

## The Gipsy Camp

The snow falls deep; the Forest lies alone:  
The boy goes hasty for his load of brakes,  
Then thinks upon the fire and hurries back;  
The Gipsy knocks his hands and tucks them up,  
And seeks his squalid camp, half hid in snow,  
Beneath the oak, which breaks away the wind,  
And bushes close, with snow like hovel warm:  
There stinking mutton roasts upon the coals,  
And the half-roasted dog squats close and rubs,  
Then feels the heat too strong and goes aloof;  
He watches well, but none a bit can spare,  
And vainly waits the morsel thrown away:  
'Tis thus they live – a picture to the place;  
A quiet, pilfering, unprotected race.

Written in 1841 while was resident in an asylum in High Beach, Epping Forest, this sonnet is one of a group of poems Clare handed to Cyrus Redding, who published them with an accompanying essay in his new and short-lived *English Journal*, across two issues, on [15 May 1841 \(305–9\)](#) and [29 May 1841 \(340–3\)](#).

*John Clare*. Edited by R. K. R. Thornton. London: Everyman, 1997. 22.  
With grateful thanks to Professor Thornton.