**This Lime-tree Bower my Prison**

By [Samuel Taylor Coleridge](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/samuel-taylor-coleridge)

*[Addressed to Charles Lamb, of the India House, London]*

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,

Unsunn'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 along 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 creeking o'er thy head, and had a charm

For thee, my gentle-hearted Charles, to whom

No sound is dissonant which tells of Life.