

This Lime Tree Bower my Prison
by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Notes

Well, they are gone, and here must I remain,
This lime-tree bower my prison ! I have lost
Beauties and feelings, such as would have been
Most sweet to my remembrance even when age
Had dimm'd mine eyes to blindness ! They, meanwhile,
Friends, whom I never more may meet again,
On springy heath, along the hill-top edge,
Wander in gladness, and wind down, perchance,
To that still roaring dell, of which I told ;
The roaring dell, o'erwooded, narrow, deep,
And only speckled by the mid-day sun ;
Where its slim trunk the ash from rock to rock
Flings arching like a bridge ;--that branchless ash,
Unsun'd and damp, whose few poor yellow leaves
Ne'er tremble in the gale, yet tremble still,
Fann'd by the water-fall ! and there my friends
Behold the dark green file of long lank weeds,
That all at once (a most fantastic sight !)
Still nod and drip beneath the dripping edge
Of the blue clay-stone.

Now, my friends emerge
Beneath the wide wide Heaven--and view again
The many-steepled tract magnificent
Of hilly fields and meadows, and the sea,
With some fair bark, perhaps, whose sails light up
The slip of smooth clear blue betwixt two Isles
Of purple shadow ! Yes ! they wander on
In gladness all ; but thou, methinks, most glad,
My gentle-hearted Charles ! for thou hast pined
And hunger'd after Nature, many a year,
In the great City pent, winning thy way
With sad yet patient soul, through evil and pain
And strange calamity ! Ah ! slowly sink
Behind the western ridge, thou glorious Sun !
Shine in the slant beams of the sinking orb,
Ye purple heath-flowers ! richlier burn, ye clouds !
Live in the yellow light, ye distant groves !
And kindle, thou blue Ocean ! So my friend
Struck with deep joy may stand, as I have stood,
 Silent with swimming sense ; yea, gazing round
 On the wide landscape, gaze till all doth seem
 Less gross than bodily ; and of such hues
As veil the Almighty Spirit, when yet he makes
 Spirits perceive his presence.

A delight

Comes sudden on my heart, and I am glad
 As I myself were there ! Nor in this bower,
 This little lime-tree bower, have I not mark'd
 Much that has sooth'd me. Pale beneath the blaze
 Hung the transparent foliage ; and I watch'd
 Some broad and sunny leaf, and lov'd to see
 The shadow of the leaf and stem above
 Dappling its sunshine ! And that walnut-tree
 Was richly ting'd, and a deep radiance lay
 Full on the ancient ivy, which usurps
 Those fronting elms, and now, with blackest mass
 Makes their dark branches gleam a lighter hue
 Through the late twilight : and though now the bat
 Wheels silent by, and not a swallow twitters,
 Yet still the solitary humble-bee
 Sings in the bean-flower ! Henceforth I shall know
 That Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure ;
 No plot so narrow, be but Nature there,
 No waste so vacant, but may well employ
 Each faculty of sense, and keep the heart
 Awake to Love and Beauty ! and sometimes
 'Tis well to be bereft of promis'd good,
 That we may lift the soul, and contemplate
 With lively joy the joys we cannot share.
 My gentle-hearted Charles ! when the last rook
 Beat its straight path across the dusky air
 Homewards, I blest it ! deeming its black wing
 (Now a dim speck, now vanishing in light)
 Had cross'd the mighty Orb's dilated glory,
 While thou stood'st gazing ; or, when all was still,
 Flew creaking o'er thy head, and had a charm
 For thee, my gentle-hearted Charles, to whom
 No sound is dissonant which tells of Life.

To the Skylark by William Wordsworth

Ethereal minstrel! pilgrim of the sky!
 Dost thou despise the earth where cares
 abound?
 Or, while the wings aspire, are heart and eye
 Both with thy nest upon the dewy ground?
 Thy nest which thou canst drop into at will,
 Those quivering wings composed, that music
 still!

Leave to the nightingale her shady wood;
 A privacy of glorious light is thine;
 Whence thou dost pour upon the world a
 flood
 Of harmony, with instinct more divine;
 Type of the wise who soar, but never roam;
 True to the kindred points of Heaven and
 Home!

On the writing of this poem:

On July 2, 1797, Samuel Coleridge, with Dorothy Wordsworth sitting beside him, drove from Racedown in Dorset to Nether Stowey in Somerset, and for about two weeks the small cottage behind Tom Poole's hospitable mansion sheltered William and Dorothy and perhaps Basil Montague's little boy, whom they were educating, besides Coleridge and Mrs. Coleridge and Hartley the baby and Nanny their maid. To fill up the measure, Charles Lamb joined them on the 7th and stayed a week. Coleridge, writing to Southey, says:

'The second day after Wordsworth came to me, dear Sara accidentally emptied a skillet of boiling milk on my foot, which confined me during the whole time of C. Lamb's stay, and still prevents me from all walks longer than a furlong. While Wordsworth, his sister, and Charles Lamb were out one evening, sitting in the arbour of T. Poole's garden, which communicates

with mine, I composed these lines, with which I am pleased.'

In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

From Richard III – William Shakespeare

Look, what thy soul holds dear, imagine it
To lie that way thou go'st, not whence thou com'st.
Suppose the singing birds musicians,
The grass whereon thou tread'st the presence strew'd,
The flowers fair ladies, and thy steps no more
Than a delightful measure or a dance;
For gnarling sorrow hath less power to bite
The man that mocks at it and sets it light.

From "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning by John Donne

Dull sublunary lovers' love

(Whose soul is sense) cannot admit

Absence, because it doth remove

Those things which elemented it.

But we by a love so much refined,

That our selves know not what it is,

earth

Inter-assured of the mind,

Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.

Our two souls therefore, which are one,

Though I must go, endure not yet

A breach, but an expansion,



Like gold to airy thinness beat.