than a worsted needle or bodkin they nimble about after the old snakes & if they are in danger the old ones open their mouths & the young dissapear down their throats in a moment till the danger is over & then they come out & run about as usual I have not seen this myself but I am certain of it as if I had because I have heard it told so often by those that did When I have been pilling bark in the woods in oaking time I have seen snakes creeping half errect by the sides of the fallen oaks that were pilld putting their darting horse hair like tongue every now & then to the tree & I was a long while ere I coud make out what they were doing but I made it out at last in my mind that they were catching flys that were attracted there in great quantitys to the moister of the sap just after the bark had been ripd off—this I have observed many times & I think if it were examind they have a sticky moister at the end of those double-ended fangs that appears like a bit of wailbone split at the end or a double horse hair which attaches to the flye as soon as touchd like bird lime & I think this is the use for which nature designd their mistaken sting the motion was so quick that the prey which it seizd coud not be percievd when taken but I have

not the least doubt that such was its object people talk about the watersnake but I cannot believe otherwise than that the water & landsnake are one tho I have killd snakes by the water in meadows of a different & more deep color than I have found in the fields the watersnake will swallow very large frogs I have often known them to be ripd out of their bellys by those who have skind the snake to wear round their hats which is reckond as a charm against headach & is often tryd but with what success I am not able to say some say that snakes are as wholsome as eels to eat & when the french prisoners were at Norman Cross Barracks it was a very common thing among the people in the villages round about to go in the fens a snake catching & carry home large sticks of them strung like eels on osiers which the Frenchmen woud readily buy as an article of very palatable food I knew this to be a fact but I rather doubt the Frenchmens good taste in cookery by eating such things—the fens swarm with snakes I have walkd by the brink of a large dyke among the long grass in a morning when they have run away from every step I took & dropt into the water by scores the Fenmen care nothing about them no more then childern do for the common flye when we see any we kill them & think we get rid of a danger by so doing but the fen people pass them without fear or notice in fact if they dreaded them they coud not stir out of their doors they are so numerous

The black snake or Viper a very small one about a foot long & not often thicker than ones little finger is very scarce here & venomous I believe The fens have none they seem to inhabit high land a place calld Southey wood is a spot were they are the oftenest seen with us a woodman got stung by one in Worthorp Groves near Burghley some few years ago & his hand & arm swelld very large another man while cutting up furze on a place calld the Lings at Casterton was stung over the leg by one & lay ill a long time & when I was a boy I can remember a next door neighbour namd Landon was stung with one of these vipers in crossing a close of very long grass he describd the sensation as if a thorn had prickd him just above his shoe top on the ancle & shoud have beleivd it had been so had not his wife been following him who saw at the moment somthing hustle quickly in the grass when she told him & he turnd back & killd

it with his stick on coming up to some gipseys they advisd him to take the dead viper home & boil it & apply the broth to the wound which he did but it got worse & worse & the doctors when they saw it expected it woud have mortified but he got well—I have seen three of these black snakes they are very quick eyd looking things with a fang darting out like the common ones their heads are shorter & much flatter than the large snake & their bellys bright yellow interspersd with scaley bars of blackish hues—I have heard some people affirm that even these are not venomous & that people who suppose themselves bitten by them mistake sudden yumours filling in their limbs for a bite I believe this is the doctors opinion with us—all I can say is that I was never harmd by them—toads & newts harbour in ruins & under large stones they will live either in the water or out of it—I believe the newt is calld the water lizard by many—& the nimble one on heather is the land Lizard of a light brown coverd with small scales—ugly as these things are they give the poet a delight to mention them

Shakespeare & Thomson both speaks of the Common snake I cannot refer you to the place in eithers poems but I believe one of them describes it as lying 'curld in the sun' I think its Thomson

The common snake is very fond of milk & it often makes its way into a dairy by a mousehole or some other entrance to sip the cream—in the fens (were they are as numerous as flies) they all creep up the milk pails that are set to cool at the door of an evening by 3 or 4 together—they have a very quick sense of hearing & retreat in a moment at the approach of danger—this no doubt is the order of providence for if the venomous serpent was as slow to retreat as the toad what numbers woud be injurd by falling in its way

Feb 7 [1825]*

You ask me wether I have resumed my botanizing & naturalizing excursions & you will laugh at my comencement for I

* Since there are two letters dated 'Feb. 7', and the above appears to be the later one (see Journal for 26 Dec. 1824 and 7 Jan. 1825), this and the four following may belong to 1825, while the seven preceding to 1824. For subject matter of three of the thirteen Natural History Letters still in America, see Journal for 11 Sept. 1824.

have been seriously & busily employd this last 3 weeks hunting Pooty shells & if you are not above them I must get you to assist me in the arangement or classification of them I have been making some drawings of them but they are so miserable that I must send the shells with them

There is a pleasing association attachd to these things they remind me & I think every one of happy hours who has not been a gatherer of them in his schoolboy days—how anxious I usd to creep among the black thorn thickets & down the hedge sides on my hands & knees seeking them as soon as the sun lookd warm on the hedges & banks & wakend the daisey to open its golden eye & the arum to throw up its fine green leaves I cannot forget such times as these we usd to gather them to string on thread as birds eggs are strung & sometimes to play with them at what we calld 'cock fighting' by pressing the knibbs hard against each other till one broke—I think there is one shell peculiar to our neighbourhood & almost to one spot in it it is a large one of a yellow green color with a black rim round the base there is another yellow one very common which we calld when boys 'painted Ladys' but the one I imagine as a scarce one is very different from this—they are found in low places by brook sides the snail is of a blackish yellow & appears to feed on a species of brooklime—there is another not very common I have stiled it the yellow one banded the others are common the red one banded the red self & the red many banded & small many banded with a mottld sort calld badgers by schoolboys—there is many others but they all seem variations of the same kinds the large mozzld* garden snail is well known but I found many of them in a spot where it woud puzzle reason to know how they got there

A person had been digging a dyke in the old roman bank by the side of a fence & in some places it was 6 feet deep & in the deepest places I found the most shells most of them of the large garden kind which had been clarsified† as it were in the sandy soil in which they were bedded I suppose them to have lain

* May be 'moild'—MS. i.e. 'muddied', but far more likely 'mozzld', a word of Clare's own individual use (cf. strunted, snufting, sturt), meaning 'of rubbed, indistinct patterning', as on the garden snail.

† Calsified. 'Clartified,' which the MS. *might* read, is neither as Clare-descriptive nor as sensible.

ever since the road was made & if that is so what a pigmy it makes of the pride of man Those centurions of their thousands & 10 thousands that commanded those soldiers to make these roads little thought that the house of a poor simple snail horn woud outlive them & their proudest temples by centurys it is almost a laughable gravity to reflect so profoundly over a snail horn but every trifle owns the triumph of a lesson to humble the pride of man—every trifle also has a lesson to bespeak the wisdom & forethought of the Deity I was struck to-day with a new Discovery I stood looking over the wall of a bridge at the brook rippling beneath me & observd a large shell & on examining it I found it a sort of fresh water Periwinkle of which there are several varietys in our brooks but none that has the peculiar construction that this one has which is a sort of Lid that it opens & shuts at pleasure that fits as close as the lid of a snuff box & keeps out the water when ever it chuses to be weary of [ ]* or wants to be dry in its boat its joint as it were attached & sticks under the chin & is of no more inconvenience than a mans beard when it is open it serves the double purpose of clogs or shoes to keep the sharp gravelly bottom of the brooks from hurting its tender flesh which it might easily do if it were not thus guarded

The instinct of the snail is very remarkable & worthy notice tho such things are lookd over with a carless eye—it has such a knowledge of its own speed that it can get home to a moment to be safe from the sun as a moment too late woud be its death—as soon as the sun has lost its power to hurt in the evening it leaves its hiding place in search of food which it is generally aware were to find if it is a good way off it makes no stoppages in the road but appears to be in great haste & when it has divided its time to the utmost by travelling to such a length as will occupy all the rest of its spare time to return its instinct will suddenly stop & feed on what it finds there & if it finds nothing it will go no further but return homewards & feed on what it chances to meet with & if after it gets home the sun shoud chance to be under a cloud it will potter about its door way to seek food but it goes no further & is ready to hide when the sun looks out—when they find any food which suits them

* One word we have failed to read.

they will feed on it till it lasts & travel to this same spot as accurately as if they knew geography or was guided by a mariners compass—the power of instinct in the most trifling insect is very remarkable & displays the omnipotence of its maker in an illustrious manner nature is a fine preacher & her sermons are always worth attention

at the end of a little common when I was a boy called Parkers Moor there was a little spring of beautiful soft water which was never dry it used to flow from under a hedding* at the end of a land out of a little hole about as deep & round as a cutten*—it used then to dubble its way thro the grass in a little ripple of its own making no bigger than a grip† or a cart rut—& in this little springhead there used to be hundreds of the little fish called minnows not so big as the struttle‡ & these used to be found in that hole every year but how they came there I could not tell some years a quantity of struttle were found & often a few gudgeons—when a boy we used to go on a sunday in harvest & leck it out with a dish & string the fish on rushes—& thereby thinking ourselves great fishers from the number we had caught not heeding the size

Winter primroses—I have gathered a handful of primrose in Hilly wood on Christmas day in the midst of a severe frost not only once but many years

Wild ducks always rise against the wind that is to face it they never rise with it to leave it behind them

Magpies have always two openings into their nest one to enter into it & one to escape from it—I have often got my hand into the nest before the old one has left it when she has sat hard on her eggs & she always escaped at another hole Magpies always line their nests with twitch & dried roots—Crows use twitch roots old rags & wool—but the magpie never uses wool or anything but roots & twitch

Jaybirds uses dead roots & twitch like the magpie but they are generally of finer texture

Those little beetles called yules§ that eat holes in beans &

* A 'heading' is more usually 'the first swath cut'. Here Clare uses it to mean a 'bank-boundary' (with hedge on top) on a field side. A 'cutting' is a furrow at a field corner.

† A trench for draining. ‡ Stickleback. § Weevils.

other grain—as soon as touched drop down & lie as if dead Spiders will coil up their legs & lie still & the hog beetle will roll itself into a round ball & scarcely open if laid by a fire

The long legged shepherd will emit a drop of water if imprisoned in the hand & a flat beetle of a dull purplish brown will emit a red sort of fluid if stopt in its journeys by the childern who provoke it on purpose to make it do so

The blue Crow* builds on thornbushes in the fens—seldom venturing on trees its eggs are similar to common crows but of a paler colour & slenderer in shape The Heronshaws build on the fir trees on the Island pond in Milton gardens they make their nests in clusters & associate like the rook but their nests are of a more clumsy & heavy appearance & yet are perched on the tops of the trees & grains in such places that appear incapable of bearing such a load of rough thorny sticks as their nests appear below their eggs are long & very slender at the small end of a greenish white colour spotted with brown & faintly streeked with a paler colour—they never meddle with the fish in the pond but go a great distance for their food

March 25th 1825

I took a walk to-day to botanize & found that the spring had taken up her dwelling in good earnest she has covered the woods with the white anemone which the children call Lady smocks & the harebells are just venturing to unfold their blue drooping bells the green is coverd with daiseys & the little Celandine the hedge bottoms are crowded with the green leaves of the arum were the boy is peeping for pootys with eager anticipations & delight—the sallows are cloathed in their golden palms were the bees are singing a busy welcome to spring they seem uncommonly fond of these flowers & gather round them in swarms—I have often wonderd how these little travellers found their way home agen from the woods & solitudes were they journey for wax & honey I have seen them to-day at least 3 miles from any village in Langley wood working at the palms & some of them with their little thighs so loaded with the yellow dust as to seem almost unable to flye it is curious to see

* More usually known as grey crow. Lilford, writing in 1895, says it did not nest in Northamptonshire in those later days.

how they collect their load they keep wiping their legs over their faces to gather the dust that settles there after creeping in the flowers till they have got a sufficient load & then they flye homewards to their hives—I have heard that a man curious to know how far his bees travelld in a summers day got up early one morning & stood by one of the hives to powder them as they came out with fine flour to know them agen & in the course of an hour afterwards he observd some of them at the extremity of the Lordship & having to go to the market that day he passd by a turnip field in full flower about 5 miles from home & to his supprise he found some of his own in their white powderd coats busily humming at their labour with the rest—the Ivy berrys too are quite ripe & the wood pigeons are busily fluskering among the Ivied dotterels on the skirts of the common they are very fond of them—& a little nameless bird with a black head & olive green back & wings—not known—it seems to peck the Ivy berries for its food & I have remarked that it comes as soon as they are ripe to the Ivy trees & dissapears from them when they are gone—I fancy it is one of the tribe of the Titmice & I have often found a nest clinging by the side of trees among the Ivy which I think belongs to it I know nothing further of its Life & habits—I think I had the good luck to-day to hear the bird which you spoke of last march as singing early in spring & which you so appropriatly named the mock nightingale for some of its notes are exactly similar I heard it singing in 'Open Wood' & was startled at first to think it was the night-ingale & tryd to creep into the thicket to see if I coud discover what bird it was but it seemd to be very shoy & got farther from me as I approachd till I gave up the pursuit—I askd some woodmen who were planting underwood at the time wether they knew the bird & its song seemd to be very familiar to them they said it always came with the first fine days of spring & assured me it was the wood chat but they coud not agree with each others opinion for another believd it to be the large black cap or black headed Titmouse* so I coud get nothing for fact but I shall keep a sharp lookout when I hear it again—you have

* Countrymen's namings often seem confused, though they are probably not. This may have been the blackcap-warbler, the wood-warbler, or the rarer wood-lark. See Appendix II.

often wished for a blue Anemonie the Anemonie pulsatilla of botanists* & I can now send you some for I have found some in flower to-day which is very early but it is a very early spring the heathen mythology is fond of indulging in the metamorphing of the memory of lovers & heroes into the births of flowers & I coud almost fancy that this blue Anemonie sprang from the blood or dust of the romans for it haunts the roman bank in this neighbourhood & is found no were else it grows on the roman bank agen Swordy well & did grow in great plenty but the plough that destroyer of wild flowers has rooted it out of its long inherited dwelling it grows also on the roman bank agen Burghley Park in Barnack Lordship it is a very fine flower & is easily cultivated by transporting some of its own soil with it a heathy sandy soil seems to suit it best—you enquired last summer wether we had any plants indegenous to our neighbourhood I think we have some but I dont know much of the new christning system of modern botany that has such a host of alphabetical arrangements as woud fill a book to describe the Flora of a Village like the types of the Chinese characters that fill a printing house to print one book with—-we have a very fine fern of the maiden hair kind that grows large with a leaf very like the hemlock but of a much paler green & another very small one that grows on the old stools of sallows in damp hollows in the woods & by the sides of brooks & rivers we have also the thorn pointed fern of Linnaeus that grows on one spot in a dyke by Harrisons Closes near a roman station & the harts tongue that grows on the brinks of the badger holes in Open wood in fact we have a many ferns there is a beautiful one which a friend of mine calls the 'Lady fern' growing among the boggy spots on Whittlesea Mere & a dwarf willow grows there about a foot high which it never exceeds it is also a place very common for the cranberry that trails by the brink of the mere there are several water weeds too with very beautiful or peculiar flowers that have not yet been honored with christnings from modern botany—we have a great variety of Orchises among them the Bee orchis & Spider orchis are reckond the finest both of them may be found in an old deserted quarry calld Ashton stone pits

* In 1930 the Pasque-flower grew where Clare found it, but that haunt has now been quarried.

—but perhaps they are more common on Whittering Heath were grows the 'Cross leaved heath' & a fine tall yellow flower of the Mullein species which the villagers call Goldilocks these are all the rare flowers that I am acquainted with & botanists will come miles to gather them which makes me fancy they are not common elsewhere I will send you some dryd specimens in their successions of flowering this season—have you never heard that croaking jarring noise in the woods at this early season I heard it to-day & went into the woods to examine what thing it was that caused the sound & I discoverd that it was the common green woodpecker busily employd at boring his holes which he effected by twisting his bill round in the way that a carpenter twists his wimble with this difference that when he has got it to a certain extent he turns it back & pecks awhile & then twists agen his beak seems to serve all the purposes of a nail paper gough* & wimble effectually what endless new lessons may we learn from nature

I am yours &c &c

J. CLARE

April 21

I went to take my walk to-day & heard the Nightingale for the first time this season in Royce wood just at the town end we may now be assured that the summer is nigh at hand you asked me a long while back to procure you a Nightingales nest & eggs & I have tryd every season since to find if the bird nesting boys have ever taken one out but I have not been able to procure one—when I was a boy I usd to be very curious to watch the nightingale to find her nest & to observe her color & size for I had heard many odd tales about her & I often observed her habits & found her nest so I shall be able to give you a pretty faithful history—she is a plain bird somthing like the hedge sparrow in shape & the female Firetail or Redstart in color but more slender than the former & of a redder brown or scorchd color than the latter the breast of the male or female is spotted like a young Robin & the feathers on the rump & on parts of the wings are of a fox red or burnt umber hue one of them is of a darker brown then the other but I know not wether

* 'gouge'?

it be the male or the female they generally seek the same solitudes which they haunted last season & these are the black-thorn clumps & thickets about the woods & spinneys they sit on the water grains of oaks or on a twig of hazel & sing their varied songs with short intervals both in the night & day time & sing in one as common as the other I have watchd them often at their song their mouths is open very wide & their feathers are ruffled up & their wings trembling as if in exstacy the superstition of laying their throats on a sharp thorn is a foolish absurdity but it is not the only one ascribed to the nightingale they make a large nest of the old oak leaves that strew the ground in woods & green moss & line it with hair & somtimes a little fine witherd grass or whool it is a very deep nest & is generally placed on the root or stulp* of a black or white thorn somtimes a little height up the bush & often on the ground they lay 5 eggs about the size of the woodlarks or larger of a deep olive brown without spot or tinge of another color their eggs have a very odd appearance & are unlike any other birds in the county when they have young their song ceases & they make an odd burring noise as if calling their young to their food they are very jealous of intrusions on their privacy when they have young & if one goes in their haunts at that time they make a great chirping & burring & will almost perch close to you noising & chirping as if to fright you away at first one assails you & after it has been chirping about you awhile the other approaches to join it but as soon as you get a little distance from their haunts they leave you & are still when if you return they resume their former chirping & continue fluttering among the branches till you leave them again to their privacy their nests are very difficult to find indeed it is a hopless task to hunt for them as they are seldom found but by accident being hidden among the tall weeds that surround the roots & cover the woods undisturbed recesses when I was a boy I found three nests one season & all were found by chance in crossing the woods hunting the nests of other birds—the Redbreast frequently builds on the ground under the shelter of a knoll or stulp & its

* Clare always used this word, as he used 'stoven', for 'broken but moss- or fern- or ivy-covered stump of a tree'. The other dialectal meaning for both words seems to be 'stake' or 'boundary'.

nest is often taken for that of the nightingales but it is easily distinguishd from it as the robins is built with dead grass & moss on the outside while the Nightingale never forgets her dead oak leaves & this is so peculiar to her nest that I never saw a nest of theirs without them nor are they usd by any other bird for their nests—

It has been often asserted that young frogs & fish will fall from the clouds in storms & it has often [been] wrongly asserted when the phenomena has sprung from natural causes— I have seen thousands of young frogs crossing a common after a shower but I found that they had left their hiding places & pursued their journeys after the shower began early in the morning early risers may see swarms of young frogs leaving their birth places & emigrating as fast as they can hop to new colonys & as soon as the sun gets strong they hide in the grass as well as they are able to wait the approach of night to be able to start again but if in the course of the day showers happen to fall they instantly seize the chance & proceed on their journey till the sun looks out & puts a stop to their travelling again as to young fish I always found them in holes that were very near neighbours to brooks & had held communications (tho not then) with them in wet weather when dykes were full—it has been asserted that eels fall with rain in ponds it has been so asserted because they did not know how to account for it any other way—once when I was a young man on staying late at a feast I cross[ed] a meadow about midnight & saw to my supprise quantitys of small nimble things emigrating across it a long way from any water I thought at first they were snakes but I found on a closer observation they were young eels making for a large pond called the pool with as much knowledge as if they were acquainted with the way I thought this a wonderful discovery then but I have since observd the same thing in larger eels going from one pond to another in the day time & I caught two very large ones in the act of emigrating

Blackbirds & Thrushes particularly the former feed in hard winters upon the shell snailhorns by hunting them from the hedge bottoms & wood stulps & taking them to a stone where they brake them in a very dexterous manner—any curious

observer of nature may see in hard frosts the shells of pootys thickly litterd round a stone in the lanes & if he waits a short time he will quickly see one of these birds coming with a snail-horn in his bill which he constantly taps on the stone till it is broken he then extracts the snail & like a true sportsman eagerly hastens to hunt them again in the hedges or woods where a frequent rustle of their little feet is heard among the dead leaves

A golden Plovers nest was found on Southorp heath or at least the young plovers for they make no nest—& they were taken to a clergyman at Barnack who ascertained what they were

When Woodpeckers are making or boring their holes in the spring they are so attentive over their labours that they are easily caught by boys who watch them when they are half-hid in the holes they are making & climbing softly up the tree make them prisoners—a nest thus left unfinished is never resumed by another—the male makes the holes generally & when finished sets up a continued cry to invite a companion that seldom fails to join him in seeking materials for lining the nest—the pied woodpecker never bores holes in the body of the tree but in the larger grains very high up & always on the underneath side so that they are inaccessible to nest hunting boys—it is easy to see where the tribe are making new nests by the litter they make at the foot of the tree as if it were sawdust

There are two sorts of the hedge roses or hip brambles easily distinguished one has a greyish green rough hairy leaf this is not common it grows in a hedge on the south west corner of Ailsworth heath

The other has a glossy green leaf without hairs & is common on every old hedge

When the young of the Nightingale leave the nest the old ones bring them out of the woods into old hedgerows & bushy borders about the fields—where they seem to be continually hunting along the roots & hedge bottoms for food Their hants here are easily known from the plaintive noise of 'toot toot' that the old ones are constantly making at passers bye where the path running by a hedge side make such intrusions frequent the firetail & the Robin make a similar noise—the Nightingale often makes another noise of 'Chur chur' which on

hearing I have seen the young one instantly hopping down from the hedge into the bottom of the dyke & when she made the noise of 'toot toot' they would in a moment be all as still as if nothing was there but the old one

I always took the 'chur chur' as a food call & the tooting noise as a token of alarm

I have often been amused with the manners & habits of Insects but I am not acquainted with entomology to know the names they go bye—when I was following my avocations of husbandry last summer at weeding in a beanfield while sitting at dinner I observed one of those small green nimble beetles* repeatingly running up to some object & then retreating again at last my curiosity urged me to examine what he coud be at when I found that he was attacking a large moth & when ever the moth made a trial to escape (which it coud not do for the weeds) & struggled it retreated back & as soon as it was still it returnd to the attack again at length the moth became quite exausted & the beetle with the utmost dexterity began to bite off his wings & whenever the moth made faint struggles instantly fell to wounding him agen in the body as if he had not sufficiently disabled him then he returned to the wings which he soon got off & as soon as he accomplished it he paused a while by the body as if on the watch wether his object needed any further butchering to dispatch him & on finding him lying quite still he then took a wide circuit all round the body as if like a murderer he was afraid of being seen & taken—then he nimbled off somwere as if he had accomplished his object going about his business & I wonderd what his object coud be in killing the moth & then leaving him but before I had much time for reflection the beetle again made his appearance with a companion they went round the moth without attempting to seize it & seemd in a consulting posture for some seconds when both of them started agen in contrary directions & bye & bye both returned each leading in his tracks a companion & then one of them instantly started agen while the other three took a circuit round the moth presently the beetle that went out returned with two more companions & the company making 6 in all when they came up instantly began as if the whole family

* Tiger-beetles.

was now got together to make their dinner on the moth they first turnd him over on his back & fed on his body 3 on each side & when satisfied they all joined help in hand & dragd the remainder of their prey home to a little hole between the furrows & dissapeard—I was much astonished at the time & made up my mind that Insects have a language to convey their Ideas to each other & it always appears that they posses the faculty in a greater degree than the large animals

NATURE NOTES

HAWKS

Hawks are beautiful objects when on the wing I have often stood to view a hawk in the sky trembling its wings & then hanging quite still for a moment as if it was as light as a shadow & could find like the clouds a resting place upon the blue air

There are a great many different sorts of hawks about us & several to which I am a stranger too

There is a very large blue one almost as big as a goose* they fly in a swopping heavy manner not much unlike the flye of a heron you may see an odd one often in the spring swimming close to the green corn & ranging over an whole field for hours together it hunts leverets & partridges & pheasants I saw one of these which a man had wounded with a gun he had stupified it only for when he got it home it was as fierce & as live as ever the wings when extended was of a great length it was of a blue-grey color hued with deeper tinges of the same its beak was dreadfully hookd & its claws long & of a bright yellow with a yellow ring round each eye which gave a fierce & very severe look at the sight of a cat it put itself in a posture for striking as if it meant to seize it as prey but at a dog it seemd rather scared & sat on its tail end in a defensive posture with its eyes extended & its talons open making at the same time an earpiercing hissing noise which dismayd the dog who woud drop his tail & sneak out as if in fear they tyd a piece of tarmarking & tetherd it in a barn were they kept it 3 or 4 days when it gnawed the string from its leg & effected its liberty by getting thro the barnholes in the wall it ate nothing all that time they offerd it carrion but

* Almost certainly a hen harrier.

it woud take no notice of it what its name is I know not they call it the blue hawk

There is a small blue hawk often mistaken for the cuckoo I know nothing of it further then seeing it often on the wing* & a rare one about the size of a blackbird of a mottld color & with a white patch of feathers on the back of the head one of these sort was shot here in the summer by a field keeper I have never seen anything like it before†

Last year I had two tame hawks of what species I cannot tell‡ they were not quite so large as the sparrow hawk their wings & back feathers was of a red brown color sheathd wi black their tails was long & barrd with black & their breasts was of a lighter color & spotted their eyes was large & of a dark piercing blue their beaks was very much hookd with a sharp projecting swell in the top mandible not unlike the swell in the middle of the hookd bill usd by hedgers & called by them a tomahawk This made an incision like a knife in tearing its food the bottom mandible was curiously shortend as it were for the hook to lap over & seemd as tho nature had clippd the end off with scissors for that purpose their legs was short & yellow with a tuft of feathers over each thigh like the bantam fowl a property belonging to most of the hawk tribe They grew very tame & woud come at a call or whistle when they were hungry They made a strange noise that piercd the ear with its shrillness they was very fond of washing themselves often doing it twice a day in winter after being fed they woud play in the garden running after each other & seizing bits of clods or fallen apples in their claws or catching at flies when they rested they usd always to perch on one leg with the other drawn up among their feathers they always lovd to perch on the topmost twig of the trees in the garden were they woud sit in a bold & commanding attitude one was much larger than the other & the large one was much the tamest When I went awalking in the

* A cock sparrow hawk, Mr. Kenneth Richmond suggests.

† Most likely Clare was referring here to a merlin, though, as Mr. Richmond says—to whom we are indebted for this note—'the white patch on the back of the head rather confuses the issue, making it look as though it might have been a hen sparrow hawk'.

‡ In his list of Northamptonshire birds he says they were hobbies (see Appendix II). If this were so, hobbies, birds of passage, would not flourish in captivity.

fields it woud attempt to flye after me & as I was fearful of losing it I usd to drive it back but one day it took advantage of watching & following me & when I got into the fields I was astonishd & startld to see a hawk settle on my shoulder it was mine who had watchd me out of the town & took a short cut to flye after me I thought it woud flye away for good so I attempted to catch it but it woud not be made a prisoner & flew to the trees by the road side I gave it up for lost but as soon as I got out of sight it set up a noise & flew after me agen & when I got upon the heath were there were no trees it woud settle upon the ground before me & if I attempted to catch it it woud run & hide in the rabbit burrows & when I left it took wing & flew after me & so it kept on to the other end of my journey when it found home as soon as I did after this I took no more heed of losing them tho they woud be missing for days together a boy caught one by suprise & hurt it so that it dyd & the tamest dyd while I was absent from home 4 days it refusd food & hunted for me every morning & came to sit in my empty chair as it woud do till I got up They thought it fretted itself to death in my absence but I think the meat I gave was too strong for it & I believd it was not well a good while before I left it I felt heartily sorry for my poor faithful affectionate hawk

THE BUTTER BUMP

This is a thing that makes a very odd noise morning & evening among the flags & large reedshaws in the fens some describe the noise as something like the bellowing of bulls but I have often heard it & cannot liken it to that sound at all in fact it is difficult to describe what it is like its noise had procurd it the above name by the common people the first part of its noise is an indistinct sort of muttering sound very like the word butter utterd in a hurried manner & bump comes very quick after & bumps a sound on the ear as if eccho had mocked the bump of a gun just as the mutter ceasd nay this [is] not like I have often thought the putting ones mouth to the hole of an empty large cask & uttering the word 'butter bump' sharply woud imitate the sound exactly after its first call that imitates the word 'butter bump' it repeats the word bump singly several

times in a more determind & louder manner—thus 'butter bump bump bump butter bump' it strikes people at first as something like the coopers mallet hitting on empty casks when I was a boy this was one of the fen wonders I usd often to go with my mother to see my aunt at Peakirk when I often wanderd in the fen with the boys birdnesting & when I enquired what the strange noise was they describd it as coming from a bird larger than an ox that coud kill all the cattle in the fen if it chose & destroy the village likewise but that it was very harmless & all the harm it did was the drinking so much water as to nearly empty the dykes in summer & spoil the rest so that the stock coud scarcely drink what it left this was not only a story among children but their parents believd the same thing such is the power of superstition over ignorant people who have no desire to go beyond hearsay & enquire for themselves but the 'world gets wiser every day' tis not believd now nor heard as a wonder any longer they say that it is a small bird that makes the noise not unlike the quail tho a deal larger & longer in the legs they say it puts its beak in a reed when it makes the noise that gives it that jarring or hollow sound which is heard so far I have no knowledge of its using the reed but I believe they are right in the bird I have started such a bird out of the reed shaws myself were I have heard the noise & afterwards the noise was silent which convincd me that the one was the bird I never saw it but on the wing & it appeard to me larger than a pheasant & not unlike it either in shape or colour but it flu different—there is a great many of these birds on Whittlesea mere & their noise is easily heard on a morning on the London Road which is some miles distant its noise continues all summer & at the latter end of the year it is silent & heard no more till summer return

BATTS

I know not how batts propagate I have heard it asserted that they breed like mice but when I was a boy I was foolish enough to suppose they laid eggs like other birds & have often sought vainly to find them I remember there was an old ash tree in the Lordship with a woodpeckers hole in it of long standing a wryneck generally laid in it yearly & one year I swarmed up it

to take the nest & on putting my hand into the hole I felt something different to what I usually met with so I hastily pulld it out when to my astonishment a multitude of batts followd in quick succession to the count of 20 or 30 I had not the hardihood to venture my hand into the hole again to satisfye my curiosity wether there was eggs in it but retreated down the tree as fast as I coud so it still remaind a mistery Batts are pleasing objects in the summer eves we usd to pull off our hats when boys & keep bawling out 'Bat bat come under my hat & I give you a slice of bacon' upon what superstitious notion it is founded I know not they hide in charnel vaults in steeples & old empty houses or barns it will steal its way into dairies were it feeds on the milk bacon or cheese like a mouse

Collins in his delicious Ode to evening mentions it so beautifully that I shall not venture to hunt up other extracts to keep it company

Now air is hushd save were the weak-eyd bat
With short shrill shriek flits by on leathern wing

ON ANTS

It has been a commonly believd notion among such naturalists that trusts to books & repeats the old error that ants hurd up & feed on the curnels of grain such as wheat & barley but every common observer knows this to be a falsehood I have noticd them minutely & often & never saw one with such food in its mouth they feed on flyes & caterpillars which I have often seen them tugging home with & for which they climb trees & the stems of flowers—when they first appear in the spring they may be seen carrying out ants in their mouths of a smaller size which they will continue to do a long time transporting them away from home perhaps to form new colonys—they always make a track & keep it & will go for furlongs away from their homes fetching bits of bents & others lugging away with flyes or green maggots which they pick off of flowers & leaves some when overloaded are joind by others till they get a sufficient quantity to master it home—I have often minded that two while passing each other woud pause like old friends longparted see

& as if they suddenly reccolected each other they went & put their heads together as if they shook hands or saluted each other when a shower comes on an unusual bustle ensues round their nest some set out & suddenly turn round again without fetching anything home others will hasten to help those that are loaded & when the rain begins to fall the others will leave their loads & make the best of their way as fast as they can their general employment is the gathering of bents &c to cover their habitation which they generally make round an old root which they cut into holes like an honeycomb these holes lead & communicate into each other for a long way in the ground in winter they lye dormant but quickly revive if exposd to the sun there is nothing to be seen of food in their habitations then I have observd stragglers that crawl about the grass seemingly without a purpose & if they accidentally fall into the track of those at labour that quickens their pace & sudden retreat I have fancied these to be the idle & discontented sort of radicals to the government

The smaller ants calld pismires seem to be under a different sort of government at least there is not that regularity observd among them in their labours as there is among the large ones they do not keep one track as the others do but creep about the grass were they please they are uncommonly fond of bread (which the larger ants will not touch) & when the shepherd litters his crumble from his dinner bag on their hill as he often will to observe them it instantly creates a great bustle among the little colony & they hasten away with it as fast as they can till every morsel is cleand up when they pause about as if looking for more—it is commonly believd by carless observers that every hillock on greens & commons has been first rooted up & afterwards occupied by these little tenants but on the contrary most of the hills they occupy are formed by themselves which they increase every year by bringing up a portion of mold on the surface finely powdered on which they lay their eggs to receive the warmth of the sun & the shepherd by observing their wisdom in this labour judges correctly of the changes of the weather in fact he finds it an infallible almanack when fine weather sets in their eggs are brought nearly to the top of the new addition to their hill & as soon as ever a change is about

to take place nay at the approach of a shower they are observd carrying them deeper down to safer situations & if much wet is coming they entirely disappear with them into the bottom of the castle were no rain can reach them for they generally use a composition of clay in making the hills that forces off the wet & keeps it from penetrating into their cells if the crown of one of the hills be taken off with a spade it will appear pierced with holes like a honeycomb—these little things are armd with stings that blister & torture the skin with a pain worse than the keen nettle There is a smaller sort still of a deep black color that like the large ones have no sting I once when sitting at my dinner hour in the fields seeing a colony of the red pismires near one of these black ones tryd the experiment to see wether they woud associate with each other & as soon as I put a black one among them they began to fight with the latter after wounding his antagonist (seeming to be of inferior strength) curld up & dyd at his feet I then put a red one to the colony of the blacks which they instantly seized & tho he generaly contrivd to escape he appeard to be terribly wounded & no doubt was a cripple for life—these little creatures will raise a large tower of earth as thick as a mans arm in the form of a sugar loaf to a foot or a foot & a half high in the grain & long grass for in such places they cannot meet the sun on the ground so they raise these towers on the top of which they lay their eggs & as the grass or grain keeps growing they keep raising their towers till I have met with them as tall as ones knee

SPARROWS

3 sorts The common house Sparrow The Hedge Sparrow & Reed Sparrow often calld the fen sparrow The common sparrow is well known but not so much in a domesticated state as few people think it worth while bringing up a sparrow When I was a boy I kept a tamed cock sparrow 3 years it was so tame that it would come when calld & flew where it pleasd when I first had the sparrow I was fearful of the cat killing it so I usd to hold the bird in my hand toward her & when she attempted to smell of it I beat her she at last woud take no notice of it & I venturd to let it loose in the house they were both very shoy at each

other at first & when the sparrow venturd to chirp the cat woud brighten up as if she intended to seize it but she went no further than a look or smell at length she had kittens & when they were taken away she grew so fond of the sparrow as to attempt to caress it the sparrow was startld at first but came to by degrees & venturd so far at last [as] to perch upon her back puss would call for it when out of sight like a kitten & woud lay mice before it the same as she woud for her own young & they always livd in harmony so much the sparrow woud often take away bits of bread from under the cat's nose & even put itself in a posture of resistance when offended as if it reckoned her no more than one of its kind In winter when we coud not bear the door open to let the sparrow come out & in I was alowd to take a pane out of the window but in the spring of the third year my poor tom Sparrow for that was the name he was calld by went out & never returnd I went day after day calling out for tom & eagerly eying every sparrow on the house but none answerd the name for he woud come down in a moment to the call & perch upon my hand to be fed I gave it out that some cat which it mistook for its old favourite betrayed its confidence & destroyed it

DUCKS

Wild ducks have been known to build in our meadows—sea fowl are governd in their excursions by the wind fowlers know by the wind when they will return to our coast & when they will leave it

A beautiful black bird of the duck or diver kind was shot in the river Nen this winter with a long pheasant-like tail my friend Artis says it is very rare & calls it the scooter it is caught now & then in the Nets of fishermen & a species of this bird is eaten in lent by the Catholics who reckon it more akin to fish than flesh by the circumstance of it being taken in the nets more often than by any other means

Conks* as large as a tame goose with a longer neck & the body more slender flye in companys like wild geese & are of the same color a bluish grey but they [have]† this singular differ-

* In his catalogue of Northamptonshire birds, Clare lists 'conks' as Spanish geese. See Appendix II. † MS. has 'if.'

ence in their species a black protuberance on the top of their bills next to the head they are very common about the fens & often build their nests in the flags &c in Deeping fen when the gossaders* hunt them & set the eggs under those of the tame goose & as the young brood grows up they disable their wings & keep them for breeding to cross with the tame ones selecting a conk gander for the tame goose or a tame gander for the conks & the breed thus crossd become very hardy to stand the weather & breed earlier they generally retain their color but the black protuberance on the bill wears away & diminishes in the crossing to a speck which I believe they always retain & by which mark the gossaders know the breed

WOODPIEGONS

Our Landscape is not poetical enough I shoud suspect for the farfamd turtledove tho I hear it breeds in Kent & Essex we have nothing more than the woodpiegon here which is a very poetical object in nature both from its soft cooing voice & from its rustling rambles in the forest haze They are very shoy & nothing but a hard winter can make them bold when they leave the woods in large flocks & feed on the turnip with the sheep in spring they feed on the ivy berries of which they seem very fond as one may often hear them rustling among the old ivy-featherd dotterels & see them feeding in a greedy manner when the ploughmen begin seed time they get plenty of grain & then they begin their cooing song between that time & harvest it is a time of scarcity with them when they may be seen pecking up the young leaves of clover in a clover ground or gathering that green that covers ponds in summer calld duckmeat I believe they have no notion of feeding on the bents like the cote piegon when the harvest begins their cooing songs are resumd when they build their nests of sticks & breed—they never lay more than two eggs but they often build twice or thrice in the year the young are coverd with a golden down & tho the old ones are shoy the young ones seem bold in their ignorance & when one approaches they even put themselves in a posture of defiance & make a puffing noise & they make a pecking motion at the

* Gooseherds—a very local word.

hand that approaches to take them I had 4 tame ones & have 3 left now one having got wounded when absent from home by a gun of which wounds it dyd the others are all hen birds & have layd this summer it is said that they cannot be thoroughly tamd perhaps they cannot but I believe they might be tamd in the same way as the cote piegon for whenever mine get out they are sure to return in the evening they have often been absent 5 or 6 days & have at last sufferd themselves to be taken by the hand tho not by strangers it woud not be a bad plan to try the experiment of domesticating this bird in a cote as they are very large—I put sticks in the cage & they make a nest each helping the other & one nest serves all but not as the first left for they each pull it to pieces & build it over again they are very fond of each other & make a cooing trembling their wings & picking each others feathers with their bills I think if the cock bird had been alive they woud have bred tho the cage was much too small even for a pair for before I knew they was all hen birds I left the eggs in the cage & they broke them in flying down from the perch—they wanted to sit several days after they had laid & even now have not forgot it these birds are beautiful objects in the summer landscape not only for the sweet music of their song but from their appearance on the wing they make a startling rustle as they leave their perch from a thick bush or tree in breeding time they fly after each other in couples among the green trees & by clapping their wings in a sharp manner make a peculiar noise like the clapping of hands they like to build in old bushes about the fields were provision is in plenty or in ivy dotterels but it is mostly in hedgerows or on the margin of woods near the grain for they leave the barren solitudes & seem to prefer the endangerd plenty to scarcity

While moulding up Potatoes today I noticed a spider of very grotesque appearance its body being all over knotty as it appeard which on a closer examination I found to be a multitude of young spiders closely adhering to the body of their parent who seemd very little inconvenienced by her burthen but the moment I touchd her they all started off in different directions & the old one seeming to feel all the affections of a

parent moped about as if unable to crawl & every now & then crouchd down as if to receive them again & strange to say when danger appeared to be over a great number of the brood crawled upon her as before when she instantly became as lively as usual & ran off with her progeny

CRITICAL ESSAYS

ESSAY ON POPULARITY

Rumour and the popular voice
Some look to more than truth, and so confirm
Opinions.

CARY'S *Dante*

POPULARITY is a busy talker she catches hold of topics & offers them to fame without giving herself time to reflect wether they are true or false & fashion is her favourite deciple who sanctions & believes them as eagerly & with the same faith as a young lady in the last century read a new novel & a tavern-haunter in this reads the News it is natural with such foundations to ask wether popularity is fame for it often happens that very slender names come to be popular from many causes with which merit or genius has no sort of connection or kindred from some oddity in the manner or incident in the life of the author that is whispered about before his book comes out this often macadamized the way to popularity for gossip is a mighty spell in the literary world & a consealment of the authors name often creates it & kindles an anxiety in the public notice for it leaves room for guesses & conjectures & as some are very fond of appearing wise in such matters by saying they know from good authority that such a one is the author &c it becomes the talk of the card party & the tea table & gains a superficial notoriety such was the case with the 'Pursuits of Literature,'* a leaden-footed satire that had as much claim to merit as the statue of Pasquin in the Market-place of Rome, on which vulgar squibs were pasted everybody knew the author & nobody knew him the first names of the day

* 'Or What you will': a satirical poem (by T. J. Mathias), of which there were sixteen editions between 1794 and 1812, before it sank into deserved oblivion.

were foisted into the concern & when the secret was found out it [ ] to belong to one of the lowest & sunk to rise no more—sometimes a pompous pretending title hits the mark at once & wins a name—who among the lower orders of youth is ignorant of the 'Young Man's Best Companion' by Mr Fisher Accomptant* or the 'Book of Wisdom' by Mr Fenning Philomath† These are almost as common as bibles & Prayer-books in a cottage library—a guess is not hazarded in believing that popularity is not the omen of true fame: but it assumes such a variety of Proteus influences in its colections that it woud be a wide guess in many of its varietys to say wether it was any fame at all sometimes the trifling & the ridiculous grow into the most extensive popularity such as the share of it a man gained by wearing a wide-brimmed hat & another that cut off the tails of his coat & thereby branded his name on the remnant & tho Spencers are out of fashion they have outlived many a poetical popularity—these are instances of the ridiculous the trifling are full as extensive where is the poet who shares half the popularity of Warren Turner Day & Martin whose ebony fames are spread through every dirty little village in England—these instances of the trifling & ridiculous made as much noise & stir in their day as the best & noise & bustle are the essense & soul of popularity—the nearest akin to popularity is common fame I mean those sorts of names that are familiar among the common people It is not a very envious species for they seldom know how to value or appreciate what they are acquainted with the name of Chatterton is familiar to their ears as an unfortunate poet because they saw his history printed on pocket handkerchiefs & the name of Shakespear as a great play writer because they have often seen him nominated as such on the bills of strolling players that make shift with barns for theatres but this sort of revelry makes a corresponding idea in their minds for the paltry balladmongers whose productions supply hawkers

* *The Instructor: or Young Man's Best Companion*, by George Fisher, Accomptant (1763).

† There is no *Book of Wisdom* among the works of the prolific Daniel Fenning (fl. 1760–80). Perhaps Clare has confused it with the *Young Man's Book of Knowledge*. Fenning wrote on both education and mathematics. But it is hard to see what, besides the titles, captured for Fenning's and Fisher's books their popularity with the awakening public.

with their wares are poets with them & they imagine one as great as the other common minds making no distinctions in these common fames on the other hand there is something in it to wish for because there are things as old as England that has outlived centuries of popularity nay left half its historys in darkness & they still live on as common in every memory as the seasons & as familiar to childern even as the rain & Spring flowers—I alude to the old superstitious fragments of legends & stories in rhyme that are said to be norman & saxon &c—there is a many desires too to meet this common [fame] & it is mostly met in manners least expected While some affectations are striving for a life time to by a lye as they fancy hit all tastes & misses the mark by a wide throw an unconscious poet of little name writes a trifle as he feels without thinking of others & he becomes a common name Unaffected simplicity is the everyday picture of Nature thus little children's favourites of 'cock robin' 'little red riding hood' & Babes in the wood' have impressions at the core that grow up with manhood & are beloved on poets anxious after common fame as some of the 'naturals' seem to be imitate these things by affecting simplicity & become unnatural—These things found fame were the greatest names are still oblivious A literary man might enquire after the names of Spenser & Milton in vain in half the villages in England even among what are called its gentry but I believe it would be difficult to find a corner in any county were the others are not known nor an old woman in any hamlet with whom they are not familiar in my days some of the pieces of the modern poets have gained this common popularity which must be distinguished from fame as it may only live for a season— Words[worths] beautiful simple ballad of 'We are seven' I have seen hawked about in penny ballads & Tannahills song of 'Jessy' has met with more popularity among the common people than all other songs English & Scottish put together Lord Byrons hasty fame may be deemed a contradiction to the above opinion that popularity is not true fame though at its greatest extent it is but an exception & scarcely that for his great & hurried popularity that almost trampled on its own heels in its haste must drop to a less bustling degree & become

cool & quiet like the preaching of Irving—Shakespear was hardly noticed in his lifetime by popularity but he is known now & Byron is hardly the tenth part of a Shakespear Every storm must have its calm & Byron took fame by storm by a desperate daring he overswept petty control like a rebellious flood or a tempest worked up into madness by the quarrel of the elements & he seemed to value that daring as the attainment of true fame he looked upon Horace's 'Art of Poetry' no doubt with the esteem of a reader but he cared no more for it in the profession of a poet than the weather does for an almanack He looked upon critics as the countryman does on a magistrate he beheld them as a race of petty tyrents that stood in the way of genius they were in his eyes more of stumbling blocks than guides & he treated them accordingly he let them know there was another road to parnassus without taking theirs & being obliged to do them homage not stooping to the impediments of their authorities like the paths of a besieged city encumbered with sentinels he made a road for himself & like Napoleon crossing the Alps he let the world see that even in the eye of a mortal their greatest obstacles were looked on as 'the dust in a ballance' he gained the envied eminence of living popularity by making a breach were it was thought impregnable were others had laid siege for a lifetime & lost their hopes & their labour at last he gained the parnassus of popularity by a single stride & looked down as a freebooter on the world below scorning the applause that his labour had gained him & scarcely returning a compliment for the laurels which fashion so eagerly bound round his brows—while he saw the alarm of his leaden-footed enemies & withered them to nothings with his sneer he was an Oliver Cromwell with the critics he broke up their long-standing Parliament & placed his own will in the speaker's chair & his will they humbly accepted they submitted to one that scorned to be shackled & champed the bit in his stead they praised & respected him nay they worshiped him he was all in all in their mouths & in their writings but I suspect their hearts had as much love for him as the peasantry had for witches in the last century who spoke well of them to their faces because they dared not do otherwise for fear of meeting an injury—wether

Byron hath won true fame or not I cannot say my mind is too little to grasp that judgment to say that he was the first of his age in his way is saying nothing but we have sufficient illustration for the argument in saying that Popularity is not the forerunner of fame's eternity among all the bustle of popularity there must be only a portion of it accepted as fame time will sift it of its drossy puffs & praises & I dare say he has been with others extolled as equal to Shakespear & I dare say the 'popular voice' of 'readers' thought him superior but 3 centuries will wither every extravagance & sober the picture of its glaring colours. He is no doubt one of the eternals but he is one of those of the 19th century & if all its elements be classed together in the next they would make but a poor substitute for a Shakespear Eternity will not rake the bottom of the sea of Oblivion for puffs & praises & all their attendant rubbish the feelings that the fashion of the day created & the flatterys it uttered it will take at their own value & no other She will not even seek for the newspaper praise of Walter Scott she will not look for Byron's immortality in the company of Warren's blacking Prince's Kalydor & Atkinson's bear's grease She looks for it in his own merit & her impartial judgment will be his best reward—Wordsworth has had little share of popularity tho he bids fair to be as great in one species of poetry as Byron was in another but to acknowledge such an opinion in the world's ear would only pucker the lips of fashion into a sneer against it—yet his lack of living praise is no proof of his lack of genius—the trumpeting clamour of public praise is not to be relied on as the creditor for the future

The quiet progress of a name gaining its ground by gentle degrees in the world's esteem is the best living shadow of fame to follow—The simplest trifle & the meanest thing in nature is the same now as it shall continue to be till the world's end

Men trample grass & prize the flowers in May
But grass is green when flowers do fade away

for

ESSAY ON LANDSCAPE

There is no worse trickery of disposal of lights & shadows to catch the eye from object to object with excessive fractions of diminishings untill the eye rest upon that last pinspoint effect that makes a tree appear a mile high & the neighbouring background a mile off—these beautiful extravagances of false effects have produced such beautiful ugliness that many have clomb into fame & profit by their creations but Dewint has none of these minute gradations these atom stipplings by which beautiful effective compositions are produced but not paintings from Nature as they profess to be—Art may ply fantastic anatomy but nature is always herself in her wildest moods of extravagance—Arts penalty is a beautiful vagary a vision a romance—& like the moral pictures of nature in books we look about us & cannot find anything like them elsewhere—Dewint is none of these Artists look at his sketches his studies there is the simplest touches possible giving the most natural possible effects the eye is led over the Landscape as far as a sunbeam can reach & the sky & earth blends into a humanity of greetings & beautiful harmony & symetry of pleasant imaginings—There is no harsh stoppage no bounds to space or any outline further then there is in nature—if we could possibly walk into the picture we fancy we might pursue the landscape beyond those mysterys (not bounds) assigned it so as we can in the fields—so natural & harmonious are his perceptions & tints & lights & shadows

Look at them they are the very copys of nature—& she rewards the faith of her worshippers by revealing such beautys in her settings that the fanciful never meet with—tho they imagine mountains & rivers & rocks & cateracts where they are not—& so they are strange to the eye & harmony of beautys perceptions—not so the worshiper of nature—she gives him her own imagings & he makes the best use of them by reflections as true & as light as a rushy common with its summer tract of a brook & old dotterel trees becomes a Paradise which the lovers of truth & nature muse over & are thankful for the gratification —& such are the landscape of Dewint & the living pastorals of

Rippingille for Rippingille is the Theocritus of English painting —there they are as true as if nature had just left them & none of the ridiculous imaginings of fashion hung about them—the dewy morning is not more fresh in her features than the air & the sky & the very grass of the pastures—tis summer the very air breathes hot in ones face we see nothing but natural objects not placed for effect or set off by other dictates of the painters fancys but there they are just as nature placed them—& as long as nature exists will the merits of their labours grow into familiar excellence & increase in value & in fame

The only artist that produces real English scenery in which British landscapes are seen & felt upon paper with all their poetry & exillerating expression of beauty about them is Dewint & the only British painter perhaps that passes the yearly exehibition with a passing notice & no praise but his excellence will not always be hidden—admirers of nature will admire his paintings—for they are her autographs & not a painters studys from the antique

There are no mountains lifting up the very plains with their extravagant altitudes no old ruins with their worn & mossy claptrap for effect but simple woods spreading their quiet draperys to the summer sky & undiversified plains bask in the poetry of light & sunshine so void of all trick & effect & so true to nature that they make as interesting compositions as if the artist had studied in Italy & far more interesting to English truth than English creations

There is a fashionable accomplishment in this day which may be called taste trimming this mannerism is according to the fancy of the artist & most to be seen in the drawing of trees & other landscape appendages you may know several artists by the style of their trees some trim them as uniform & regulars & every tree is the facsimile of its fellow they are dressed to the fashion of the artist exactly as a barber dresses a wig another puts his objects in stays & narrows the high & mossy trunk of a timber tree into a dandy prototype of a Barber's pole dimensions Others make gnarled & knotched & broken trunks with a witherd bough & a green one throwing their curled arms half over the landscape & this serves for every picture in which trees

are introduced & becomes the style of the artist—the characters of trees have never been closely attended to—the green draperys of a sunny forest astonish the observer with their harmony & diversity of green yet when we look upon paintings we see nothing but an uniformity

To see a painter who excells others in his simplicity of merit or in the naked excellence of his power we must not go to Somerset House or Suffolk Street or to the water color or other exehibitions beautiful as these are for there we see them touched up to the very acme of effect & almost as transparent as a looking glass as if they doubled their own reflections—this is to please the taste & the fashion of the day where even Hilton & Etty & Rippingille & Dewint powerful as their pencils are must sacrifice something of their own taste to the taste of the public & it is a very good thing to warn spectators against touching the pictures or they woud by the multiplicity of opinions soon share the fate of the painters masterpiece—who striving to please all the world placed it in the market place for the correction of the crowd who to his astonishment found fault with every excellence & made a perfect blank of his labours—thus it is that real excellence must be its own creation it must be the overflowings of its own mind & must *make* its admirers willing converts from its own powerful consceptions & not yield to win them by giving way to their opinions of excellence which turns out in time to be nothing more than mere importers of fashions mysterys of pretentions These abortions sullied the powers of the greatest artists that ever honoured a country with their labours & their truth '& it is the pride of England to own & posses them as it was the pride of fashion to criticize & torment them—

These two Gadflyes introduced all the incongruous & unnatural deformitys that sully the unfading excellence of the best landscape painters of the land—the out of the way & tasteless absurditys of the past century remain in the most awkward deformity in the face of our sweetest landscapes & tho touched off with all the graces of Art & Genius they appear as ill suiting to the creations they are mixed with as a ladys sampler with its flaming features would in a company of Paintings—

Genius was forced into these abortions & with all its power it was not able to disguise them in drapery sufficient to hide their deformitys—& so it is that we see the most natural reflection of scenery crowded with groups of satyrs & fawns & naiads & dryads & a whole catalogue of the vampire unaccountables dancing about in ridiculous situations round modern fishponds & immence temples in the Grecian style but no longer than a goose quill—& mown pleasure grounds kept as smooth & as orderly as a turkey carpet but are these the proper place for the introduction of ancient mythology or anywhere else in a painting for they are the creations of the Poets fancys & not the painters realitys like the hand that wrote the mystery on the wall we see it in our imagination but in a picture it cannot be represented for it is a mystery & not a reality which is the only cause of its terror & sublimity the very clouds were not out of the reach of these patronizing deformers—so they are loaded with fiddling Gods & gossiping Goddesses holding their starry conversations more in the character of modern teacher-masters than any inhabitants of heaven

There are other ridiculous situations oft to be found in modern fancy Landscapes where we often meet a group of cattle indiscrimatly intermixed just as they fancied not as they found them thus cows horses & sheep are scened cooling themselves in a pool which is out of nature for sheep were never seen in that situation since Noahs flood unless forced in for they have a great aversion to water & will seldom cross the smallest brook without some difficulty & they are seldom seen to drink except in the height of summer unless they meet with water by accident—so much for fancy pictures & their unnatural extras—yet when nature dreams herself into extravagant vagaries & fancy pictures they are always beautiful fancys & who hath not seen some of these vagaries on beholding a Forrest cloaked in the magic foliage of a snowstorm—while walking in the fields in winter when the snow hung in light fairey shadows upon every tree & bush & tiny stalk of witherd herbage—what beautiful bits of effective landscape hang about the skirts of a forrest with its shelterd cowsheds underneath its magnificent branches glows like a scene of faireyland—or a rural picture of enchantment with its pendant branches—its picturesque cattle

—their hovel & haystack—& the foddering boy all attired in the brilliancy of a snowstorm like some supernatural prospect just stept out of the Arabian Nights Entertainment*

for
ESSAY ON MONEY CATCHING
OR COMMON HONESTY

I challenge you to say black to the white of my eye—SMOLLET

As it is the fashion for cunning to dissemble & to appear what it is not—to be fashionable therefore is to be a hypocrite successfully which is putting out pretention at self interest—as the Actor when he appears on the stage to do his best as successfully as possible hides himself behind it as much as he can & the more he contrives to cheat his audience in this way the more he is applauded—tis just so with the world at this time—if a man would live & be successful in life he is told not to be honest at all times or speak the truth at all times but he must act just as chances give him the oppertunity Yet cunning always whispers him to have an appearance of religion in his acting wether he is so or not—no matter if he tryes to appear so—little matters will be winked at & his character is unimpeachable but if ever he suffers his conscience or his honesty to stand in the way of his self-interest he is considerd nothing but a fool & instead of merely praise will receive nothing but contempt for his pains—that is with the knave & the hypocrite—consistancy is not looked [on] as the way to preferment—for that is a merit & the only one that the stubbornly rebellious humour of the spirit of evil is alowed to possess—& it is not at all consistent with pretention to take any pattern from so black a subject—little delinquencys are lookd over as objectionables & nesesary evils good badnesses & profitable lackadiasicals should-not-does & cannot-helps—self interest covers a multitude of sins—tis but a winter frost preparing & mellowing the soil of practical economy for a luscious summer crop

Our beautiful religion has fallen into the general disregard of superficial observers who consider that it teaches an impossible

* Unfinished.

doctrine of life—its divine creation was a fountain outflowing for the benefit of all but self-interest choaked its channels & walled up its fountain head into a sanctum of mystery & benefit for the few—still the fountain is pure—let the waters of life grow muddy by the way & people who drink thereof are less endued with inspirations of goodness & doing good than with the enquirey of meddlings & mischief—

There is a kingdom somewhere in the unlimited bounds of Affrica on the never-ceasing records of travellers where the people try all the means in their power to live well by acting badly—from the king on the throne to the meanest subject all pursue this method & he who is the most accomplished hypocrite to hide his intentions under his profession is the most accomplished courtier & scholar & is sure of a golden harvest as the reward of his merits—They talk about virtues & morality & honesty as a talkable assumption & act the reverse in everything—When a young parson first mounts the pulpit he is considered to have a very large share of wisdom in desception if he can utter his text without a smile & preach upon any topic of virtue & morality without laughing for the congregation are constantly on the titter when such jokes are mentiond for they consider them nothing more than old-fashioned & antiquated truths & would be as much ashamed to treat them in a serious way as the ladies would be to appear in ruffled cuffs & starched bibs & hooped petticoats—a gentleman of this country got the highest name for learning & the highest preferment for it by writing a most bulky treatise which he styled Mathematical Perfections—to prove that the old axiom of considering that cyphers placed on the left hand of figures amounted to nothing by contending that they did encrease the number by quantity & quality tho the latter was minus to the former as plus to nothing & to prove which he produced a universal Theorem filling many crowded pages with nothings to prove nothing in which he succeeded so satisfactorily as to win schools of converts to his systems & the whole country as followers of his doctrines—& another great man won the title of the Philosopher of Life by writing a treatise on the art of canting by which he showed the way to wealth & preferment—the knowledge & the cunning tho superficial in truth always wears a greater consequence of

opinion then those whose learning is solid & whose intentions is honest—like as the shadow of a man when cast upon a mist extends into a giant even at noonday when in reality it would be no longer than an infant—yet now we are on such a subject it were an excellent thing for us all to begin with—that when we see error committed by others not only to reprove them or to advise better but to look into ourselves & correct our own lest by over-officiousness about others actions we get carless of ourselves & unwittingly make the same mistake in doing likewise*

for

ESSAY ON CRITICISM & FASHION

None need be supprised to see these two false prophets in partnership or conjunction for an Essay as they may be called brothers for the one attests what it pleases & the other takes it for granted it is grown a sort of book milliner who cuts a book to any pattern of abuse or praise & Fashion readily wears the opinion what a many productions whose milk & water merits or unintelligable stupidity have been considered as novelties have by that means gained the admiration of Criticism & the praise of Fashion untill a more absurd novelty pushed them from their preferments & caused them to be as suddenly forgotten—the vulgar tasteless jargon of 'Dr Syntax'† with all the above mentioned excellencies to excite public notice from the Butterflys of literary Fashion soon found what it sought tho some of the plates possess the disadvantageous merit of being good yet the letter-press doubly made up for all for it was prose trebly prosified into wire-drawn doggerel & consequently met with a publicity or sale unprecedented Edition multiplied on edition till it was found needless to number the title-page & it was only necessary to say 'A New Edition' while the poems of Wordsworth scarcely found admirers enough to ensure a second edition What will the admirers of poetry in the next age think of the taste of this which has been called 'The Golden Age of criticism taste & genius‡

* Unfinished.

† William Combe wrote many books of popular history and travel, including *Life of Napoleon* (1815) and *Wars of Wellington* (1819).

‡ Scraps for other essays intervene between this paragraph and the next—MS.

Fashion is like a new book 'elegantly bound & lettered'— it cannot endure dust & cobwebs but true criticism is like a newly-planted Laurel it thrives with age & gathers strength with antiquity till it becomes a spreading tree & shelters the objects of its praise under its shadow

Just Criticism is a stern but laudable prophet & time & truth are the only disciples who can discern & appreciate his predictions & these touchstones fashionable pretentions with all her mob of public applause cannot pass but shrinketh into insignificance & silent nothingness from their just derision like shadows from a sunbeam & true merit at its eulogys 'grows with its grow[th] strengthens with his strength' & meets at last the honours & glorys of a protracted renown like the unexpected fulfilment of a prophecy

FRAGMENTS

RECIPE FOR INK

Take three ounces of bruised Nut galls put into a pint & a half of rain water let it stand for three days then put in One ounce & a half of Green Coppurs & a piece of Stone blue & shake it up every day & it is fit for use

Truth is the integrity of action not the correctness of speaking for the first is the spirit & practice of truth & the second only the preperation & theory which like the title of a book often leads us to expect more than we meet with

It cannot be said to be a great resolve when people resolve to do as well as the many & not a very great merit if they succeed in doing better than the many but it is a noble ambition to aspire too & a nobler merit to achieve in doing as well as the few

No man should suffer fame to eat up his excellence & lie fallow to listen to the music of her melody when a man grows proud of his abilities & lies dormant fame is his creditor to whom he becomes bankrupt

Night like a feeling mother attends to nature with universal tenderness she throws a veil of darkness over sorrow & compassionates in its distresses to hide its anguish from the levity of unfeeling folly it indulges the lovers with a secret hiding place on her bosom where they may enjoy their innoscent

discoursage uninterrupted by the meddlings of envy—for true love is timid & like the nightingale ever retreats from the approaches of a thoughtless crowd

Though perpetual argument assures us that there is nothing like perfection either in creeds or government or anything of worldly wisdom—yet we should neither expect it nor be particular about it the way to heaven is a direct road & we have little to do with the turnings for like the bye roads from a turnpike they lead to private possessions & private interests & have little to do with our objections & nothing with our interests for eternity—a true lover of a library cares little about the dress of the books & the appearance of the bookcase

My creed may be different from other creeds but the difference is nothing when the end is the same—if I did not expect & hope for eternal happiness I should be ever miserable & as every religion is a rule leading to good by its professor the religions of all nations & creeds where that end is the aim ought rather to be respected than scoffed at—a final judgment of men by their deeds & actions in life is inevitable & the only difference between an earthly assize & a heavenly one is that the final one needs no counsellors to paint the bad or good better or worse than they are the Judge knows the hearts of all men & the sentence may be expected to be just as well as final wether it be for the worst or the best—this ought to teach us to pause & think & try to lead our lives as well as we can

FOR ESSAY ON MOCK MODESTY AND MORALS

Some people are very fond of being troublesome at home to their friends in observing or pretending to observe an over strict adherence to virtue & morality when they have never been known as very great observers of it elsewere this often makes a hearer distrust himself & fancy their lecture is personally applied & they do not know at the same time that those who

preach up such excess of morality & never allow it in practice in their actions only set themselves down as *lyars*

FOR ESSAY ON INDUSTRY

Industry being the disciple of thrift a many restless people would fain believe themselves industrious when they are not for industrious people are contented & pursue those avocations only by which they are sure to live but the restless & discontented person pursues a many unnecessary avocations by which at best he only hopes to thrive not caring to be sure of living first

The lower orders of England from their almost total disregard of Poesy have been judged rather too harshly as destitute of the finer feelings of humanity & taste & it is a paradox yearly witnessd of the apparent apathy & unconcern with which they witness the tragedy of death displaying farces as seemingly happy as on a holiday excursion yet these very people will stand around an old ballad singer & with all the romantic enthusiasm of pity shed tears over the doggerel tales of imaginary distress

Many of the best productions of this age are among the fanciful in poetry beautiful incongruities of the imagination not bearing the likeness of anything that is on the earth & therefore may they be stiled 'handsome pieces of deformity'

I look upon Cobbett as one of the most powerful prose writers of the day—with no principles to make those powers commendable to honest praise—the Letters to farmers contain some very sensible arguments & some things that appeared to be too much of party colouring—there is no medicine in party matters where there is excess it is always on one side—& that is the worst of it—I am no politician but I think a reform is wanted—not the reform of the mob were the bettering of the many is only an apology for improving the few—nor the reform of partys where the benefit of one is the destruction of the other but a reform that woud do good & hurt none I am sorry to see that the wild notions of public spouters always keep this reform

out of sight—& as extreams must be met by extreams—the good is always lost like a plentiful harvest in bad weather—mobs never were remembered for a good action but I am sorry to see it now & then verging into the middle classes of society whose knowledge ought to teach them commonsense & humanity for if they have it they never let it get into their speeches

A person may be very clever at detecting faults in composition & yet in the writing of it may be a mere cypher himself & one that can do nothing

Such a one as Cobbett who has come forward & not only assailed the outworks of such a pedantic garrison but like a skillful general laid open its weakness to all deserves more praise for the use of his labour than all the rest of the castle hunting grammarians put together for he plainly comes to this conclusion—that whatever is intelligible to others is grammar & whatever is common sense is not far from carrectness

There has been more words used & criticism exhausted in the settlement of what is poetry & what should be poetry in the arguments of opinions urged & in the explanations of opinions refuted than has been hurled upon refutations & arguments of political matters . . . for it were always an easier task to say what is not excellent than to produce what is

Since the days of Milton we have often had weary samples of sermons in rhyme from good pious men who mistook their good intentions for poetical inspiration—it was not the subject that made Milton immortal but the halos which his genius cast around it—if anyone was to render Paradise Lost into prose he would find many incongruitys the framer of a sermon would never mention gunpowder as an ingredient in the battles of the angels—the splendour of true poetry like the spots in the sun renders faults indiscernable

I have just finished reading the works of Pope & I am astonished at the false position of criticism & taste that I have read about him where it was even doubted by some wether they should call him a poet or no poet at all—if he is no poet where

are we to look for one he has written a great deal of verse & it appears to me to be uniformly excellent & therefore I should not only contend that he is a poet but a great poet & his uniform excellence I should say has been one of the reasons that has contributed to the false taste & false criticisms about him—There is few or no shadows in his sunshine everything seems written well & when he writes better than well there being no foil to set off the beauty no shadow to throw out the light readers do not see them & not giving themselves the trouble to look further they set him down in their doubts & not in their understanding as a doubtful writer & not a Poet—thus I think comes the absurditys that we see constantly springing up among the weeds of criticism—at least I know not otherwise to account for it—it is to me an unaccountable folly—as to the foolery of 'indoor' & 'outdoor' nature its not worth the notice of an argument What is good of each is good of both nature is not two persons but one & the same

KEATS

He keeps up a constant alusion or illusion to the grecian mythology & there I cannot follow—yet when he speaks of woods Dryads & Fawns are sure to follow & the brook looks alone without her naiads to his mind yet the frequency of such classical accompaniment make it wearisome to the reader where behind every rose bush he looks for a Venus & under every laurel a thrumming Appollo—In spite of all this his descriptions of scenery are often very fine but as it is the case with other inhabitants of great cities he often described nature as she appeared to his fancies & not as he would have described her had he witnessed the things he describes—Thus it is he has often undergone the stigma of Cockneyism & what appears as beautys in the eyes of a pent-up citizen are looked upon as consciets by those who live in the country—these are merely errors but even here they are merely the errors of poetry—he is often mystical but such poetical liscences have been looked on as beauties in Wordsworth & Shelley & in Keats they may be forgiven

BYRON

He had an ambition of attaining popularity either at discount

or interest he was singular in his genius by sporting with subjects that time has rendered so sacred as to become the universal hopes of all human existences to him they appeared as the common infirmitys of earthly fancys—universal doubts & visions of unrealizing happiness—he won the applause of popularity less by his sterling merit as a poet then by his odditys as a man—he set as little store by his heritage as Esau & squandered it away for only a trifle more than the Hebrew's pottage—he preferred foreign lands to the spot of his nativity he equipped himself in the arms of a soldier & was lauded as a hero of Greece tho he merely appeared as the actor on a stage in that character having achieved nothing more by the profession of arms than effect & applause for the intention when the intention appears to be the utmost extent of his ambition—wounds & scars belong to the hard-earned reputation of the professors of arms & not to an ornamented shield or a laurel crown—these appear to be his infirmitys—& these are but as spots in the sun—his merit & his excellencies outshine them & make them of less consequence then shadows—his powers are beyond my pen & I shall not venture to praise them—the sun does not want the light of a lamp or a candle to show it glory —he carolled among the immortals & shines as the jewel in the crown of modern literature

I have used the Critics prerogative of faultfinding with as light a hand as possible & his ingenious depredations of cutting up & desultory warfare I have passed bye as a lover of peace for to oppress & injure seems to be a perfect acquisition among mankind soon learnt & never forgotten but to show mercy & pardon is so imperfectly learned & so seldom practised that it seems to await the end of time for its perfection as being one of the attributes of the deity where universal power & universal mercy will be splendid associates with eternity

As we grow into life we leave our better life behind us like the image of a beauty seen in a looking glass happiness only dissemminates happiness while she is present & when she is gone we retain no impression of her enjoyments but a blank of cold imaginings & real dissapointments—unless we are deter-

mined to shape our conduct to her approval & then she is ever with us not her picture but her perfection not in shadow but reality—read this over again & profit

FOR ESSAY ON FALSE APPEARANCES

I read history & am astonished at the lesson it gives of the vanitys of pride pomp & power—mind alone is the sun of earth —it lives on when the clouds & paraphernalia of pretensions are forgotten

FROM 'THE TWO SOLDIERS'

There was a small stream went bending in roundabout mazes across the forest & now & then interupted by a sallow bush that longing to kiss the water had bent its mossy fringed & shaggy rooted branches not only over but into the flood & from these interruptions & the broken down pathways of stones laid by rustics for the benefit of nearer way the waters broke their silence into the beautiful murmuring music that one often hears approaching these picturesque rivulets & suddenly lose when we leave their banks—something like the fits & gushes of an eolian harp—here the two girls enjoyed the luxury of drinking the clear water from their white hands—where is the lover who adores beauty that would not have preferred such a necessity to the golden goblet of the splendid banquet & even the nectar cup of Apollo

The spring of our life—our youth—is the midsummer of our happiness—our pleasures are then real & heart stirring—they are but associations afterwards—where we laughed in childhood at the reality of the enjoyment felt we only smile in manhood at the recollections of those enjoyments they are then but the reflections of past happiness & have no more to do with happiness in the reality than the image of a beautiful girl seen in a looking-glass has in comparison with the original—our minds only retain the resemblance the glass is as blank after her departure—we only feel the joy we possessed

With the mob freedom & plunder are synonymous

. . . . .

People who have little reflection look upon no remedy better than force

This class complain of poverty but show no appearance of it while the other is so destitute that one wonders they should have been silent so long

I feel a beautiful providence ever about me as my attendant deity she casts her mantle about me when I am in trouble to shield me from it She attends me like a nurse when I am in sickness puts her gentle hand under my head to lift it out of pains way & lays it easy by laying hope on my pillow she attends to my every weakness when I am doubting like a friend* & keeps me from sorrow by showing me her pictures of happiness & then offering them—She places herself in the shadow that I may enjoy to my service the sunshine & when my faith is sinking into despondency she opens her mind as a teacher to show me truth & give me wisdom

We know that the world was made & we know its architect from no other book but the bible—but being a part of the architecture ourselves we cannot go to comprehend the whole—we know but little about the materials of which we ourselves are a portion although new theories may entertain us by their novelty—they seldom lead us to the truth

Avoid multiplicity of business for its like a ravelled skein of thread & you will loose in perplexity what you begin in haste Be not over multiferous in your designs—great designs require great consideration & time must mature them or they will prove trifling & like the mountain in labour after much noise & pretention bring forth a mouse

Be not righteous over much—the enthusiasts often give us their own fanatical absurditys for gospel & condemn every-body's religion but their own—these people think as familiar of the Deity as a man would of his children & a master of his

* May be 'fiend'—MS. But this alters the sense. And 'fiend' is not a word Clare would be likely to use.

servants—& as Warburton says they make God after man's image & chuse the worst models they can find—themselves

I think it is Franklin who says that philosophers are sages in their maxims & fools in their conduct but this is an everyday fact consonant with maxims—that human nature is ever capable of improvement & never able of being made perfect

Pleasures are of two kinds—one arises from cultivation of the mind & is enjoyed only by the few—& this is the most lasting & least liable to change—the more common pleasures are found by the many like beautiful weeds in a wilderness they are of natural growth & though very beautiful to the eye are only annuals—these may be called the pleasures of the passions & belong only to the different stages of our existence

Of all the different sects that differ from church going give me for humility & meekness the quakers the primitive quakers not the hard featured phisionomy of worldly cunning which we often encounter peeping under a colourless coat & creeping from under a large broad brimmed hat

I dont see why any man is to be laughed at for the opinions he entertains of his faith any more then another for other opinions equally absurd—the poor Indian may be allowed the exercise of his harmless faith if it be harmless—& in seeking salvation eat his roasted cuckoo & his cowdung & pinch his cow tails in peace till he be found out—& the Mahometan indulge in the efficacy of Mahomet's shirt without interruptions & the poor Catholic enjoy the superstitions of modern enthusiasts as divine revelations in the leisure of his own ignorance if in that place he find comfort let him find it—commonsense or the right use of reason will wear out these delusions but persecutions only augment them—therefore if reason & commonsense cannot convert them from harmless superstitions she will not oppress them

A religion that teaches us to act justly to speak truth & love mercy ought to be held sacred in every country & whatever the differences of creeds may be in lighter matters they ought to be overturned & the grand principles respected

. . . . .

Many books are written to make people read the best are written to force them to think

Blake was brave by instinct & honest by choice

Taste is a uniformity of excellence—it modifys expression & selects images—it arranges & orders matters of thought—but genius creates them

An honest man finds no enemies because he fears none a bad man makes enemies where he has none because he fears them

He who seeks wisdom without first seeking self-knowledge tries to read before he knows his letters & so looses his way—for whoever is desirous of finishing a purpose must first determine to begin it—the rambles of a man after wisdom without knowing himself first is vanity & his attempts presumptuous—wisdom declines his affection & is deaf to his entreaties—but the man who first seeks self knowledge enters her temple by his own right

Modern prophets are very unfashionable & the fact seems to be that modern writers are too fond of fame to take to prophecy by stinting it within the fruits of their own lives

War has ever been the watchword of political intriguers & religion but too often as the professional bottle-holders on each side to encourage the combat

The world with all its fascinations would become by time the most gloomy prison if death did not bring us the means of escaping from it

Deception is universal & a weed in every climate

When we become disabled pensioners from our follys we look to God for a bounty

. . . . .

No one knows what he can bear till he is tried & no one knows what he can do till he tries

Fix your character & keep it wether alone or in company is the maxim of an ancient philosopher & there is nothing more injurious to a person's success in life as a wavering disposition as to how he shall act & what he shall follow—what you wisely propose stick to it—fear to break the resolution as you would to break an oath or do a crime

If a man would know what the world ought to be let him read books if he wishes to know what the world is he must read men

The best way to avoid a bad action is by doing a good one for there is no difficulty in the world like that of trying to do nothing

A SPEECH FROM 'THE BONE & CLEAVER CLUB'

'Now to please everybody Mr. President we must act justly to nobody—thats truth we must praise the church to the parson Mr. President & abuse it to the parishoners we must speak well of justice & belie it in our actions Mr. P. thats fact we must miscall magistrates wise men to their faces Mr. P. & knaves to our neighbours Mr. P. thats truth we must go to church with farmer Folly to be good & get an hours sleep in the pew only contriving to waken to sing Amen with the clerk in the prayer for the royal family Only go to church Mr. P. thats all go to church wait in the porch to make a bow to the priest & praise his dull sermon Mr. P. thats truth Then go home & drink to the abolition of English slavery (applause) tithes parsons & taxes in the company of radicals & then we stand in the praise of all Mr. P. as good men good subjects & good everythings thats truth Mr. P. Cant humbug & hypocrisy are the three-in-one grand principles of this age Mr. P. thats truth if you would be upright you must suffer buffets from one party or the other Mr. P. thats truth—& whats the use? if we decline opinions we are insinuators if we give opinions we are enemies to our country or infidels to religion if we decline to praise ministers we are

traitors Mr. P. thats fact & whats the use of it If we fancy patriots bribe-fishers the mob worrys us for Government men Mr. P. thats fact & whats the use of it If we say parsons have great sallaries Mr. P. we are deists & devils & worse & whats the use Mr. P. But if we say these things as opportunity offers we are saints Mr. P. aye—everything Mr. P. very Caesars Mr. P. fit for one of the oracles of family devotion & public worship Mr. P. a very saint a downright saint & only inferior to a red letter saint in the almanack & a stone & mortar saint in the church thats fact Mr. P. Cant & hypocrisy are the grand necessitys of the world & theres no help for it Mr. P. thats fact—And now for a song!

THE DREAM

Last night Oct 13 1832* I had a remarkable dream that Guardian spirit in the shape of a soul stirring beauty again appeared to me with the very same countanance in which she appeared many years ago & in which she has since appeared at intervals & moved my ideas into exstacy—I cannot doubt her existence—I thought I was in a strange place & in a rather fine room among strange people yet the host who appeared so paid me much attention & kindness yet I was in low spirits & in despondency when on a sudden a lovely creature in the shape of a young woman with dark & rather disordered hair & eyes that spoke more beauty than earth inherits came up to me in a familiar way & leaning her witching face over my shoulder spoke in a witching voice & cherishing smiles sentences that I cannot reccolect yet I instantly knew her face & the reccolection of her appearance in former dreams came vivid in sleep The first dream in which she appeared to me was when I had not written a line—I thought she suddenly came to my old house led me out in a hurried manner—into the field called Maple hill & there placed me on the top where I could see an immense crowd all around me in the north west quarter of the field towards Hilly wood & Swordy well appeared soldiers on horseback moving in evolutions of exercise & the rest were crowds of various description on foot as at a great fair where ladies in splendid dresses were most numerous but the finest lady in my own heart's opinion was the lady at my side—I felt shamed into insignificance at the sight & seemed to ask her from my own thoughts why I had been so suddenly brought into such immense company when my only life & care was being alone & to myself—you are the only one of the crowd now she

* Cf. 'The Dream' and 'The Nightmare', *Collected Poems*.

said & hurried me back & the scene turned to a city where she led me to what appeared to be a booksellers shop where I reluctantly followed she said something to the owner of the place who stood behind a counter when he smiled & at his back on a shelf among a vast crowd of books were three vols lettered with my own name—I see them now I was very astonished & turning to look in her face I was awake in a moment but the impression never left me I see her still she is my good genius & I believe in her ideally almost as fresh as reality—

many years after this I dreamed I was in the long close it seemed morning where all the people in the village seemed passing by me in one mind northward toward the west end—I felt anxious to know their purpose but they were all silent both in look & speech The sun seemed of a pale moonstruck light—the sky had a dull unnatural hue & a sudden conviction struck me that all were called to judgment so I instantly followed with the rest feeling great depressions & rather uneasiness of mind The crowd went on to the church yard & then into the church as soon as I entered the gates I heard a loud humming as of the undertones of an organ & felt so affraid that before I got opposite to the school door I shrunk back & felt a wish to return to my reccolections of home & at that moment something of a delightful impulse took me by the arm & led me forward—I see the yellow grave stone which I stood opposite when she came to my side just at the school door—I looked sideways for hope & fear—she was in white garments beautifully disordered but sorrowful in her countenance yet I instantly knew her face again—when we got into the church a light streamed in one corner of the chancel & from that light appeared to come the final decision of man's actions in life I felt awfully afraid tho not terrified & in a moment my name was called from the north east corner of the chancel when my conductress smiled in exstacy & uttered something as prophetic of happiness I knew all was right & she led me again into the open air when I imperceivably awoke to the sound of soft music —I felt delighted & sorrowful & talked to her awake for a moment as if she was still bending over me—these dreams of a beautiful presence a woman deity gave the sublimest consceptions of beauty to my imagination & being last night with

the same presence—the lady divinity left such a vivid picture of her visits in my sleep dreaming of dreams that I could no longer doubt her existence so I wrote them down to prolong the happiness of my faith in believing her my guardian genius —the cause I cannot tell the fact is truth if so be it may be said of dreams

EXCURSION WITH 'THE ANGLER'

I HAVE been having a weeks delightful Excursion with some delightful company the latchets of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose & yet were they very civil to me & seemed quite at home with my rudeness who were they think you why no less in honour then the Exelent Angler & Poet Izaak Walton & his illustrious apostles of the Muse Sir Henry Wooton Sir Walter Raleigh Dr. Donne Charles Cotton Mr. George Herbert Mr. Richard Hooker & a young enthusiast in Angling whom the venerable father of Angling was pleased to call Venator from his love of the gentle art 'All honourable men in their generations' trust me we had a sweet pastime of it their talk & mirth was edifying Mr. Herbert plukt a wild rose & utterd a moral on beauty in these sweet sounds

Sweet Rose whose hue angry & brave
Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye
Thy root is ever in its grave
& thou must die

& venerable Izaak as he dropt himself down on a green bank beside a busy stream utterd a wish in the shape of a delicious Poem one part of it was

On that bank feel the west wind
Breathe health & plenty please my mind
To see sweet dewdrops kiss these flowers
& then washed off by April showers
Here hear my Kenna sing a song
There see a blackbird feed her young
Or a leverock build her nest
Here give my weary spirits rest
& raise my low pitcht thoughts above

Earth or what poor mortals love
Thus free from lawsuits & the noise
Of princes courts I would rejoice

Waltons disciple hath put it all down with a pencil from his masters utterance to delight us another day Sir Henry Wooton burst out into a Rhapsody of sweet sounds

Fame honour beauty state brains blood & birth
Are but the fading blossoms of the earth . . .
This day Dame nature seems in love . . .

Sir Walter Raleigh quoted some sweet lines as did Dr Donne & Charles Cotton between a sigh & a smile utterd a delivious melody which he began

Farewell thou busy world & may
We never meet again

& I the meanest of them all utterd a wish in the verses of another for the company would make a man a poet

Here might I master of a little flock
Feed my poor lambs & often change their fare
My lovely mate should change my sparing stock
I nurse my little ones with pleasing care
Whose love & look shall speak their father plain
Health be my feast heaven hope content my gain
So in my little house my lesser hearth shall reign

Just as I had done a terrible confusion of mirth & melody struck up on the other side of the stream beneath a woodbine hedge & we discovered it was a nest of Gipseys singing Frank Davisons Song of the Beggars in chorus Play beggars play &c & there they kept noising away till a sudden sprinkling shower made us leave our angles & seek shelter under a sycamore tree where a haymaking maiden & her mother had sought shelter too before us & good old Isaak ever for mirth besought the damsel to sing for the sweetness of her face betokend the sweetness of her voice & she instantly from a look of her mother pulled the hayshock closer about her to keep out the rain & sang that sweetest of Melodys made by Kit Marlow some years

since in sooth it was sweetness overdone & my heart & I daresay the hearts of us all were not in the right place for a day or two after her music had charmed the sun from his hiding place of cloud after chatting away the shower we besought our angles gathered up the fish from the wet grass & betook us to a tavern where we spent the night in mirth & memory of the day but the delicious Izaak took pen & paper & put it down much better than I can either write or repeat

SELF-IDENTITY

FEN DESCRIPTION—AUTUMN

THE JOURNEY FROM ESSEX

1841

AND

LATER FRAGMENTS

SELF-IDENTITY

A VERY good commonplace counsel is *Self-Identity* to bid our own hearts not to forget our own selves & always to keep self in the first place lest all the world who always keeps us behind it should forget us altogether—forget not thyself & the world will not forget thee—forget thyself & the world will willingly forget thee till thou art nothing but a living-dead man dwelling among shadows & falsehood

The mother may forget her child
That dandled on her lap has been
The bridegroom may forget the bride
That he was wedded to yestreen

But I cannot forget that I'm a man & it would be dishonest & unmanly in me to do so

Self-Identity is one of the finest principles in everybody's life & fills up the outline of honest truth in the decision of character—a person who denies himself must either be a madman or a coward

I am often troubled at times to know that should the world have the impudence not to know me but willingly forgetting me wether any single individual would be honest enough to know me—such people would be usefull as the knocker to a door or the Bell to a cryer to own the dead alive or the lost found there are two impossibillitys that can never happen—I shall never be in three places at once nor ever change to a woman & that ought to be some comfort amid this moral or immoral 'changing' in life—truth has a bad herald when she is obliged to take lies for her trumpeters—surely every man has the liberty to know himself

Tis Liberty alone that gives the flower
Of fleeting life its lustre & perfume
& we are weeds without it

FEN DESCRIPTION—AUTUMN

AUTUMN hath commenced her short pauses of showérs calms & storms & shadow & with all her bustle she is nothing but a short preface before a large volume of 'Winter' though not yet come to drive us to the fireside He is giving us daily notice by dirty paths brimming dykes & naked fields that he is already on the way—it is now very pleasant to take walks in the morning in fact at any time of the day though the mornings are misty & the 'foggy dew' lies long on the grass—here is a drive leading us on its level sward right into the flaggy fens shaded on each side with whitethorn hedges covered with awes of different shades of red some may almost be called red-black others brick red & others nearly scarlet like the coats of the fox hunters—now we have a flaggy ditch to stride which is almost too wide for a stride to get over—a run & jump just lands on the other side & now a fine level bank smooth as a bowling green curves & serpentines by a fine river whose wood of osiers & reeds make a pleasant rustling sound though the wind scarcely moves a single branch—how beautiful the bank curves on like an ornament in a lawn by a piece of water the map of ploughed fields & grass ground in small alotments on the left hand with an odd white cottage peeping somewhere between the thorn hedges is the very perfection of quiet retirement & comfort & on the right hand the clear river with its copses of reeds & oziers & willow thickets & now & then a house peeping through where the willows are not so thick & showing trees loaded with apples & too thick for lodges shows we are near the approach of a town of age now the church spire looking [of] rather large dimensions catches the eye like a giant overtopping trees & houses & showing us his magnitude from half way up the tower to the weather cock & looks noble above his willow woods nothing

looks so noble among country landscapes as church steeples & castle towers as fine houses & public edifices do among city scenery—tis pleasant as I have done to-day to stand upon a length of Bridges & notice the objects around us there is the fine old Northborough castle peeping through the scanty foliage of orchards & thorn hedges & there is the beautiful spire of Glinton church towering high over the grey willows & dark walnutts still lingering in the Churchyard like the remains of a wreck telling where their fellows foundered in the ocean of time—place of green Memorys & gloomy sorrows—even these meadow arches seem to me something of the beautiful having been so long a prisoner & shut up in confinement they appear something worthy of notice—to a man who has had his liberty they would appear nothing more than so many tunnels thrown over a few puddles that are dry three parts of the year but to me they are more interesting than a flight of arches thrown over a cascade in a park or even the crowded bridges in a great city—yonder is Maxey Tower church looking as if it was light[ed] up with sunshine when the autumn sky is as gloomy as summer twilight & on the right peeping between the trees may be seen West Deepings crocketed spire on the left Glinton Mill goes sweeing away to the wind—how sweet & green the banks wind away on each side the meadow with now & then a single arch crossing the meadow drain through which one can see a bit of the bank on the other side & being weary looking out for steeples I will take the path down the north bank its green slopes look so pleasant though the wind blows chilly & the rustics face looks purple with cold—men are occupied in cutting the weeds from the drains to make a water course for the autumn rains—solitary persons are siding up the hedges & thrusting the brushwood in the thin places & creeps which the swine made from one ground or field into another & stopping gaps made in harvest by gleaners or labourers—the larks start up from the brown grass in the meadows where [they make] a couple of flutters or flights & drop out of sight as suddenly again into the grass—now a flock of redcaps seven or eight together take flight from the sides of the bank & settle again in the hedges which are almost crimson with awes seeming as if they fed on the seeds of the ragwort as no thistles are

near—a solitary crow & sometimes a pair fly with heavy wing just overhead now & then uttering a solitary croak to warn their tribes around that a man is approaching & then make a sudden wheel round at the sight of the stick in ones hand perhaps mistaking it for a gun—the top stones of all the bridges I pass are full of two letter names rudely cut with a knife spread hands—& feet—often true love knotts & sometimes figures meant for houses churches & flowers—& sheep hooks & sometimes names cut in full—the idle amusements of cowtending boys horse tenders & shepherds—now a snipe with its pointed wings hurries up from the meadow dyke into the fields—the meadow lakes seen from the bank puts me in mind of school adventures & boyish rambles the very spots where I used to spend the whole sundays in fishing while the bells kept chiming in vain—I cannot make out where all these feelings or fancys are gone too—The plot of meadows now dont look bigger than a large homestead & the ponds that used to seem so large are now no bigger than puddles & as for fish I scarcely have interest to walk round them to see if there is any—Yon arches yonder with trees peeping above them & between them & where the traveller is hopping away wearily over them on the narrow road is Lolham Bridges—time makes strange work with early fancys the fancied riches & happiness of early life fades to shadows of less substances even than the shadows of dreams I sigh for what is lost & cannot help it—yet there is even calm spots in the stormiest ocean & I can even now meet happiness in sorrow the usual pictures or objects in these flats & meadows warms ones loneliness such as a rustic driving his little lot of cows or sheep down the plashy drives & plucking a handful of awes from the half naked hedges to eat as he goes on—The rawky mornings now are often frosty—& the grass & wild herbs are often covered with rime as white as a shower of snow —in the fen greensward closes the pewit or lapwing may be seen in flocks of two or three hundred together about Waldron* Hall dabbling on the edges of the lakes left by the rains—it is pleasing to see the woods of oziers by the river side fading yellow There are a few willow trees by the Hall or Cottage—where the crows sit in the old nests as if it was spring though

* Walderham.

perhaps they may do it to get from the cold for there is a little crizzling ice on the edges of the water in some places such as ruts & horsefootings—Now the man is putting off his boat to ferry over the water where an odd passenger may now & then call to be ferried over the lake to the other bank or high road—the ozier hedges & holts are with[ered] yellow & the white-thorn hedges are getting thin of leaves & so crowded with awes that bye & bye the fields will be dressed in nothing but crimson & scarlet—nature like simplicity is beautifull in every dress she chuses to put on with the seasons—even winter with his doublet of snows & hoar frost can make himself agreeable when he chuses to give people leave to go out of doors—I love to clamber over these bridge walls & when I get off the banks on the road I instinctively look both ways to see if any passengers are going or coming or carts or waggons passing now here is a stile partitioning off somebody's partion of the bank but the middle rail is off so I stoop under to get through instead of climbing over it—there is a pair of harrows painted red standing on end against the thorn hedge—in another ground an old plough stands on its beam ends against a dotterel tree sometimes we see a roll[er ?] lying in one corner & broken trays & an old gate off the hooks waiting to be repaired till repairs are useless—even these rustic implements & appendages of husbandry blend with nature & look pleasing in the fields

RECCOLECTIONS &c OF JOURNEY FROM ESSEX

July 24 1841. Returned home out of Essex & found no Mary her & her family are nothing to me now—though she herself was once the dearest of all—& how can I forget

July 18 1841. Felt very melancholly went a walk in the forest in the afternoon—fell in with some gipseys one of whom offered to assist in my escape from the madhouse by hiding me in his camp to which I almost agreed but told him I had no money to start with but if he would do so I would promise him fifty pounds & he agreed to do so before saturday On friday I went again but he did not seem so willing so I said little about it—On Sunday I went & they were all gone—I found an old wide-awake hat & an old straw bonnet of the plum-pudding sort was left behind & I put the hat in my pocket thinking it might be usefull for another oppertunity & as good luck would have it it turned out to be so

July 19. Monday—Did nothing

July 20 Reconnitred the route the Gipsey pointed out & found it a legible one to make a movement & having only honest courage & myself in my army I led the way & my troops soon followed but being careless in mapping down the route as the Gipsey told me I missed the lane to Enfield Town & was going down Enfield Highway till I passed the Labour in vain Public-house where a person I knew coming out of the door told me the way

I walked down the lane gently & was soon in Enfield Town & bye & bye on the great York Road where it was all plain sailing & steering ahead meeting no enemy & fearing none I reached Stevenage where [it] being night I got over a gate [&] crossed over the corner to a green paddock where seeing a pond

or hollow in the corner I [was] forced to stay off a respectable distance to keep from falling into it for my legs were nearly knocked up & began to stagger I scaled some old rotten paleings into the yard & then had higher pailings to clamber over to get into the shed or hovel which I did with difficulty being rather weak to my good luck I found some trusses of clover piled up about six or more feet square which I gladly mounted & slept on there were some trays in the hovel on which I would have reposed had I not found a better bed I slept soundly but had a very uneasy dream I thought my first wife lay on my left arm & somebody took her away from my side which made me wake up rather unhappy I thought as I woke somebody said 'Mary' but nobody was near—I lay down with my head towards the north to show myself the steering point in the morning

July 21 Daylight was looking in on every side & fearing my garrison might be taken by storm & myself be made prisoner I left my lodging by the way I got in & thanked God for his kindness in procuring it for anything in a famine is better than nothing & any place that giveth the weary rest is a blessing I gained the north road again & steered due north On the left hand side the road under the bank was like a cave—I saw a man & boy coiled up asleep which I hailed & they woke up to tell me the name of the next village

Somewhere on the London side the 'Plough' public-house a Man passed me on horseback in a slop-frock & said 'here's another of the broken-down haymakers' & threw me a penny to get a half-pint of beer which I picked up & thanked him for & when I got to the Plough I called for a half-pint & drank it & got a rest & escaped a very heavy shower in the bargain by having a shelter till it was over—afterwards I would have begged a penny of two drovers who were very saucy so I begged no more of anybody meet who I would

Having passed a Lodge on the left hand within a mile & a half or less of a town I think it might be St Ives* but I forget the name I sat down on a flint heap where I might rest half an hour

* Clare's note to St. Ives: It was St. Neots

or more & while sitting here I saw a tall Gipsey come out of the Lodge gate & make down the road towards where I was sitting when she got up to me on seeing she was a young woman of an honest-looking countenance rather handsome I spoke to her & asked her a few questions which she answered readily & with evident good humour so I got up & went on to the next town with her—she cautioned me on the way to put something in my hat to keep the crown up & said in a lower tone 'You'll be noticed' but not knowing what she hinted I took no notice & made no reply at length she pointed to a tower-church which she called Shefford church & advised me to go on a footway which she said would take me direct to it & should shorten my journey fifteen miles by doing so I would gladly have taken the young woman's advice feeling that it was honest & a nigh guess towards the truth but fearing I might lose my way & not be able to find the north road again I thanked her & told her I should keep to the road when she bade me 'Good-day' & went into a house or shop on the left hand side the road I passed 3 or 4 good built houses on a hill & a public-house on the roadside in the hollow below them I seemed to pass the Milestones very quick in the morning but towards night they seemed to be stretched further asunder I got to a village further on & I forgot the name The road on the left hand was quite overshaded by some trees & quite dry so I sat down half an hour & made a good many wishes for breakfast but wishes were no hearty meal so I got up as hungry as I sat down—I forget here the names of the villages I passed through but recolect at late evening going through Potton in Bedfordshire where I called in a house to light my pipe in which was a civil old woman & a young country wench making lace on a cushion as round as a globe & a young fellow all civil people—I asked them a few questions as to the way & where the clergyman & overseer lived but they scarcely heard me or gave me no answer

I then went through Potton & happened with a kind talking country man who told me the parson lived a good way from where I was or overseer I don't know which so I went on hopping with a crippled foot for the gravel had got into my old shoes one of which had now nearly lost the sole had I found the

overseer's house at hand or the parson's I should have gave my name & begged for a shilling to carry me home but I was forced to brush on penniless & be thankful I had a leg to move on

I then asked him whether he could tell me of a farmyard anywhere on the road where I could find a shed & some dry straw & he said 'Yes if you will go with me I will show you the place—its a public house on the left hand side the road at the sign of the Ram' but seeing a stone or flint heap I longed to rest as one of my feet was very painfull so I thanked him for his kindness & bid him go on—But the good-natured fellow lingered awhile as if wishing to conduct me & then suddenly recolecting that he had a hamper on his shoulder & a lock-up bag in his hand cramfull to meet the coach which he feared missing—he started hastily & was soon out of sight—I followed looking in vain for the countryman's straw bed & not being able to meet it I lay down by a shed side under some elms between the wall & the trees being a thick row some 5 or 6 feet from the building I lay there & tried to sleep but the wind came in between them so cold that I lay still I quaked like the ague & quitted the lodging for a better at the Ram which I could hardly hope to find—It now began to grow dark apace & the odd houses on the road began to light up & show the inside tenants' lots very comfortable & my outside lot very uncomfortable & very wretched—still I hobbled forward as well as I could but at last came to the Ram the shutters were not closed & the lighted windows looked very cheering but I had no money & did not like to go in there was a sort of shed or gig-house at the end but I did not like to lie there as the people were up—so I still travelled on the road was very lonely & dark in places being over-shaded with trees at length I came to a place where the road branched off into two turnpikes one to the right about & the other straight forward & on going by my eye glanced on a milestone standing under the hedge so I heedlessly turned back to read it to see where the other road led to on doing to I found it led to London & then suddenly I forgot which was north or south & though I narrowly examined both ways I could see no tree or bush or stone heap that I could recolect I had passed so I went on mile after mile almost convinced I was going the same way as I came & these

thoughts were so strong upon me that doubt & hopelessness made me turn so feeble that I was scarcely able to walk Yet I could not sit down or give up but shuffled along till I saw a lamp shining as bright as the moon which on nearing I found was suspended over a Toll-gate before I got through the man came out with a candle & eyed me narrowly but having no fear I stopt to ask him whether I was going northward & he said 'when you get through the gate you are' so I thanked him kindly & went through on the other side & gathered my old strength as my doubts vanished I soon cheered up & hummed the air of 'highland Mary' as I went on I at length fell in with an odd house all alone near a wood but I could not see what the sign was though the sign seemed to stand oddly enough in a sort of trough or spout there was a large porch over the door & being weary I crept in & glad enough I was to find I could lye with my legs straight the inmates were all gone to roost for I could hear them turn over in bed so I lay at full length on the stones in the porch —I slept here till daylight & felt very much refreshed as I got up I blest my two wives & both their familys when I lay down & when I got up & when I thought of some former difficultys on a like occasion I could not help blessing the Queen—I have but a slight reccolection of my journey between here & Stilton for I was knocked up & noticed little or nothing—one night I lay in a dyke bottom from the wind & went to sleep half an hour when I suddenly awoke & found my side wet through from the sock in the dyke bottom so I got out & went on—I remember going down a very dark road hung over with trees on both sides very thick which seemed to extend a mile or two I then entered a town & some of the chamber windows had candle lights shining in them—I felt so weary here that I [was] forced to sit down on the ground to rest myself a while & while I sat here a coach that seemed to be heavy laden came rattling up & stopt in the hollow below me & I cannot reccolect its ever passing by me* I then got up & pushed onward seeing little to notice for the road very often looked as stupid as myself & I was very often

* Clare's note: The Coach did pass me as I sat under some trees by a high wall & the lamps flashed in my face & wakened me up from a doze when I knocked the gravel out of my shoes & started.

half asleep as I went on the third day I satisfied my hunger by eating the grass by the road side which seemed to taste something like bread I was hungry & eat heartily till I was satisfied & in fact the meal seemed to do me good the next & last day I reccolected that I had some tobacco & my box of lucifers being exhausted I could not light my pipe so I took to chewing tobacco all day & eat the quids when I had done & I was never hungry afterwards—I remember passing through Buckden* & going a length of road afterwards but I don't reccolect the name of any place until I came to Stilton where I was compleatly foot-foundered & broken down when I had got about half way through the town a gravel causeway invited me to rest myself so I lay down & nearly went to sleep & a young woman (so I guessed by the voice) came out of a house & said 'poor creature' & another more elderly said 'O he shams' But when I got up the latter said 'O no he don't' as I hobbled along very lame I heard the voices but never looked back to see where they came from—when I got near the Inn at the end of the gravel walk I met two young women & I asked one of them wether the road branching to the right by the end of the Inn did not lead to Peterborough & she said 'yes it did' so as soon as ever I was on it I felt myself in home's way & went on rather more cheer-full though I [was] forced to rest oftener than usual before I got to Peterborough a man & woman passed me in a cart & on hailing me as they passed I found they were neighbours from Helpstone where I used to live—I told them I was knocked up which they could easily see & that I had neither eat nor drunk anything since I left Essex when I told my story they clubbed together & threw me fivepence out of the cart I picked it up & called at a small public house near the bridge where I had two half pints of ale & two pen'orth of bread & cheese when I had done I started quite refreshed only my feet were more

* In the small memorandum book, containing notes on the *Journey*, which Clare evidently used in copying the full account into the big folio, is the following:

'The man whose daughter is the Queen of England is now sitting on a stone heap on the high way to Buckden without a farthing in his pocket—without eating a bit of food ever since yesterday morning—when he was offered a bit of Bread and cheese at Enfield—he has not had any since but if I put a little fresh speed on hope may speed tomorrow—oh Mary, Mary if you knew how anxious I rest near you and dear Patty with the children I think you would come and meet me.'

crippled than ever & I could scarcely make a walk of it over the stones & being half ashamed to sit down in the street I [was] forced to keep on the move & got through Peterborough better than I expected when I got on the high road I rested on the stone heaps as I passed till I was able to go on afresh & bye & bye I passed Walton & soon reached Werrington & was making for the Beehive as fast as I could when a cart passed me with a man & a woman & a boy in it when nearing me the woman jumped out & caught fast hold of my hands & wished me to get into the cart but I refused & thought her either drunk or mad but when I was told it was my second wife Patty I got in & was soon at Northborough but Mary was not there neither could I get any information about her further than the old story of her being dead six years ago which might be taken from a bran new old newspaper printed a dozen years ago but I took no notice of the blarney having seen her myself about a twelvemonth ago alive & well & as young as ever—so here I am homeless at home & half gratified to feel I can be happy anywhere

Note On searching my pockets after the above was written I found part of a newspaper side 'Morning Chronicle' on which the following fragments were pencilled soon after I got the information from labourers going to work or travellers journeying along to better their condition as I was hopeing to do mine In fact I believed I saw home in everyone's countenance which seemed so cheerfull in my own—'There is no place like home' the following was written by the road side. 1st day. Tuesday. Started from Enfield & slept at Stevenage on some clover trusses—cold lodging

Wednesday—Jack's hill is past already consisting of a beer shop & some houses on the hill appearing newly built the last milestone 35 miles from London got through Baldock & sat under a dry hedge & had a rest in lieu of breakfast

May none these marks of my sad fate efface
For they appeal from tyranny to God

BYRON

LATER FRAGMENTS

THE rustling of leaves under the feet in woods and under hedges
The crumping of cat ice and snow down wood-rides, narrow lanes and every street causeway
Rustling thro a wood or rather rushing, while the wind hallows in the oak tops like thunder;
The rustle of birds' wings startled from their nests or flying unseen into the bushes
The whizzing of larger birds overhead in a wood, such as crows, puddocks, buzzards, &c,
The trample of robins & woodlarks on the brown leaves, and the patter of squirrels on the green moss;
The fall of an acorn on the ground, the pattering of nuts on the hazel branches as they fall from ripeness;
The flirt of the ground-lark's wing from the stubbles—how sweet such pictures on dewy mornings when the dew flashes from its brown feathers!*

HOUSE OR WINDOW FLIES

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

* The date of the above is 1847 (*circa*).

DEWDROPS

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

* This, and the two preceding fragments, are from the two volumes of Asylum transcripts, copies of which are at both Peterborough and Northampton. The fragments are therefore punctuated, etc., as are the transcripts.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

POPULARITY IN AUTHORSHIP

European Magazine. November 1825

Rumour and the popular voice
Some look to more than truth, and so confirm
Opinions.

CARY'S *Dante*

POPULARITY is a hasty and a busy talker; she catches hold of topics and offers them to fame, without giving herself time to reflect whether they are true or false—and Fashion is her favourite disciple who sanctions and believes them as eagerly and with the same faith as a young lady in the last century read a new novel, or a tavern-haunter in this reads the news. Now it becomes natural for Reason to inquire, whether such sandy foundations as popularity builds on may be taken as indications of true fame; for it often happens that very slender names work a way into it, from many causes, with which merit or genius has no sort of connection or kindred—from some oddity in the manner, or incident in the life of the author, that is whispered over before he makes his appearance. This often proves the road to popularity, for gossip is a mighty spell in the literary world, and a concealment of the author's name often creates it and kindles an anxiety in the public notice. It leaves room for guesses and conjectures, and as all professed book-gossips are very fond of appearing wise in such matters, it becomes the small talk of the card party and the tea-table, and gains a superficial notoriety that has no resemblance to fame, not even to its shadow. Such was the case with the 'Pursuits of Literature', a leaden-footed satire, that had as much claim to merit as the statue of Pasquin in the market-place of Rome, which was

celebrated for the vulgar squibs that were pasted upon it in the animosities of political squabbles. Everybody knew the author of this dead-letter 'Pursuits of Literature', and nobody knew him. The first names of the day were foisted into its fame, and when the secret that it belonged to one of the lowest was found out, its notoriety was gone, and it died in the little blaze that fashion had gilt upon its darkness, like the moth in a farthing taper!— Sometimes a pompous pretending title hits the mark at once, and wins a name. Who among the lower orders of youth is ignorant of 'The Young Man's best Companion', by Mr. Fisher, Accountant, or the 'Book of Wisdom', by Mr. Fenning Philomath? These are almost as common as bibles and prayer-books in a cottage library. A conjecture is not hazarded in believing that popularity is but seldom the omen of true fame, but it assumes such a variety of Proteus influences in its creations, that it would be a wide guess in many of its varieties to say whether it was any fame at all. Sometimes the trifling and the ridiculous grow into the most extensive popularities. Such was the share of it which a man gained by wearing a huge-brimmed hat, and another who cut off the tail of his coat, and thereby branded his name on the remnant; but the spencers are out of fashion—they have outlived many a poetic popularity. These are instances of the ridiculous. The trifling are full as extensive. Where is the poet that shares half such popularity as the names of 'Warren, Turner, Day and Martin' whose ebony fames are spread through every little dirty village in England? These instances of the trifling and ridiculous made as much noise and stir in their day as the best; and noise, and stir, and bustle are the essence and the soul of popularity. But such things are poor grotesque pictures for personifications of fame. The nearest akin to popularity is 'common fame', I mean those sorts of things and names that are familiar among the common people. It is not a very envious species, for they seldom know how to appreciate what they are acquainted with. The name of Chatterton is familiar to their ears as an unfortunate poet, because they meet with his melancholy history in penny ballads and on pocket handkerchiefs, and the name of Shakspeare as a great play writer, because they have seen him nominated as such in the bills of strolling-players, who make shift with barns for theatres; but this sort of levelling makes a corresponding

level in their minds, and the paltry ballad-mongers, whose productions supply hawkers with songs for country wakes and holidays, are poets with them, and they imagine them as great as the others, for common minds make no distinctions in these common fames. On the other hand there is something in it to wish for, because there are things of its kindred as old as England, that have out-lived centuries of popularity; nay, left half its histories in darkness, and live on as common to every memory as the seasons, and as familiar to children even as the rain and spring flowers. I allude to the old superstitious fragments of legends and stories in rhyme, that are said to be of Norman and Saxon origin. Superstition lives longer than books; it is engrafted on the human mind till it becomes a part of its existence; and is carried from generation to generation on the stream of eternity, with the proudest of fames, untroubled with the insect encroachments of oblivion which books are infested with. There are also many desires to gain this common fame, and it is mostly met with in a manner where it is the least expected. While some affectations are striving for a life-time to hit all tastes, by only writing as they fancy all feel, and by not trusting to their own feelings, miss the mark by a wide throw, an unconscious poet of little name writes a trifle as he feels, without thinking of others, or fancying that he feels it, and becomes a common name. Unaffected simplicity is the every-day picture of nature—thus children's favourites, 'Cock Robin', 'Little Red Riding Hood', 'Babes in the Wood', &c. &c. leave impressions at the core that grow up with manhood and are beloved on. Poets anxious after common fame, as some of the 'naturals' seem to be, imitate these things by affecting simplicity, and become unnatural. These things found fame where the greatest names are still oblivious. A literary man might inquire after the names of Spenser and Milton in vain through half the villages in England, even among what are called their gentry; but I believe it would be difficult to find a corner in any county where the others were not known, or an old woman in any hamlet with whom they are not familiar. Yet these are not the soul of fame's eternity—they are near cousins to popularity, but at best only common fame. In my days, some of the pieces of the living poets have gained a common fame, though it may only live for a season. Wordsworth's beautiful

ballad of 'We are Seven', I have seen hawked about in penny ballads, and Tannahill's song of 'Jessy', has met with more popularity among the common people here, than all the songs English and Scottish put together. Lord Byron's hasty fame may be deemed a contradiction to the above opinion, that popularity is not true fame, though at its greatest extent it is scarcely an exception, for his great and hurried popularity, that almost trampled on its own heels in its haste, must drop into a less bustling degree, and become more cool and quiet as it approaches the silent and impartial stream of time, where the periodicals of fashion will have done with stilted praise, and the reader will find no entertainment in the popular voice of days gone by, and when merit shall be its own reward. Every storm must have its calm, and Byron took fame by storm: by a desperate daring he overswept petty control like a rebellious flood, or a tempest worked up into madness by the quarrel of the elements, and he seemed to value that daring as the attainment of true fame. He looked upon 'Horace's Art of Poetry' no doubt with the esteem of a reader, but he cared no more for it in the profession of a poet than the weather does for an almanack; he thought of critics as the countryman thinks of a magistrate: he beheld them as a race of petty tyrants that stood in the way of genius: they were in his eye more of stumbling-blocks than guides, and he treated them accordingly. He let them know that there was another road to Parnassus, without taking theirs; and, being obliged to do them homage in stooping to the impediments of their authority, which stood like the paths of a besieged city encumbered with sentinels, he made a road for himself, and, like Napoleon crossing the Alps, he let the world see that, even in the eye of a mortal, their greatest obstacles were looked on 'as the dust in the balance'. He gained the envied eminence of living popularity by making a breach where the citadel was thought impregnable, and where others had laid siege for a lifetime, and lost their hopes and their labour at last. He gained the Parnassus of living applause by a single stride, and looked down as a free-booter on the world below, scorning with seeming derision the praise that his labour had gained him, and scarcely returning a compliment for the laurels which fashion so eagerly bound around his brow. He saw the alarm of his leaden-footed enemies, and withered them to nothing with

his sneer. He was an Oliver Cromwell with the critics, broke up their long standing parliament, and placed his own will in the Speaker's chair, which they humbly accepted: they submitted to one that scorned to be shackled, and champed the bit in his stead; they praised and worshipped him; he was all in all in their parties and writings; but I suspect their hearts had as much love for him, as the peasantry had for witches in the last century, who spoke well of them to their faces because they dared not do otherwise for fear of meeting an injury. What degree of favour Time will award to Byron I cannot tell,—my mind is too little to grasp such judgment. His popularity is of the highest order: it places him as the first of his age. But this is saying nothing for time. We have sufficient illustration for our argument in saying that popularity is not the forerunner of fame's eternity: among all its bustle, there must be only a portion of it accepted as truth: time will sift it of its drossy puffs and praises. He has been extolled as equal to Shakspeare, and I dare say the popular voice of many 'readers' thought him superior, but Shakspeare has stood the winter of more than two centuries, and (in the language of the Hebrew bard) still 'flourishes like a green bay-tree', and living popularity was not the forerunner of his fame. Neither were Spenser nor Milton indebted to 'popular applause'; yet their fames blossom in the sunshine of eternity, and have long towered above the little mildews of literary coquetry and fashionable quackery, of idle praise and censure, which fester round every living name that shares the popular voice: for the living praises of friends (like the living censures of enemies) are generally partial, and the former often injure future reputation more than the latter. One of the most absurd comparisons of this sort of praise is to be met with in 'Landor's Imaginary Conversations'; it is offered as serious, and therefore appears the greater burlesque and mockery. In a dialogue where Lord Byron is intended to be abused and Mr. Southey flattered, by 'shadowing forth' the one in the shade of Rochester, and other as the inspiration of Milton. Now this placing Southey in the sandals of Milton, though intended as a great compliment, is a great insult; for it instantly turns the sober eye of reason to Hudibrastic similes and ridiculous comparisons; like Mother Hubbard's 'Cat in Boots,' and such like awkward authorities. Thus Byron receives the

praise and the other the mockery. Such are the partial censures of enemies and the flatteries of friends; but two centuries will wither every extravagance, and sober many a picture of its gaudy colours. Byron is one of the eternals, but as yet he is only one of theso in the nineteenth century, and is too young to be placed above the venerables of time, let popularity noise and bustle as she may; for no doubt when all the eternals of the nineteenth century come to be weighed in the balance, even of the next, they will be found to be light weight against Shakspeare alone. Eternity will not rake the bottom of the sea of oblivion for puffs and praises, and all its attendant rubbish, the feelings that the fashion of the day created, and the flatteries it uttered. She will not seek for the newspaper that is illuminated with the puffing praise of Walter Scott's ('the great unknown') fashionable oration over Cæsar; she will not look for Byron's immortality in the company of 'Rowland's Kalydor' and 'Atkinson's Bear's Grease'; she will seek it in his own merit, and her impartial judgment will be his best recompense. Wordsworth has had no share of living popularity, though he deserved to be considered as great in one species of poetry as Byron was in another; but to have acknowledged such an opinion in the world's ear some time back, would only have puckered the lips of fashion into a sneer against it. Yet his lack of living praise is no proof of his lack of genius; he has great beauties, and great faults—such things run parallel in great men. The brighter the sunbeam the deeper the shadow. The trumpeting clamour of public praise is not to be relied on as the creditor for the future to draw acceptances from; present fame is not the perpetual almanack to time's fame; they often disclaim all kindred to each other. The quiet progress of a name gaining ground by gentle degrees in the world's esteem is the best living shadow of fame: fashionable popularity changes like the summer clouds, while the simplest trifle, and the meanest thing in nature, is the same now as it shall continue to be till the world's end:

Men trample grass, and prize the flowers in May,
But grass is green when flowers do fade away.

APPENDIX II

CLARE'S LIST OF NORTHAMPTONSHIRE BIRDS

HAIRY LEGD FALCON

one shot at a spring in Hollywell

SEA EAGLE *32

OSPREY 37

one shot by Henderson in Milton Park said to build its nest on the ground among reeds with sticks & a lining of flags & to lay 4 white eggs about the size of the hens

BUZZARD 38

is of an idle disposition & not unlike the Kite while perched but quite different when on the wing—it flyes in a flopping manner something like the owl & is soon tired & seeks its perch on some old tree were it sits for hours together it builds a flat nest of sticks lined with old rags & wool something like the kites but smaller & very often makes shift with an old crows nest by patching it up & making it a new lining it lays three eggs somthing like the kites but shorter & of a dirty white largely splashd at the large end with blood colored spots & freckled with small ones of a pale red

HONEY BUZZARD 42

not known here

MOOR BUZZARD 43

haunts the commons about Whittlesea Meer Scrats a hole on the ground & lays 3 eggs of a dirty white color blotchd at the large end with dun colored spots

* We have not found any previous published list to which these numbers refer.

APPENDIX

ASH COLORED BUZZARD 43

something of this kind flyes over the wheat fields in weeding time & appears to be hunting its prey it is said to feed on leverets & partridges

KITE 44

GOSHAWK 46

haunts the heath about holywell appears to hide among the furze

SPARROW HAWK 47

PIEGON HAWK 49

HEN HARRIER 63

RING TAIL 65

KESTREL 66

said to be the species that hangs in the air on trembling wings & is a beautiful object in the blue sky of a summers day

HOBBY 68

this was the species that I kept tame

MIRLIN 68

a hawk of passage

HORNED OWL 78

said to build in the old hollow thorn trees in Milton Park

SCREECH OWL 85

lays in the holes of barn walls 6 eggs of a white color largely blotcht with spots of a blood red screeches—preys on small birds & mice often flys out in the daytime in dull weather & autumn

BROWN OWL OR SMALL HOOP OWL 86

frequents woods & hedge borders builds in hollow trees lays 5 eggs much like the other feeds on small birds

LARGE WOOD OWL 87

the boldest of the owl tribe builds in hollow trees in woods & thicketts feeds on young rabbits leverets & birds atacks boys

in a bold manner who ventures to take its nest account of one in Bulls spinney

BUTCHER BIRD TRIBE

SHRIKE 99

not known here

WOODCHAT 100

frequents woods builds a nest of bents lined with small fibres of roots & horse hair lays 5 eggs of a dun or fox brown color markd with cloudy spots of deeper hue generaly builds in the thick squatting bushes of the wood briar

CROW 180

BLUE FEN CROW

ROOK

RAVEN 181

account of a tame one builds on larger [grains] whose bodys are destitute of branches & difficult to climb it is a large nest built in the collar of the tree which tree they keep as the usual home for many years its eggs are olive green blotchd with bluish grey & liver colored spots do great damage to sheep in the fens

183

A pair had a nest on a larg[e] ash tree in Etton field hedge for 10 or 12 years & when that was cut down the same or a pair of the family occupyd a large inaccessable oak in Oxey wood which they occupy still

HOODED CROW 189

not known here

ROOK 190

JACKDAW 196

builds in hollow trees & in the chimneys of uninhabited houses also in the steeples of churches & they are sed to occupy the holes of rabbits in some places they lay 5 or 6 eggs of a pale blue color speckled with small black spots

MAGPIE 199

builds on the highest branches of trees & in the thickest bushes makes a covering over its nest with two entrances one facing the west & the other the east makes the outside of rough thorny twigs & lines it with fibres of roots & twitch lays from 5 to 8 eggs of a watery green color thickly freckled with brown spots easily tamed & learned to talk

I kept one for years till it got drownd in a well it usd to see itself in the water I fancy it got down thinking to meet it it used to run away with the tea spoons or anything which it coud come at & woud watch its oppertunity as unceasingly as a reasoning being & the moment it found it was not observed it woud seize the thing it wanted & hasten out of the house to hide it in the garden were it woud let it lye a few days & then bring it in again—it imitated many words readily & when it heard a sound or word that it coud not imitate readily it woud become silent & pensive & sit ruminating on an eldern tree & muttering as it were to itself some inaudible words till at length it got by heart the thing it was aiming at & then it was as lively & as full of chatter as ever

JAY 204

this is a beautiful bird from the fine blue patch on each wing it builds on the sides of trees in woods & in bushs in thicketts commonly chusing the white thorn it makes the outside of its nest with stick & lines it with twitch & small fiberes of roots it lays 5 or 6 eggs of a pale greenish color thickly mozzled with small browny spots—it is a sort of pilot among the birds & warns them by a harsh noise not unlike a childs rattle of danger

ORIOLE 212

none here

CUCKOO 246

Gordons tale of one laying in a wagtails nest generaly prefers a wagtails or a hedge sparrows drops no more then one egg in a nest it [is] a short one of a beautiful blush color clouded at the large end with a deeper hue they are small not much larger than the hedge sparrows after singing times it preys

on young birds & is often mistaken for the hawk whose character in many [ways ?] it assumes the cuckoos are said to be hollow backt & throw out the young ones that are hatchd with them some people say that they are hollow backt & that by contriving to get the young sparrow theron they throw him overboard but I have not been able to observe this & cannot assertain the truth of it

WRYNECK 268

a beautiful bird of different shades of brown whose various shades is not observable till close to it when it sits on its nest or on a tree it makes an odd motion with its head turning about first to the left & then the right & I think this motion gave it the name of Ryneck it builds in hollow trees & in the old deserted holes of Woodpeckers it is a bird of passage & comes a few days before the fire-tail it has a very long tongue like the Woodpecker & appears to be of that tribe feeding on insects tho it appears unable to make any use of its bill in the boring of holes etc it makes its nest of moss & dryed grass lined with cobwebs & other light materials it lays a large quantity of eggs I have myself found nests with 16 in them often they are a little larger than those of the sparrow & are of a delicate snowey white without spot or stain the circle at the end calld the tread may be distinctly seen—I found one last year in Billings Orchard with 16 eggs in it—I took 6 out & she sat on the rest & raisd the young ones—when one approachd the nest the old one made a hissing noise & turnd her head in an odd motion from side to side

GREEN WOODPECKER 271

a beautiful bird very common bores holes in the hard trees where it makes its nest of moss & a lining of hair & wool it lays 5 eggs about the size of the sparrows & not much unlike them tho more thickly spotted with small dark spots—the flight is an easy motion of ups & downs fluttering its wings at every rise & closing them motionless at every fall it may be heard boring its hole at the beginning of spring making an odd croaking sound like a carpenter turning his wimble in hard wood it taps at the side of trees very often as if it tryd by the sound to see if they were hollow but perhaps its real

purpose is to search for Insects it bores for the larve of Moths & butterflys in rotten trees & old gate posts it is a very solitary bird rarely being seen with its own species even in breeding time

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPEKCER 273

this is smaller than the green one tho its habits are the same it is of a pied color of brown & white with a red crown & a dingy hue of red on the underparts of the belly—it taps more frequently on the trees than the green one & makes the hole for its nest in the grains I know nothing of its eggs as I never have had as yet the good fortune to meet with a nest—it seems to have a quick ear at the approach of anything from which it seldom flyes but nimbles on the other side of the grain out of sight—there is a smaller one of the same color as this but not so common I have seen it often but know nothing of its habits any way different from the former

CREEPER 288

common with us runs up the sides of trees like the wood-pecker very small & of a light brown color it builds in hollow willows & in the deserted holes of wood peckers lays 8 or 9 small white eggs spotted with faint red spots it is calld by the woodmen the tree creeper & by some the willow biter as it makes incisions in the last years twigs of willows for some insects deposited in them

NUTHATCH 285

of a beautiful color not unlike the blue titmouse but larger runs about trees like the woodpecker & is seldom seen as it haunts solitary places I have never found its nest but I should expect that it builds in trees there are tales of its being able to crack nuts but I can say nothing for its authenticity

KINGFISHER 295

its plumage of glossy orange green & blue is very beautiful in shape it resembles the woodpecker—it feeds on fish & sits on a branch of a tree that hangs over a river for hours on the watch for any small fish that passes bye when it darts down & seizes its prey in a moment—they make there nests in holes

on banks sides by the water they lay 5 & sometimes 6 eggs of a milk white color they make no nest but lay them on the bare ground the quantitys of fishes bones placed in a curious manner like a nest are found in the holes after the birds are flown I have heard fishermen say that they are the bones of the fish on which the young ones were fed—in some places they hang a dead king fisher up [in] the kitchen to note the weather by as it is said its head turns to the rainy quarter whenever rain is expected there is a larger bird of a pied color much like the former in shape & habits very common about the fen dykes which the inhabitants call a king fisher it flyes on the top of the water down rivers & dykes & often siezes its prey on the wing—it makes its nest on the ground in the reed beds & lays 5 eggs of a dirty brown color the young take the water as soon as hatchd

HOOPOE 323

it has been seen here but not often tho it is said to breed here

STARLING 384

they are curiously mottled with white specks all about the dark feathers they build early in spring & lay in hollow trees & in chimneys of uninhabited house[s] also in old walls their eggs are of a greenish blue speckled with small spots they are easily made tame & learn to whistle tunes & talk words & even speak short sentences with great*

a gipsey in the Smiths gang had one that was so tame that it needed no cage to confine it

in Autumn they collect together in large flocks & may be heart making a loud chattering in commons & in closes were they settle to feed they like to pick something out of horse dung—in the evening they go in larger flocks to roost & may be heard wirling along in the dusky sky

they perch in the reed shaws on Whittlesea meer & do great damage to the read by bending it down with their numbers & the reed cutters often stand knocking them with large poles to keep them from settling—it is said that they do hurt to dove coats & suck the eggs of the piegons but this is a falshood

* Sentence unfinished.

APPENDIX

WATER OUZEL 386

not known here

RING OUZEL 393

often seen here I know nothing of its habits

BLACKBIRD 394

a pert bird builds its nest in hedges & thickets of dead grass & moss withoutside then adds a lair of cow dung & lines it with grass of finer sorts now & then inserting a few oak leaves it lays 5 eggs of greenish ash color thickly freckeld with browny spots it feeds on shell snails in winter & dexterously breaks them agen a stone or any hard substance that it can find the readiest the blackbird has of[t] been said to sing in winter it does some times in very open weather but very rarely & the song of the Mavis thrush is often mistaken for that of the blackbird which has created this common mistake

MISSEL THRUSH 396

our Mavis thrush

FIELD FARE 396

saw one last sunday 17 April they come in large flocks & strip the awe bushes as they proceed onward in their march they stay later some years than others but generaly leave in the beginning of April they are speckled like the thrush & make a busy chirping as they flye

SINGING THRUSH 397

much smaller than the other has a fine varied song—see first catalogue*

RED WING

smaller than the field fare not so numerous flyes silent

437

SILK TAIL

often seen here Artis tells me

447

CROSS BILL

often seen here Artis says it builds here often

* We have not found any other catalogue than this one.

APPENDIX

GROSS BEAK 448

seen here—Artis

GREEN LINNET 450

builds in thorn bushes makes a rather clumsy nest of moss & read stiff stalks & wool lined with cow hair & wool lays 5 eggs longish of a white color faintly spotted with red & purple spots at the large end

brown linnet or furze linnet builds in furze bushes on heaths makes a nest of dead grass lined with rabbit fur lays 5 eggs somthing like the former but smaller sprinkled with red & purple spots at the large end—great destroyers of turnip seed of which they are very fond & it will attract them for miles their song is beautiful they are often calld furze larks by the herd catchers & are erroneously considerd as different birds the cock bird has a beautiful flush of red on its breast

BULLFINCH 450

see first Catalogue

WIN CHAT 450

I think this is the bird I see in spring about the dry trees

BUNTING LARK 479

calld ground Lark here has no song may be seen twittering its wings on the top twigs of bushes & uttering a small 'cree creeing' noise—it is very like the lark but longer—they build on the ground in the meadow grass or wheat fields they make a nest in an hole or horse footing of short dead grass lined with twitch fibres & horsehair & lay 5 and sometimes 6 dirty colored eggs markd with a purple tinge round the large end

YELLOW HAMMER 483

a bold bird builds its nest on the ground & in low bushes of dead grass & twitch & lines it with horse hair lays 5 eggs of a fleshy ash color streaked all over with black crooked lines as if done with a pen & for this it is often calld the 'writing lark' & thought by birdsnesting boys to be a different bird from the yellow hammer it likes to build in banks facing the sun by Dykes etc

REED SPARROW* 483

It is a brown slender bird with a black head & has some resemblance to the sparrow it haunts lakes & marshy places & builds a curious nest among the dead reed on the bank or by the side of the water always choosing a place that is difficult to be come at its nest is made of dead grass & always lined with the down of the reed it lays 5 & sometimes 6 eggs not much unlike the white throats but larger of a dirty white freckled with brown & purple spots at the large end they are solitary birds & are seldom seen more than 2 together they have a sort of song but not fine or varied

SNOW BUNTINGS 484

never seen here

HOUSE SPARROW 523

build a nest on the thatch under the eaves & at the gable ends in every barn & cottage its outside is made of hay & straw but it is lined with swarms of feathers have always observed as far as it came under my observation that those birds whose young leave the shell bare without down always provide for their nakedness in making the nest warm with linings of soft materials as wool & feathers while the others less careful for their offspring while nature provides them with a downy covering line theirs with rooty fibres or horsehair—the sparrow will breed in the hollows of willow trees & often where corn is plenty[iful] & houses are scarce on the branches of trees its nest then is a very large one roughly made of straws & hay as large as ones hat lined warmly with feathers & the hole or entrance is on one side like the Wrens—(I observed several nests the year before last on the elm trees agen our garden (now cut down) were they bred their young to me it was a very novel appearance to see sparrows nests in so odd a situation tho I had heard that they woud build on trees I never believed it till then—I believe the reason of their choosing such an odd place to build their houses was the frequent robberies that was made on their homes in the cottage below were a nest never escaped their pilfering tho I always denyed their intrusions on my part of the house yet

* Reed bunting? See Journal for 11 July 1825.

they woud watch oppertunitys & take them at night after I was in bed—I always thought it a very cruel practice for the overseers of the parish to give rewards to boys to kill sparrows as they often do it very cruelly & cheat the overseers ignorance a many times in taking other harmless birds to pass them for sparrows to get the bounty—white sparrow seen at Glinton last year there is a foolish notion among farmers that the Hedghog milks cows & injures the teats of the cow now if they were not deaf to reason commonsense might learn them humanity for it may easily be proved that the small mouth of the animal is impossible to suck at the teats of a cow but an old error wears a long while in the ignorance of such men—& 4[d] is still offerd as the reward for killing hedgehogs

MOUNTAIN SPARROW 527

I think this is our tree sparrow they are like the house sparrow but smaller yet the[y] never come into the village & in winter I never see them

CHAFFINCH 530

they are calld 'Pinks' here from the note
in winter I have observed that the hen birds are more numerous than the males

BRAMBLING MOUNTAIN FINCH 531

not seen here

GOLD FINCH OR REDCAP 553

see first Memorandum

SISKIN 556

passage bird not seen here

BROWN LINNET 563

TWITE 563

not seen here as I know of

MOUNTAIN LINNET 564

not know[n] here

GREAT REDPOLE 565

APPENDIX

LITTLE REDPOLE *566*

I think this is our Gosslark or red headed linnet

SKY LARK *568*

a bird that is of as much use in poetry as the Nightingale account of one kept tame by a publican at Tallington

FIELD LARK *571*

GRASS HOPPER LARK *572*

I think this is our cricket bird *

TREE LARK *573*

I have seen no such thing

WOOD LARK *573*

builds its nest in the woods on the ground under a stoven with long dead grass & lines it with horsehair & roots lays 6 eggs of a dirty white thickly fricked all over with dusty spots it has an odd way of singing as it flyes from tree to tree dropping down a little way & then rising up with a jerk & when the[y] fly up they are silent singing ever[y] time the[y] drop trembling their wings till they jerk up agen & when they are weary they either simply drop on the ground or settle on a tree where their song ceases till they are agen on the wing

TIT LARK *574*

I dont know it

RED LARK *576*

never seen it

GREAT LARK *581*

dont know it

GREY WAGTAIL *583*

a common bird haunts brooks & water builds its nest in old walls & more commonly in the heaps of loose stones left in stone pits makes a nest of long straws & lines it with whool & horshair somtimes builds in wood stacks lays 5 or 6 eggs of a white color thickly spotted with black spots like the house sparrows account of a young Cuckoo being found in a

* See Journal for 26 September 1824.

wagtails nest told me by Gordon it has no song but utters a short chirping while on the wing it is seen with us all the winter

GREAT GREY WAGTAIL 584
not common here

YELLOW WAGTAIL 584
a beautiful bird leaves us in the winter & returns in april builds on the ground among the grain makes its nest of straws dead grass & twitch & lines it with hair something like a larks but deeper the eggs are spotted like the grey wagtails but darker

NIGHTINGALE 1
see letter etc

DARTFORD WARBLER 4

RED ROBIN 4
see letter etc

RED START OR FIRE TAIL 7
come latter end of April the male is a beautiful bird—builds in walls & hollow trees makes a nest of green moss lines it with wool & cowhair lays 9 eggs blue like the hedge-sparrows but smaller makes a plaintive chirp

PETTICHAP* 9
a little bird about the size of a wren that has a note something like 'Pettichap' whence its name this note it keeps repeating as it hops about the tops of trees I never yet coud see one to examine it as they are constantly in motion & generaly buried in the closest thickets it makes a curious nest in low bushes I saw one today in Gunworth Ferry Thicket at Milton

HEDGE SPARROW 9
see first memorandum fond of building in gardens & homesteads it builds its nest in hedges & in bushes near the bottom

* Chiffchaff. See Journal for 22 April 1825.

SEDGE BIRD 10

this bird is a good deal like the white throat but larger it build[s] its nest among the sedge in marsh[es] of dead bents & [reeds ?] clung together with little knotts of spiders webbs often seen hanging among flowers lined with hair it is a deep thin nest & may be seen thro like a plaited basket its eggs are like the white throats of a dull white speckeld with bluish & brown spots it dwells in meadows & low places has a variety of short notes that can hardly be calld a song

BLACK CAP 11

a common bird of which there are two varietys the large & small the small is frequent in woods hopping about the grains of the oaks & making a twitting noise they are often in companys of 10 or a dozen together I think they build in old woodpeckers holes but I have not found their nest the large blackcap builds in old walls makes a nest like the blue cap of moss & cowhair & lays from 5 to 9 eggs larger than the bluecaps of a clear white freckled with pink spots

WHITE THROAT 14

a bird little known celebrated for its song which often imitates the nightingale [in] variety & loudness build[s] in woods on blackthorns generaly a thin carless nest of bents lined with hairs lays 5 eggs of a dirty green white spotted with brown & joceolat spots small white throat builds a nest of materials like the former but it chuses low clumps of brambles near the ground & I have often found it in beds of the keen nettle curiously fixed between them its eggs are white with small dirty spots it is as small as the wren & when put from its nest it hops out & runs on the ground in a serpentine direction so as to be readily mistake[n] for a mouse

YELLOW WILLOW WREN 18

not seen here

WILLOW BITER 18

it is of greenish color haunts willow trees & may be seen busily runing up the willow branches pecking at the young twigs whence its name it builds in the crevices & holes of

decayed willows I never found its nest with eggs tho I have found them with young

LITTLE WILLOW WREN 19

I think this is the little green bird that haunts woods & solitary places & builds its nest on the willow or on a small twig near it of green moss lined with feathers it is often taken for the Wrens

GOLDEN CRESTED WREN 19

so calld from having a narrow line of a bright yellow ring on its crown it is less than the wren it builds a very curious nest on the pine trees of Milton Park hanging it on the branches, & hanging it together with the glutinous substance or resin that oozes from the grains & were this not to be had its fastens its moss & other substances together like a basket I have never got a nest with eggs in it is very common about the shrubberys in Milton near the Hall but I hear from Artis that they are the smallest eggs among birds

WREN OR JENNY WREN 20

see first Memorandum it sometimes builds by the sides of trees but not often

REED WREN 22

The nest of this bird is a very curious one the inside is as round & not much longer than the inside of an hens egg shell it builds the outside of dead blades of grass & small water weeds & lines it in a very workman like manner with the down of the old last year reeds I found one near the horsepit in the meadow they build by the water wide in low bushes & sometimes among the reed it is like the sedge warbler but smaller its eggs are of a dusty color matted with irregular lines or long dots at the large end & paler ones & smaller ones intermixed

WHEATEAR 23

builds on Caistor Old Field & on Emmonsails their nests is sometimes found by the cow boys they build on the ground & often in the old neglected rabbit holes I have never seen their nests

WINCHAT 27

I think I have seen the bird often in the Milton stone Quarries on the heath & I believe it is often calld a flye catcher or a spider catcher—I never found its nest that I know of

STONE CHAT 27

I think this bird is what the common people with us call the short taild wagtail—it frequents Milton stone quarrys on the heath & is a good deal like the smaller grey wagtail it builds in loose heaps of stones & in the crevises of the loose rocks it does not flye in ups & downs like the wagtail but flutters with short flights about the quarries it is found on different parts of the heath & seemingly fond of lone places

RED FLYCATCHER 64

not very common here builds in walls & under the eaves of stacks & ricks like the sparrow they dont spare for stuff making a very large nest

TITMOUSE 100

BLUE TITMOUSE 102

it is reckoned destructive to the young buds of trees by gardeners who take every means to destroy it it may be seen at spring busily employd hopping from twig to twig about the apple trees it is very fond of hanging by its legs under the branches & looking upwards into buds etc this is a [habit?] peculiar to titmice & they may be often seen in this situation see first Mem

COLE TITMOUSE 103

I dont know anything of this bird

LONG TAILD TITMOUSE 103

or Bumbarrel Pudding bags
Feather pokes see first Memoranda

MARSH TITMOUSE OR BLACKCAP 104

This is what we call the little blackcap it haunts & builds in the neglected holes of the small Woodpecker it keeps constantly in motion hopping among the oak tops & pecking uttering a double tootly note at the same time

BEARDED TITMOUSE 103

I know nothing of this bird

CHIMNEY SWALLOW

they come about the middle of april & I observe on their first visit that they follow the course of brooks & rivers I have observed this for years & always found them invariably pursuing their first flights up the banks of the meadow streams & I have always observed that they come eastward they build their nests in chimneys of dust straw & feathers generaly choosing the side were the currents of smoke is the strongest they lay 5 eggs of a dirty white freckled with pink spots they often make their nests under brig arches when I was a boy I found one yearly under a low arch that overstrid a dyke at the entrance to woodcroft house—they collect together in the autumn & learn their young to fly on their chimneys to rest then the old ones come & feed them When more usd to flye they venture wider circuits & leave the place were they were bred altogether chusing the battlements of the church as a place of rest—they generaly haunt rivers & brooks before the start & may be seen settling 4 or 5 together on twigs of Osiers beside the stream that bend with them till they nearly touch the water—they make westward when they start & often return agen resting by flocks on churches & trees in the village as if they were making attempts before they started for good

SAND MARTIN 126

We have none of these in our neighbourhood but they are very numerous about the upland neighbourhood & a man with whom I burnt lime said they build their nests by scores on the side of a quarry were he worked near Northampton

SWIFT 140

this coms last & retires the earliest it remains the longest on the wing & continues its circuit round churches & old castles it makes a curious nest of cobwebs lined with hair or feathers lays 5 eggs freckled with dark spots it builds in crevices of the church walls & in large houses were boys find very difficult access to get it the clerk found an old one in the church last

year that lay on the ground with its wings spread out in an helpless posture as if dead he brought it to me & set it were I woud it coud not flye nor ever made the least attempts its legs was very short & muffled with feathers like a bantum its wings were long & narrow & curved at the fore corner [on] each eye a small tuft of feathers which nearly hid them this I suppose is a convenience of nature to keep the sharp air from hurting the eyes as the swiftness of their flight must have made the wind very sharp

MARTIN 122

Martins do not come till after the swallow & seldom make their appearance till may they make their nests under the eaves of houses were some people deem them sacred & reckon the appearance of a Martins nest under their eaves as a good Omen & as a charm against thunder & lighting on which also the large house it is considerd an infallable safe-guard & planted on the rigs & roofs for that purpose— Childern are cautioned not to destroy them in the fear of incurring therebye almost an unforgiva[ble] offence to their maker & if a hardend boy happens to destroy one his parents consider that something serious will befall him thus they gain an asylum under most cottages were otherwise they woud find none [They] line their nests with straw & feathers & lay 5 eggs nearly white but on close examination they are shadowd with feint red spots—the sparrow is an unfeeling enemy to these birds & when its nest is nearly finished they will take it by storm & make use of it themselves in these emergencies the martins will both occupy the nest & keep in for days together while the besieging robbers sit as patiently on the thatch above watching the opertunity to enter & when the Martins are pined out & forced to leave their nest for food the cock sparrow seizes the chance imediatly & the poor martins find on their return a determined occupant who resists the lawful possesion of their house—some times they return the insult afterwards by an odd revenge when the old sparrows leave the nest for food as they will do when they have been in quiet possesion of it awhile they instantly sally to the nest were others of their companions as I have often seen join help in hand & block up the entrance till the hole is

too small for the sparrows to enter who on their return may fancy some stragedy [strategy?] is laid to entrap them leave it with little or no hesitation to regain an entrance—for I have observed that the sparrow cannot get into the hole of a finished nest who always watches to seize the possesion before she has finished the entrance adding the lining of straw & feathers themselves & one of these can easily be known by straw hanging out of the hole as they use more lining than the martin

NIGHT JAR 146

not common here (see letter on Fern Owl) but found on Emmonsals heath they make a carless nest of loose grass on the ground & lay 3 eggs not unlike the wood owls of a yellowish white blotted largly with dark spots

RING DOVE 162

they are so common as not to need a description of their nests or eggs—my tame ones begun to want to couple & as there is no cockbird among them they often want to get their liberty to seek a mate—they will begin very orderly to build a nest of sticks if any be thrown in the cage & pull anything into it for that purpose within reach—two of them has this season concieved a great hatred against the other & they have beat it so much that I was forced to take it out of the cage or they woud have killed it—they do not show that fondness for each other in their amourous moods as the coat piegon whom I have often observed at spring sitting on the coat & feeding each other & expressing many other symptoms of fondness & affection

TURTLE 180

none here

COCK 210

This is one of the pleasantest companions of the cottage & Farm yard there are a great variety of sorts & the Bantum is the most harmless to a garden & tho as consieted among its wives as the best game a sparrow at the barn door will almost venture to give it battle & dispute a real right of the [place?] that it finds—the crow of the cock has been long &

generaly attributed as the break up warning of ghosts & Faireys & therefore is reckoned as a cheery sound in the long nights of winter—it has been considered as a bad omen to hear the cock crow before morning but it is generaly know[n] that game cocks crow at all hours of the night in the fighting season—Some Cocks are inveterate to chickens & others will scratch for them & brood them like the hen

PHEASANT 222

makes its nest on the ground in bushy borders on the sides of commons & sometimes in woods side tho seldom as the Fox is its mortal enemy there & endued with ready [scrutiny?] to find the nest it lays 16 18 & often 20 eggs of a plain green ash color like the Partridge but longer as soon as the birds are hatchd they leave the nest & follow the hen Peasant who clucks & calls them like a hen in sitting time the old ones sit as close on the nest as to be easily taken a fellow last year found a nest in a wheat close by the wood side she sat hard & he caught her on the nest the next day he went agen & the Cock had taken her place & sat on the eggs but he did not sit so close as the hen & flew off before the unfeeling fellow caught him—I was told of the nest & went twice when the Cock bird was on but the third time something had destroyd the eggs & wether the Cock followd the fate of the hen I cannot tell he appeard to sit in good earnest as if he intended to hatch them There is sometimes a variety of these birds found I saw one last year which I fancied a hen the color of the cock that wanted the red rim round the eye & had a short tail—pure white ones are somtimes found here generaly cocks one Henderson got & stuffed the other pheasants having fought & beaten it to death—they live on insects in summer & on acorns & hips & awes in Autumn & winter & are very fond of a sort of little fungus that grows on the oak leaves & drop off towards Autumn—the young ones if hatchd under a hen are hard to tame or raise up but it is somtimes done & I knew an old woman fond of fowl that raised a Cock bird till it was as tame as the fowl in the yard & it cohabited with the hens but its breed lost most of [the] likness to the Peasant & took more after the hens

APPENDIX

TURKEY 242

The Turkey is a proud helpless fowl & hardly capable of feeding itself a farmer of Lolham raised 3 or 4 hundred every season & a man is kept to tend them in the closes they are very fond of feeding on pismires & on awes in autumn they are great cowards & the Guinea bird & Cock can both drive them they have great antipathy against anything of a red color & drop their shottles & attack every one in a red cloak or neckerchief—they are fond of laying in hedge rows away from home their eggs are of a dirty white spotted with red spots

GUINEA HEN 248

These are at the best but half domesticated fowl for they flye about as well as a partridge & lay about the closes like a wild bird nor will they sit on their own eggs unless they are left to sit in the hedgerows were they made their nest they are bold among fowl & often attack & beat by their excessive nimble-ness a game cock their eggs are of a beautiful flesh color

PEACOCK 252

WOOD GROUSE 260

none here

HEATH COCK

BLACK COCK 262

RED GROUSE 265

WHITE GROUSE OR TARMIGAN 266

PARTRIDGE 278

Scrats a hole in the wheat lands & makes no nest lays from 14 to 18 eggs of an ash color like the peasants but lets the young ones run as soon as they leave the shells—the part-ridge has a very pleasant call in the evening among the wheat calling its mate or young together—it is not a timid bird but in the shooting season is pursued with such unfeeling anxiety by the sportsman & his dogs that it seems to lose all fear in the confusion & will flye into a house or any were from danger & suffer itself to be taken by the hand—one entered a

house next door to mine last year & seemd as tame & as confident of protection as a chicken but the tenant being as heartless as the sportsmen—it was killd & eaten—a very curious one with bared wings & a blue patch like the jay bird was shot in Allwalton field by a gentleman & sent as a curiosity to Mr Artis

MOUNTAIN PARTRIDGE 284

RED PARTRIDGE 285

QUAIL 293

The quail is in shape & color very much like the Partridge but smaller it is a very shy bird & is seldom urged to take wing they make a nest on the ground with long grass in the meadow ground or wheat field they lay a great number of eggs like the Partridge from 10 to 16 & 18 they are shorter & smaller than the partridge of a greenish white spotted with lilac & dark joceolate spots they resemble the more-hens in color as the landrail does those of the Pewet—it is called wet-my-foot by the common people from its note which exactly resembles those words & when weeders & haymakers hear it frequently repeat it they give out that it will be wet which they consider a certain sign—I used to find several of their nests when I was a boy by following the mowers & I never found them with less than 9 & often with as many as 18 they differ from the partridge Pheasant & Landrail by putting grass in the hole for a nest as the others never do—the young ones leave the nest as soon as hatchd & run very swift—when the old one sits she sits very close I have heard my father say that he has mown over them before the old one woud fly off they are birds of passage & come in may I have heard them about the 10th never earlier

GREAT BUSTARD 303

LITTLE BUSTARD 305

OYSTER CATCHER 331

WHITE SPOONBILL 332

one shot here about 12 years back

APPENDIX

CRANE 341

HOOPERS 348

a bird with this name often flyes over our [Fens] in droves like wild geese

HERON 358

they feed on frogs toads & snakes as well as fish they build on tall trees in rookerys like crows of twenty or thirty together they make a nest of sticks & line it with wool leaving a hole in the bottom for the young ones to put their legs thro as they are very long they lay from 3 to 5 eggs not as large as a hens of a slender shape & a dirty yellowish ash color spoted & scrawled with brown & reddish lines & spots—they are said never to meddle with the fish in the neighboring waters were they build always going a great distance for their food—there is a good many builds their nests every year on the Firdale trees in the Old Island pond at Milton

WHITE HERON 361

NIGHT RAVEN 362

BITTERN 381

the bittern called here the butter bump from the odd loud noise resembling that word haunts Whittlesea Mere lays in the reed shaws—about the size of the Heron flyes up right into the sky morning & evening & hides all day see Letter etc etc

LITTLE BITTERN 383

LITTLE BROWN BITTERN 387

GLOSSY IBIS 390

CURLEW 400

very common here in winter coming down with the floods they haunt Marshes & boggy paths in summer & makes their nest like the Pewit on the bare ground among rushes &c laying from 3 to 5 eggs of a dirty white color

WHIMBREL 404

not known by this name here

WOODCOCK 405

I have seen odd ones here till the beginning of may & I often thought that such never went away but stayed here

SNIPE 410

Snipes are often seen with us in summer & their nests have been found but I cannot say further

I saw one yesterday (12th of May) it sat so close that I likened to set my foot on it I examined the place & I fancied it was preparing a nest in the midst of a large tuft of fog or dead grass common on the heaths

JUDCOCK OR JACK SNIPE 414

not known here

COMMON GODWIT 418

very common about the fen lays on the ground in Tuffets of grass & rushes

CINEREOUS GODWIT 419

unknown here

CAMBRIDGE GODWIT 419

not known here

LEPER GODWIT 419

unknown

GREEN SHANK 420

known in the Fens near the Sea

RED SHANK 422

very common in the Fen about Oxney

SPOTTED RED SHANK 422

I know nothing of it

KNOT 425

very common in our fens they lay on the ground like most other fen birds

RUFFS & REEVES 426

they [come] in great droves in spring to our fens & are caught in netts the male is calld a Ruff & the female a Reeve they build on the ground & breed here

SHORE SAND PIPER 428
unknown to me

GREEN SAND PIPER 428
unknown

GAMBLET 429
unknown to me

ASH COLORED SANDPIPER 429
unknown here

COMMON SANDPIPER 430
has been seen here

GREENWHICH SANDPIPER 432
unknown

BLACK SAND PIPER 433
unknown to me

SPOTTED SANDPIPER 433

RED LEGGED SANDPIPER 433
said to be common here

LINCOLNSHIRE SANDPIPER 439
unknown to me

DUNLIN 439
unknown to me

PEWEES 440
I have seen flocks of them about our meadows they appear very [poetic?] to the landscape sometimes turning their bellys & then backs uppermost which shades white & black alternatly which has a fine effect over the flooded meadows

LITTLE STINT 441
unknown to me

TURNSTONE OR SEA DOTTEREL 442
unknown to me

NORTHERN DOTTEREL 443
I know nothing about it

RED PHILLAROPE 444

GREY PHILLAROPE 444

said to be seen in England
not known here

GREY PLOVER 446

not known here

PEEWIT* 446

they are as common as crows here in spring they lay on the ground & make no nest but use a horse footing or any hollow they can find they lay 4 eggs of an olive green color splashed with large black spots & the narrow points of the eggs are always laid inwards they have a way of decoying any thing from their young or nest by swopping & almost tumbling over before them as if wounded & going to fall uttering their harsh screaming note but when near the nest they are silent & fly off in another direction which is always a signal to the egg hunters that the nest is at hand shepherds with us train their dogs to hunt the nests & many people make it their employment in spring to find them often getting as much as 3d apiece for the eggs the young run as soon as they are out of their shells—Peewits are easily tamed & are often kept in gardens were they are said to do much good by destroying the slugs & worms on which they feed

NORFOLK PLOVER 453

I know nothing of it
here we have plovers often but they never stay to breed as I have heard tho they are common in the fen

GOLDEN PLOVER 455

known in the fens

DOTTEREL 462

very numerous & well known in the fens were it breeds on the ground

RING DOTTEREL 464

have been seen here

SANDERLING TOWILLIE 465

I dont know it

* Surely a repetition of 'pewees' on preceding page.

STINT PLOVER 466

not seen here

LAND RAIL 468

lay on the ground

the little ones run as soon as they break thro the shell

WATERCRAIK 469

it is very scarce here but has been seen & its nest found

WATER RAIL OR BROOK OUZIL 471

not known here

WATER HEN 481

they are very common with us they make a nest of flags & bullrushes lined with grass & place it on a branch of thorn or willow hanging over the stream & sometimes they make it on a clump of bullrushes in the middle of the stream they lay 9 eggs of a pale ash color spotted with lilac & joceolate colored spots the young are covered with brown down & take the water as soon as they get out of the shell

COOT 489

the coot is like the more-hen in its habits but larger it haunts lakes or meadows & solitary marshes but never builds its nest on branches that overhang the stream—it beats down a place in the midst of a reedbed or flag clump & rests its nest on them that touches the water it lays a great number of eggs as many as 12 or 14 larger than the more-hens of a dirty white color spotted with dull spots the nest is made of flags bullrushes & grass like a more hens but it is wove together so stout as to resist the floods that happen to rise while she sits on her eggs & if the nest looses its hold of the rushes it floats on the top of the water like a boat & the old one is said to sit on it unconserned but I have not seen this tho I have found a nest landed on dry land as left by the floods with the eggs in it unmolested—the young ones take to the water as soon as they leave the shells & return to it at night like the more-hen these birds are subject to lice which is so common to them that it has grown into a saying that anything filthy is 'as lousy as a coot'

APPENDIX

COMMON AVOCET 492
common in the fens

PUFFIN AUK 512
Artis has one of this tribe which was shot in the fens

RAZOR BILL 516

GREENLAND DOVE 518

GREAT CRESTED GREBE or ash colored loon called her[e] 530
GAUNTS
common about the fen dykes & on Whittlesea Mere

EARD GREBE OR EARD DOBCHICK 531
said to inhabit & breed in great numbers near Spalding

BLACK & WHITE DOBCHICK 533
found in the fens

LITTLE GREBE 534
one shot on Milton fishpond by Henderson it dived & remaind under water for 10 minutes together

GUILLEMOT 536
found about the marshes near the sea in the fen

BLACK GUILLEMOT 537
found in the fens near the sea

IMBER DIVER OR EATER GOOSE 540

LITTLE IMBER 541

SPECKELD DIVER 542

RAIN GOOSE 544
so called from their appearance being considerd as a sign of rain

COMMON OR GREAT TERN 549
has been shot at Whittlesea Mere

SANDWICH TERN 551

HERRING GULL 559
said to be common about Boston

APPENDIX

SCAUP

COMMON GULL OR SEA MEW 561

very common in the fens & marshes near the sea

WINTER GULL OR CODDY MODDY CAUDY MAUDY 562

these gulls come up in flocks to our meadows in flood time & feed on something that it leaves they dabble about as high as their knees were it is shallow there is an old rhyme about them but what it aludes to I cannot say

BLACK HEADED GULL 562

said to build about Whittlesea Mere & Holbeach Marsh

KITTIWAKE OR ANNETT 564

SKUA OR BROWN GULL 565

I think this bird answers to the description of one shot last winter by B. Price it had been seen feeding on carrion in the fields

PETRELS

GOOSANDER 586

said to be common in the Fens about Boston

DUN DIVER 587

RED BREASTED MERGANSER 588

SMEW OR WHITE NUN 589

RED HEADED SMEW

LOUGH DIVER

BLACK MERGANSER 591

WILD SWAN 592

they often go over here in large flocks flying in figures like wild geese but a great deal higher while one keeps uttering a hoarse noise

SPANISH GOOSE 597

I think the wild ones are what we call Conks

GREAT GOOSE 597

APPENDIX

CANADA OR CRAVAT GOOSE 598

said to be common about Boston

GREY LAG OR COMMON WILD GOOSE 602

very common here were they are said to breed Mr Pennant says he saw the [flocks] of Geese pulling baere & that they pulled goss lys that were not above 6 weeks old I have no hesitation in saying that Mr Pennant is a Liar

WHITE FRONTED GOOSE 608

BEAN GOOSE 609

BRENT GOOSE 610

all these said to be common in the fens & marshes

BARNACLE GOOSE 611

one shot by Henderson below Peterboro

EIDER DUCK 619

VELVET DUCK 623

SCOTER 624

one shot on the River Nen by Henderson

WILD DUCK 626

common in the fens & some have been known to breed in our meadows make a curious nest—a half wild sort fly in crowds about the fens in harvest & eat great quantitys of the mown corn—account of a Decoy

SCAUP DUCK 630

SHIELD DRAKE 632

CLUCKING DUCK 635

TUFTED DUCK 636

PINTAIL DUCK OR SEA PHEASANT 642

LONG TAILED DUCK 643

SHOVELER 648

one shot by Artis in the River Nen

APPENDIX

RED BREASTED SHOVELER 650

WIDGEON 652

very common in the fens here

POCHARD OR GREAT HEADED WIDGEON 654

GOLDEN EYE 656

MORILLION 658

GARGANEY 659

COMMON TEAL 660

common here in Winter

SUMMER TEAL 663

CORMORANT 676

one shot here by Porter a schoolmaster on the high elm trees that stood by long close pond in a hard frost

SOLON GOOSE 686

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