



## A poem by John Clare

The Harvard community has made this article openly available. [Please share](#) how this access benefits you. Your story matters

Citation	Rollins, Hyder E. 1949. A poem by John Clare. Harvard Library Bulletin III (1), Winter 1949: 147-148.
Citable link	<a href="https://nrs.harvard.edu/URN-3:HUL.INSTREPOS:37363422">https://nrs.harvard.edu/URN-3:HUL.INSTREPOS:37363422</a>
Terms of Use	This article was downloaded from Harvard University's DASH repository, and is made available under the terms and conditions applicable to Other Posted Material, as set forth at <a href="http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:dash.current.terms-of-use#LAA">http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:dash.current.terms-of-use#LAA</a>

reversion of certain lands acquired from his relative Ralph Wood. Greene, whose second wife was sister to Taylor's first wife, and whose son Thomas was third in remainder to the whole of Taylor's estates, was con-

cerned in this action, in which Taylor was finally defeated.<sup>14</sup>

HERMAN W. LIEBERT

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Taylor, *A Life of John Taylor* (London, 1910), pp. 64 ff.

## A Poem by John Clare

JOHN CLARE'S third volume, *The Shepherd's Calendar*, published by John Taylor in 1827, sold very badly, and while the poet was in London early in 1828 Taylor suggested that he buy at cost as many copies of the book as he liked and try himself to sell them locally. After much discussion of the proposal with his friends, Clare decided to accept it, and, leaving London at the end of March, he became 'a perambulating bookseller, hawker of his own poetical ware.'<sup>1</sup> The perambulation and hawking were unsuccessful and humiliating. With eight dependents — a wife, five children, and two parents — in his cottage, Clare's financial affairs were desperate; and hence, while continuing to peddle his books, he tried to add to his funds by sending poems to London annuals and magazines.

In these straits he wrote the following letter, now in the Harvard College Library, to Samuel Carter Hall (1800–1889), editor of the *Annulet* (1826–1836) and sub-editor or editor of the *New Monthly Magazine* from 1830 to 1836. Hall's wife, Anna Maria

<sup>1</sup> Frederick Martin, *The Life of John Clare* (London and Cambridge, 1865), p. 216. See also J. L. Cherry, *Life and Remains of John Clare* (London and Northampton, 1873), p. 107, and J. W. and Anne Tibble, *John Clare* (London, 1932), p. 301.

Fielding (1800–1881), novelist and miscellaneous writer, was herself editor of the *Juvenile Forget-Me-Not*, first published in 1828.

Address: S. C. Hall Esq / 2 East Place / Kennington Road / Lambeth / London / Favoured by / Mr H. Behnes.<sup>2</sup>

Dear Sir

This Poem has been written out a long while for Mrs Hall but I was prevented from sending it by some tormenting & distracting matters that are always occurring in a family mans affairs<sup>3</sup> — Disappointments I have met with so often that they cease to be any thing but the name & so it is with the Magazine I did not write to them [in] time enough but I did send to them a Poem within 3 days of Publication which I wrote out under such inability that I was obliged to send 2 days after that a corrected copy with a desire that they would cancel the other it was 'Impulses of Spring' which I fancied not much amiss<sup>4</sup> I wish you

<sup>2</sup> Henry Behnes, the sculptor (died 1837), made for John Taylor a bronze bust of Clare that after Taylor's death (1864) was bought by Frederick Martin (*The Life of John Clare*, p. 217 n.), and is now in the Northampton Public Library.

<sup>3</sup> His fifth child, born in April, was christened on May 4 (the same, pp. 226 f.).

<sup>4</sup> Clare refers to the *New Monthly Magazine*, which did publish his 'Ballad' ('If love be such a wilderness') in 1828 (XXII, 520). According to J. W. Tibble, *The Poems of John Clare* (London, 1935), I, xxii, 429–433, 'Impulses of Spring' was first published in 1835.

would request the Publishers to send the Magazine direct to me as I have not got the others yet & per[haps] they would let me have the back Nos to compleat it as I shall wish to write for it in earnest & I wish to hear as soon as convenient how Mrs Hall likes the 'Grasshopper'<sup>6</sup> when you can tell me if the[y] insert the ~~above~~ Poem above mentioned in this Month

I am yours &c

John Clare

May 13. 1828

Enclosed in the letter was the following pretty song: —

*Verses*

The winter comes dreary  
In frost & in snow  
A sun shall come cheery  
& bid them all go  
The spring it shall greet with  
Its songs & its showers  
The summer shall meet with  
Its dancing & flowers

But alas for the lover  
Thats loved not again  
No art can discover  
A cure for the pain  
Full dark is the token

<sup>6</sup> Cherry, p. 103, says, 'Mrs. Hall, on behalf of Messrs. Ackermann, sent him in October, 1828, three guineas for "The Grasshopper," and in the following month Mr. Hall wrote "Enclosed you will receive £5 for your contributions to the 'Amulet' and the 'Juvenile Forget-Me-Not.'" 'The Grasshopper' appeared in this latter annual 'for 1829,' pp. 118-128.

Of pleasures adieu  
The heart that is broken  
No hopes can renew

The star falls in darkness  
To be no more seen  
& leaves a blank markless  
Where splendour hath been  
On the shore speedy drying  
Noughts seen of the wave  
So the heart for love dying  
Sinks into the grave.

John Clare

Helpstone Sept<sup>r</sup> 13. 1827

Clare's 'Verses' are presumably unpublished,<sup>6</sup> as Mrs Hall did not include them in the *Juvenile Forget-Me-Not* 'for 1829' or 'for 1830' or in the only issue ('for 1830') examined of the *Forget-Me-Not* of Rudolph Ackermann (1764-1834). Hall is described by the Tibbles<sup>7</sup> as a man 'whose letters had been full of friendly professions, but who was unwilling, or unable, to pay for the many poems he accepted.' Perhaps he showed Clare's poem to his wife, but for one reason or another he kept the manuscript unpublished in his own files.

HYDER E. ROLLINS

<sup>6</sup> They are not printed in Cherry's *Life and Remains*, Arthur Symonds' *Poems by John Clare* (London, 1908), Edmund Blunden and Alan Porter's *John Clare: Poems* (London, 1920), or J. W. Tibble's *The Poems of John Clare*.

<sup>7</sup> *John Clare*, p. 303.

## The Treasure Room of the Law School Library

THE Treasure Room of the Harvard Law School Library, located at the north end of the Langdell Hall Reading Room, was opened for use 15 August 1948.

The room was built to house and preserve the world's greatest collection of legal rarities. First plans were drawn early in 1943, but construction was delayed by war conditions and,

## List of Contributors

HENRY R. SHEPLEY, Coolidge, Shepley, Bulfinch & Abbott, Boston, Massachusetts

KEYES D. METCALF, Professor of Bibliography, Director of the Harvard University Library, and Librarian of Harvard College

MICHAEL J. WALSH, Goodspeed's Book Shop, Boston, Massachusetts

HAMILTON VAUGHAN BAIL, Treasurer of the Franklin Institute, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

MARGARET CURRIER, Librarian of the Peabody Museum, Harvard University

MERTON M. SEALTS, JR, Assistant Professor of English, Lawrence College

S. F. JOHNSON, Instructor and Tutor in the Department of English, Harvard University

NANCY G. CABOT, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts

HERMAN W. LIEBERT, Research Assistant, Yale University

HYDER E. ROLLINS, Gurney Professor of English Literature, Harvard University

ELEANOR N. LITTLE, Treasure Room, Law School Library, Harvard University