

**Sonnet: 'I dreaded walking where there was no path'**

I dreaded walking where there was no path  
And pressed with cautious tread the meadow swath  
And always turned to look with wary eye  
And always feared the owner coming by;  
Yet everything about where I had gone  
Appeared so beautiful I ventured on  
And when I gained the road where all are free  
I fancied every stranger frowned at me  
And every kinder look appeared to say  
You've been on trespass in your walk today.  
I've often thought the day appeared so fine,  
How beautiful if such a place were mine;  
But having nought I never feel alone  
And cannot use another's as my own.

Composed sometime between 1832 and 1837, when Clare was living in Northborough.

*John Clare*. Edited by R. K. R. Thornton. London: Everyman, 1997. 9–10.  
With grateful thanks to Professor Thornton.