



Letters From An English Farm

David Myatt

The Last Week Of March

The work of the day having ended, I sit against a fence a little sheltered from the cooling wind. It has been a day of rain, then sun, and it is ending with clearing skies. There is time now to reflect on various things as I drink what remains of the green tea in my flask. I can hear the road - one stream, three hedges and two fields distant - and I do not envy the people speeding along in their vehicles from somewhere, to somewhere else. For I can sit with a notebook balanced on my knee and write another letter. I see things they cannot; I hear what they miss; I feel the weather. I feel the coolness of the wind, and the warmth of the sun on my hands and face; I see that the hawthorn buds have burst, and soon the slight pale green of leaves which shows will grow to deepen in colour; I watch the clouds as they move and change; I hear the song of many birds: Robin; Blackbird; Sparrow...

It is good to rest, like this, after a day of work. There is a definite satisfaction, for there will be money in exchange for the toil, and with the money comes not only a self-respect but also a certain security of time and place: food, a place to stay; maybe even a little self-indulgence, such as a pint of the local cider. And perhaps a little saved for the time when a new pair of boots, or a shirt or trousers, will be needed. So I am fortunate indeed. For there are millions in the world hungry, homeless, unable to afford new clothes.

There really is very little needed if we are to live, happy, without causing undue suffering to others.

Somewhere to dwell; hopefully someone to share that dwelling with, to love and give love; work enough to buy the food, the clothes, needed; a certain time - but not too much - to reflect, and watch the sky, the clouds, the stars; perhaps some children to raise and teach in a slow natural way, through example.

Who - apart from you, perhaps - would have thought I would write words such as this? Yes, I have changed, grown, these last years, as once you hoped when I turned again back to those other political things you then, in our Summer of knowing, knew nothing about. Changed, but too late, now, to change what was: to change how that Summer ended.... I am now, in one way, returned to the person you knew all those years ago; the person you remembered. Yet the calm, the inner peace, known then, shared, is deeper, born from so many diverse experiences, so much sorrow seen, known, in the years that have passed since then. And also because of the past years of hard, outdoor work of the kind there is, it seems, little of, these days. Such work has rooted me; slowed down my thoughts, given me the perspective of Nature. Not the unreal, romantic kind of perspective - some artist observing from his window or out on a ramble - but the close contact that each day brings when one is out in all weathers for eight, nine or ten hours or more hours a day, working with one's hands.

This rooting, this slowness of being, means that I have very little desire to travel again; to even stray from this one rural area. Most of what I need is here, within walking distance; a world within the world.

Thus, I know certain fields near where I live in great detail. The soil; the hedges; the trees; the life that lives within or passes through or overhead. I see, hear, experience, feel, this small part of the Earth change with each passing month, and because I see and feel this, and live within the time of such small changes, I am at home where my feet can take me. The hedge, the tree, the forgotten pond, the neglected one acre strip, the sky above, are like friends, a secret world.

Yet there is still that unfulfilled, often sad, longing for someone, who understands, to share what has become my simple life. Recently, I believed - hoped - I had found her.... But poems, words, could not change things. I respected her choice, made before we got to know each other, but her decision to remain with the person who was her choice was, and is, hard for me. Should I have strived, passionate, and rent them asunder? No, for I felt that would have been dishonourable. There is some solace, for the moment at least, in work, in more work. How many millions of people have felt like this, thousand year upon thousand year? Have we learnt anything?

But what still greatly surprises me - apart from my own foolish innocent hope in matters of love - is that things in the world are as they are; that a lot people are as they are. Things and people do not have to be what they are. We can control ourselves; we can empathize. We can do the honourable thing. But most of all we can will to be more than we are: we can consciously continue our evolution in a positive way, which means striving to avoid harming other people and the other life with which we share this planet. We can and could create a noble, free society, based as such a society must be on the concept, the ideal, of personal honour. Instead of evolving ourselves, and our societies, we

have regressed, creating impersonal modern States. We have lost, it seems, the slow rooted being, the natural thinking, that comes from staying, dwelling, toiling with our hands and ignoring what is beyond where we cannot walk in one day of walking.

But I have digressed - or rather, regressed, to old, worn, polemics. Must be the lack of cider.....

One Sunny Morning Early May

A sunny morning in early May has renewed, invigorated me; for here in the field where my tended plants grow - warmed and drawn-upward toward the life-liberating Sun - there is the now drying soil, warm to my touch; the birds, nesting, flying, perching, singing; the hedge, centuries-old, fully in leaf; the breeze playing verdant tunes upon the trees, which all now are green, and greener - even the Oak and the Ash; the midges, cascading, up, down, around, as if in rhythm to such verdant sounds.

Thus am I aware of how there is a symbiosis here between Sun and soil, between Sun and Earth: of how connected each part of Nature's emanations are to each other. There really is, here in this land, an awakening, new life, between early March and the beginning of May, and I feel so fortunate to be in this one place, working with my hands, touching, nurturing, seeing, sensing, this living, these beings. And it does not seem to matter - while this now hot Sun lasts and only wisps of high cloud obscure a little of the blue - that I am alone, having lost the woman I loved. For in such moments, such hours, I sense I am really not alone: for She is there, here; a numinous presence.... So I know how and where I should dwell for the years remaining to me, just as I know there should be, can be, is for me only the knowing of, the living of, the gentle propagation of, The Numinous Way. Anything else - politics, religion - is, for me, now, a dishonourable compromise that negates what I have learnt, discovered, felt, experienced, known.

Such emanations as I feel, know, here - now - are Her life: a life, a living, a presencing, we might know if only we slowly stayed, working, dwelling, in silence and long enough to sense, feel, experience, what grows as it grows, warmed, drawn-upward toward Sun and nurtured by the giving that is rain.

But what do we humans do? We ravish; we plunder; we exploit; we despoil; we destroy. We are unbalanced, mere ignorant children, lacking as many of us do an awareness of the beauty, the fragility, of the living, breathing, being which is our Earth: a being we seem intent on killing.

What if we who live upon this world are alone in the Cosmos, with the life that surrounds us being unique?

What do we do? Destroy, ignore, this miracle. And even if - as seems probable - we are not alone, will we ever grow up, act with reason, honour and empathy, and care for, and value, our home? What if we venture forth, into Space, as the dishonourable, exploitative, killing beings we have remained for far too long?

Yet here the Apple trees in the fields several hedges and a lane to my right are all in white bloom, and a few days ago, not long after Dawn, I heard a Cuckoo there, the second I have heard this year. Nearby, before the sunken narrow tree-lined lane descends, twisting, down to meet the stream, there is a cottage whose Wisteria is now abundant with its beautiful flowers, and walking along there in late Spring sunshine with the leaves and branches of trees rising up and shading so giving a special kind of space and light, I am reminded of those great English cathedrals with their vaulted columns and arches. Were such trees, such lanes - such a pagan intimation of a living Nature - their inspiration?

But it is now the time for me to eat my lunch before the work of the day resumes.....

Late September Summer Sun

There is only one thing more beautiful to me - one thing more which can bring such silent slow-falling tears of joy - than being alone in a rural field in England on a warm sunny day of blue sky, far from human noise, hearing only the song, the call, of birds, the breeze in leaves, grass, bush; seeing only tree, hedge, hand-sown crops, and grass. And that one thing is a woman: one who feels as I, who has the empathy, who understands the numen so presenced here, in Nature.

There is then a new earthly-being from the joining which silently, together, exults to become a wordless, joyful unity with the life, the greater-being, so presenced. No wonder then that I am annoyed when such a silence, such a field, such numinosity, is destroyed. No wonder then there is a sadness of loneliness.

How can I leave this land, to dwell elsewhere? Each day, each week, each month of each dark dull day in Winter is endured to savour such a warmth as this: I am at peace here, under Sun, where flies fly noisy from shade to warmth of Sun, and plants, feeling it is Spring, flower, again - to feed the still abounding flying, feeding, life around.

Truth, history, learning, sorrow, wisdom - all here. There has to be the sadness for it was born from the suffering that had to be - mine, others - to bear the gift of that empathy which changed and still changes this one life which as the Cumulus clouds drift and drifted on one world among so many.

So I cannot, must not, exchange this hard-won peace, this brief Sun, this growing, this silence of sorrow, for the

following of some cause in some land, far distant. It is this warm silence that I seek, that heals, that bears the very purpose and meaning of life. All that they suffered, toiled, died for I am - I have become. So there is peace when I remember as the flowering plant remembers to flower just as when, forgetting, I wander back, impatient - empathy's dormant Winter - to where those urban ways of abstract, disconnected thoughts traverse the Earth as dry poisoned dust, wind-borne, destroys.

Soon, there will be rain - already the clouds have come to cover the wonderful healing warmth of Sun. So I must remember, endure the six-month wait for the beauty, the warmth of one more English Summer.

This morning as I worked the Church bells tolled the Sunday hour, and I was pleased until, a mile or more distant, a raucous chain-saw sounded. It is the Crane-fly season - hordes fly up as I walk - and I wonder how long can such silence, such fields, such peace, such memories, survive?

One Week Beyond Mid-Spring

Another warm beautiful Spring day in the English fields of the kind that reminds how wonderful and simple life can and should be: there seem to be no problems here, by this small stream, and I sit on the now longish, greening grass beside it beneath a sky of variegated blue with only the sounds of birds for company. No breeze to stir the trees of the overgrown copse behind.

There, three yards away, a bare grass-free patch where animals have come to drink, leaving prints in the now dried mud: two deer, a fox.

There is no human-made war here; no rockets, missiles, bombs; and I am left again to wonder with sadness why our species never learns. Once, many times, anger at such injustice would have roused me, all but controlled me, and I would have sallied forth to try and make things better. But now: now, I feel only the centuries of longing that have brought some of our species to that perspective, that compassion, that empathy that has grown within me as grass grows with each warming Spring. Such a gift, this soil.....

Is this lack of action, by me, really the wisdom of age, experience, or only the weariness born of decades of strife? Or even caused because of feelings of personal love?

Yes, there was, is, a new love for me, but it is not returned as I dreamed and hoped, and so I strive to console myself by resting in places such as this, sensing the living being which is this world, and staring forth into sky and Space as if my own longing for worlds, lives, beyond might change what is into what can, could be: a world of reason, honour, empathy. And I am again as I was, decades ago, at times so suffused with a personal love that I have run miles bearing the only real gift I have, a love, word-wrought as a poem.

Who would have believed that I, with my past, at my age, would do such things, again? Love is strange: I was trembling when she telephoned..... but there was no meeting wherein the essence might flow between us again, and all I could do was sit, staring without thought out of the window of my room, listening to JS Bach's Art of Fugue as if my listening might still the feelings.

It was hope - and another lost love - which took me, once and a decade or more ago, to Egypt to travel in the desert as if such travelling might bring a forgetful peace. It did not work, despite the grim toil of that long journey, and it was only when I returned to Cairo that I forgot. I remember it so well: I had gone, out of politeness, to a concert to see and listen to some singer which some Egyptian I had met enthused about. And there was such beauty there, in her, her voice, in the music, as she sang of many things. Such sadness; such joy, such an embracing, for me, of another world, another culture.



I was at home there, listening, feeling, with the audience as the beautiful Samira Said sang, and ever since - in times of personal sadness, rejection, such as this - I remember her concert, or listen to her songs ¹, reminding me of how I am not alone, of how others have, and do, suffer, and have cried, and laughed, and sang of their problems, personal, political, social and otherwise. But most of all I remember that there is another world out there of different, vibrant, cultures, of good people striving in their daily mostly toiling lives with hope for a better more honourable world for themselves, their family, their children, their land.

Such beauty in this world; such a wonderful diversity. And yet such a terrible continuation of the barbarism that should by now belong to our past.

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(1) P.S. She seems to have now changed her musical style somewhat, less Arabic, more Western. And it is those earlier songs that I listen to.

One Day Early Spring

There is a lovely, simple, pleasure here in this field. Spring is most certainly here - in the meadow fields, seedlings of the late Spring flowers push up through the tufts of grass whose frost-bitten ends are joined by shoots of new growth. Already some flowers bloom in the grass: there, a Dandelion; there: almost two circles of Daisies. And, to compliment the calls and songs of other birds, the loud repeating call of the Parus Major.

It is good to be here, with an unobstructed view of the sky, and I watch the clouds, borne as they are on a still cool breeze that begins to chill my hands, a little. But there is Sun, warm, when the altocumulus breaks. On the horizon in the North, beyond the tall old Oak, small Cumulus clouds drift toward the hills, ten miles distant. Thus am I again - for these moments - at peace with myself, this world, listening as I do to a large flock of Starlings who chatter among themselves in the trees across from the drainage ditch, there by the copse of Ash, Oak, and a few young Beech.

It has been a long journey, to reach here - sitting peaceful in a field, aware of the life that lives around me and of which I am but one small, causal, mortal part. A journey through many lands, cultures and faiths; through deserts, over hills and mountains; across seas and lakes; along rivers and many, many paths. A long journey which I do not even now know if it has ended, or even if all of me desires it to end. For yes there is peace, stillness, here, and I am briefly one, sitting, standing, leaning, and balanced between land, clouds and sky, knowing the sadness that kept me plodding on often against what seemed my own will. A sadness born of mistakes; of seeing, experiencing, causing, suffering, breaking down as that suffering did my arrogance until the half-remembered often suppressed empathic truths came forcibly back, unable to be forgotten or covered-up again. No lies to save me.

Work, yes there must be work: toil enough to keep that balance. And work with these my hands, outdoors where lives the silence that I love as I feel the weather, changing, bringing thus an empathic living for me, in me, and for this life that lives around, emanating as it does in this grass, those trees, the clouds, the soil, the water, those flowers, the very sky itself.

But I fear for this world I have found - for fields such as this with their sights and sounds brought by their smallness bounded only by hedge and tree. For there is noise, around, encroaching; human-made, machine, noise; there is development, around, encroaching, destroying the life that is this life, this being, this living and this peace. And there is thus even more sadness, within me, because of such things.

So far - to find so little so great in its living. So far - to find so much being destroyed.

Nearing Mid-September

A glorious warm day of full, hot, Sun and I after work lying in the warm still growing greening grass by the edge of one field at the back of the Farm - sometimes asleep - for what is probably an hour. And yet, I still do not know.

Beneath and around the old tall Oak, acorns have fallen, eaten or stored, or both, by Squirrels, for I can find and see only the top which once held them on the tree. The small pond with its incumbent still living branches, is smaller, greener now, home to algae and slime, and the large Dragonfly hovers above the greenish water, to fly around to return to hover. A fly - or something, for I cannot quite see from here - passes it by and the Dragonfly darts around, chasing it away from the water. It is a chase, for I see this happen twice, three times. Then the Dragonfly is gone, toward the bushes, the branches.

In the field, a single tall Cornflower amid the yellow buttercups, the purple Clover, the Vetchling and Hawksbeard. Field-walking, I can see the Church in the two-mile distant village whose bell I can hear, here, come Sunday morning. And now, at last, I am here in the neglected one-acre strip whose fruit-giving, flowering hedges have been untrimmed for years.

But already the desecration has started. For, five fields to my left, is a lane which winds toward an orchard, a Farm, whose fields have hedges newly, murderously, flailed by a brutish machine. The berries, the fruits, the dormant buds - all gone. No wonder there that each year the life-giving, life-holding, life-sheltering, hedge dies a little more.

Alas, I have no land, no field or fields, to call my own where I can tend and care as life, field-grown, field-sown, field-fare, should be tended with care born from dwelling, feeling, there. I only work, toiling, for another, to keep me fed, housed, clothed, tired and, sometimes, content, as now where two small brown butterflies spiral and dance around the greening growing grass where I have sat to sit crossed legged writing this, chewing on a sweet stalk of grass.

So warm the Sun I can forget what should-be in the what-is of warmth: in the gentle music of leaves, breeze-brought. A few small cumulus clouds drift West to East over the nearby wooded hill, and I know, sense, feel, that here in this field, under this Sun, is Paradise.

Desires, hopes, dreams, a distraction: all that is good, beautiful, here; needing only plot of land, wife, shack, to make a world complete. Must I go? For letters from a lady keep reminding me of her life, love, a mostly desert land.

So I settle down to rest: but no answer, no intimation, or sign, here even in the Ruddy Darter that quite far from water skims the greening still growing blades of grass.



Ruddy Darter

February

So here I am, again - in a field in rural England on a day of warm Sun in early Spring (yes - late February is Spring, according to Nature) sheltered from the still cool breeze by sitting leaning against the wide trunk of an Oak many centuries old, no cloud to obscure the gentle blue.

Midges swirl around a cleft in the trunk while overhead squawking Crows mob a passing Buzzard. I really can smell the Spring as two Robins vie, in territory and song.

There is a joy here, a serenity, that pleases me and makes me realize how foolish I was to - once again if only briefly - return to the milieu of agitating for action in the world, hoping to somehow inspire immediate deeds against what is now an ignoble Empire, forgetting the wisdom of patiently waiting for the real change of empathy and reason.

A fly, warmed by Sun, emerges, to flit and give one more sound of an English Spring and Summer.

How foolish, to negate the reality of this numen by a recent return to a way of a past. Maybe, perhaps, a time soon for me to again live alone, far from this modern world, with only a pen, some paper, as a means of communication.

A rising breeze to briefly, swiftly, catch the ivy that, fulsome, grows, clinging, covering, to green the tree behind, making sounds above the breeze blown branches, wind-bending grass.

How foolish, to forget my own understanding: to forget the remembering, the pain, that shaped, changed, evolved such empathy that - when alone as now in such places as this - I knew my past, and burdened by such knowing tried hard to keep away the tears of so many centuries of sorrow, so little insight lived.

So hard, it seems, to renounce the passion of a life, as when a relationship of lovers falters, stalls, restarts to stall again; seldom a clean and sudden leaving. Feelings, memories, linger. And there is guilt. Let us not forget the guilt, the hope; the guilt of a duty abandoned.

Tomorrow, I could have been elsewhere, in a teeming city, talking words as if my old arrogant wrongful hope of inspiring certain deeds was right in a modern urban world seemingly too tired of silence, patience, and too afraid of numinous stillness. But I choose not to go; and instead will - the goddess permitting - sit here again suspended in time between brown, green and blue.

Near my feet, a small beetle no larger than a large red ant, disappears into a crack opened when the shallow patch of earth - watered over for weeks - dried in sun, wind and early Spring warmth.

There is much mistletoe, gold-green, suckered onto a tree, twenty paces to my right: its Oak decaying with its age and its larger branches gone, storm-fallen. How many passing lives has it felt, known, here where my strength, my remembering, strengthens through Sun?

If I have anything hopeful to leave, let it be such words as these: not the strife; not the anger; not the deaths; not the agitation for action. These are the words of a Spring, newly born between Sun and earth, bringing joy to a man whose hands, back and face have borne the cold toil of outdoor work in Winter.

I hope I have the hope to not forget this warmth, this beauty, yet again.

A Fine Day in Middle June

A day of hot Sun but cooling breeze, and I sit on the warm ground with my back resting against the wheel of my small cab-less tractor in this lunchtime respite from work. This is my special corner - beyond the fence to my right a small neglected copse of mostly Ash is fronted by a patch of tall nettles, Willow-herb and brambles; while, behind where I rest, is an overgrown hedge, two trees deep in places. Beneath one of the almost shrub, weed, covered fallen trees in

the copse there is a fox's lair: two days ago, as I sat, almost sleeping in the warm Sun after sandwiches and milk-less tea from a flask, the Vixen stopped, right by the fence, to stare at me for a while before she turned away back into cover. I have seen her, there, before, and maybe I will soon see her again. Perhaps she is getting used to this slow moving, straggly-bearded, long-haired, flat-cap and olive-coloured-clothes wearing being whose hands, arms and face are tanned by months of Sun?

So many birds here, so many different calls and songs I wish I knew more than the few I know. Does it matter? Not really. Jay, Yellow Finch, Thrush, Blackbird, Robin, Sparrow, Wagtail... They are all part of the complex matrix, weaved by Nature: they are Nature, manifestly alive and presenced in this one small rural place. All I can hear are the songs, the calls, of birds, the sound of flies, bees, and the breeze stirring bushes, grass and leaf-full trees.

Yesterday, a Heron stood atop a young tree, unmoving, watching the low damp ground to the left of the copse where bull-rushes grow and where I have seen many a frog.

This, I feel, is how the world should be - how, perhaps, it was, before the pace of change, of material lusts, overwhelmed us. I feel strongly attached to this very small piece of rural England, this special neglected place of about one acre, and it is good that I work nearby, mostly toiling with my hands in hot sweat-making Sun, cold rain, overcast skies, hail, a wind cold enough to numb my fingers even beneath two pairs of gloves. Here, there are the Robins which months ago first nested and who, every morning, would appear, as I sat to begin my morning with a customary drink of tea. A few pieces of bread, and they were off, to feed their young, who - not long after, and fledged - would wait nearby for their parents to feed them the crumbs I gave. Even now, every morning, the two adult Robins appear as soon as I arrive, to wait chirping a few feet away.

Is this how our world should be? With each of us connected to where we live, where we dwell, working in such a way that we have a symbiotic relationship with Nature, with the land, the very soil we depend upon to grow the food we eat. Is this how it should be? With a quietness; with a working toil that brings us out into the fresh air, whatever the weather; and with a concern for only where we live, where we dwell, who we know and who live within no more than half a day's walk away.

Do we really need industries, the nations that grow them? Do we really need the entertainment, the commercial music, spewed forth by profit-hungry, manipulative, concerns whose owners have probably never done months of hard-manual toil in their lives and who are at home only in cities? Do we really need cities and the Nature-destroying often cruel always un-empathic things that support them? Do we need governments that concern themselves with abstract ideas and policies; who scheme and plot, who send people to kill other people in the name of some abstract idea or concept?

Not long ago I was talking with an elderly man who remembered a very different way of life and whose father worked as a wood-worker in a typical village of that time, before what became known as the First World War. He told of how most things the village, the farms, needed for their daily life were made of wood, locally cut, shaped, crafted: carts, fences, gates, doors, even pumps. And what was not so made and crafted of wood, was more often than not made by a local blacksmith, or of stone quarried somewhere near. And now? The village is no longer so self-contained, and often only a residence for people whose cars or vehicles take them miles and miles away to work in some town or city in jobs which maintain the world we now live in.

Several years ago, and for quite a few years, I worked on a different farm with a man who had worked there for nearly fifty years - all his working life. From him, I learnt many things, especially about the way and manner of hard, outdoor, work. I learnt how to toil for hours on end - to not rush, to settle into a natural slowish working rhythm suited to the job. Then, as now, even the way I walked became unhurried.

Gone was the quick walk of a rushing, harassed, man. Many times the two of us would walk - our long-handled hoes slung over our shoulders - along the road from one field to another. We must have seemed to the drivers of the many cars that passed, in our worn working old-fashioned clothes, with our slow amble, our fifty year old hoes, our caps, to belong to another age.

Not that I in the years there applied most of what was learnt, for I was still feckless, still restless, inside, still part of the causal time of the modern world, with my ideas, my desire to change the world, my impatience. In those years I was indeed torn between such settled rural work, and my hubriatic vision of a better world - spending a few hours, a few days, working hard, and then write an article, or go forth on travels, to meetings and the like. So, there, in that place, in those days, I was often a bad worker: slack and sometimes unreliable.

It was only when I began, almost a year ago, this current spell of outdoor work that I applied those lessons - and not consciously; not intentionally. Or rather, I became like him, that happy, uncomplicated farm-worker. For I settled into the slow, unhurried, pace of toil because, inside, in my being, I had ceased to be restless, ceased to be concerned about the external world, accepting, knowing that my world was my work, the village where I lived, the people I knew, the land where I dwelled.

So it is that I have become increasingly reluctant to travel away from here until this week that reluctance became more than reluctance: a quiet, still, determination to not do so again - to not venture from this small part of this rural English county ever again, unless it be for some reason, not of my doing, to find work such as I do now. There is simply no need, for I have become, by dwelling here, doing the work I do, something other than I was, changed as I have been partly by the knowledge, the understanding, of suffering, and partly by a real appreciation of Nature begun by that work on that farm with that worker six or more years ago.

But do not believe that I yearn for some non-existent romantic rural idyll. I know the hardness of this life, of how the work, the days, the weather, can wear you down, make limbs, back, hands, ache; of how some days I become wearied with a particular wearisome, repetitive task, and yearn for the day to end, to sit outside in the garden of the local Pub, alone with my pint of liquid food made from water and barley and flavoured with hops.....

But this simple life is my choice; there are good days, and bad days; usually more good days, especially when - as today and yesterday - the Sun warms and I can see the beauty of this Earth's blue sky. In many ways, I yearn for the warm, sunny days of an English Spring, Summer and Autumn, as I know there must be life-giving rain, and clouds to bear that rain. There is balance, which has brought the numinous beauty of this rural landscape, this land.

The toil of earlier times was often much harder than it is now; but the toil that is necessary, now, to live simply, frugally, is not that hard - although it might be so for those who have never done such work. I remember how many people - especially young people - started work in the fields at my previous place of work. Some lasted a few hours; some lasted a week; a few lasted a few weeks. None lasted longer, leaving us two with our hoes, our taciturn ways, to knowingly smile.

The important thing is that I, perhaps we, now have, and can make, a conscious choice - to live in the world, as it is, has become; or to live as we can, and - I now believe - we should, simply, in an unaffected way, in harmony, symbiosis, with Nature, thus restraining ourselves, especially our desire for the things we really do not need, for the things which harm Nature, the living beings of Nature, and we ourselves, if we but knew it. And I have learned that one of the most harmful things is an ideology, of whatever kind, political, religious, social: a belief we have the answers, and that some law, some government, some abstract idea, some political or social policy, or religious belief, can and will change things for the better, even though - as it almost always does - such a thing involves some suffering, some deaths, some people being deprived of their liberty, their freedom, and some individuals using whatever arts of manipulation they can to convince others of the correctness of such a thing, which is always supra-personal, and as such always involves some people, or some government, having some dishonourable "authority" over others, on pain of punishment.

The simple way of reason, of restraint, of empathy with all living things, of symbiosis with Nature does involve us changing ourselves but such change involves only a free, conscious, individual, choice. Can we accept some of the hardships, the frugality, that such a life brings because we know that this is how we can and should live and that by so living we are not only not harming others, but aiding ourselves, our family, or locality, Nature and the Cosmos? All else seems, now, inauthentic, unnecessary, a turning away from the knowledge, the understanding, we have achieved - and especially a turning away from that empathy, that consciousness, that awareness of the matrix, of us as a connexion, a living nexus, which I have begun to feel is the essence of our humanity.

But now, words spewed on a notebook page as of my days of old, it is time for me to resume the tasks of this working day.

One Hot Sunny Day, Almost Mid-July

A beautiful, hot, sunny day and only a few wisps of high white cirrus cloud lie below the blue dome of sky.

There is no more work, today, now, and I have spent about an hour lazy - my flask of cider empty - lying in the shade of an Oak in this field of freshly cut hay, no breeze to even rustle the leaves above me; no roads - except two miles distant - and no people to assail me with their sounds, their feelings: to en-press upon me the patterns, the ways, the life, the harm, of that other world.

Thus, here, I am calm, able to be the belonging which I, we, are, and thus it is that I, smiling, walk the short distance to where there is a small pond, down in a hollow by a hedge and shaded only in one part of one corner by one small Hawthorn bush. Behind the larger, blue, Dragonfly, the Ruddy Darter clings to a small half-submerged blade of grass. But the blue has the better perch - a tall Bull-rush, one among a group of three two-thirds towards the centre of this pond, and every few minutes, the blue flies up, to briefly circle a part of the water before returning to its bull-rush rest. Damsel-flies - a scintillating light-blue - circle, land, join together, land, around this water's edge.

There is a reason for the blue's wait. A smaller, darker, female arrives and with a loud buzzing of wings, they join to tumble, spin, fly until they break when she hovers toward one edge of the pond, dipping her lower abdomen into the water, again, again, again, there near where stems of grass rise, curved, up toward the Sun, breaking the surface tension of the water. The male blue circles, briefly hovers - as if watching, waiting - and she is gone, back into cover of bush, tree, long grass. He returns then to his perch, but only for a while. He, too is soon gone - where I cannot see - and it is not long before the female returns to perch, almost exactly - perhaps exactly - where he perched.

The Ruddy Darter has flown away, somewhere, and I wait, wait, wait until my legs become numb from the sitting-stillness and sweat falls down, many times, from my forehead to my face. For this July Sun is hot.

Now, the she-blue circles, alighting from time to time on water-edge grass, before returning to her perch.

On the pond, a black whirly-gig beetle sails over the greeny surface - while, beneath, near where I sit, perched, watching, a myriad of small grey-things, with two front legs like paddles, dart, here, there, following, tussling with each other among some fallen dead twigs. Something, jet-black, oval and small - a beetle perhaps - briefly breaks the surface before swimming back down into the murky depths of the middle as a Water-boatman glides by atop the surface.

I wait, but still do not see the rare Ruddy Darter. It must have gone while I waited, distracted by the blue.

The myriad small grey-things - twenty, thirty, more - have become ten as the Earth turned to move the Sun across my sky. Then only a few remain where I can see them.

There is a slight breeze, now, to break this silence brought by the few calling birds, so hot is the heat of this Sun. And it is the Sun - and thirst, hunger, numbness of limbs - which makes me to rise, pond-ripple slowly, to turn to walk with reluctance back toward that other world.

Having harmed nothing - except two stalks of grass, chewed - I sigh. There are no humans harming things, here: but for how much longer?

A Walk In February Snow

This is new - at least for me in my years here, in this rural place. Several inches of snow; the pond of my repose frozen and covered in a speckling of the fresh-fallen snow of last night which followed many hours of snow in the middle and late afternoon; the glorious blue sky with a morning, warming, Sun which little by little begins the thaw.

The snow of yesterdays' cold hours enables me to wander and see in great detail the tracks of Fox, Deer,

Badger, Hare and Rabbit. So much snow that even the branch of Oak which forms my pond-side seat had to be cleared before I sat with a cold breeze raining down droplets of freshly melted snow upon me, this notebook, the white-hidden grass around. Yet the birds - Blackbird, Thrush, Robin - still sing, even though I think they must be hungry. But the Sun, surely, warms them, as it does me, bringing to me at least that relaxing peace I have often found here amid these fields of rural England.

So, Spring becomes poised, for a while, while this cold wind and whiteness lasts. And I - I myself am poised now between a now lost love and what I in my lowly human form desire and hope will be the promise of my future to bring again the warmth, the joy, of one more human love. She, my recent love, is gone and I try not to dwell upon her loss, upon the loneliness, for there is here that beauty which assuages, and that knowing, that learning which I have known and learnt these past years here, toiling as I did outdoors in cold, warm, heat, wind, cloud, Sun, snow, and rain. Thus am I but one connexion, one perspective, among the threads, the nexions, of life. But there is temptation, great temptation born from such loss: the temptation of deeds, the whisperings of those many words of the past prompting involvement in that world beyond this world where I sit, at peace under this life-giving god-like Sun. I need to resist; I must resist, remembering - what? Only those deeds done; only the suffering, the pain caused, bringing as such causal things did over decades that understanding, that feeling, presented in empathy and made manifest in compassion, reason and honour. I need to resist - why? Because otherwise I know deep within the waste that such a return would bring. A waste of those lost lives; a waste of the suffering, the creations, the joy, the passion, the deaths, of others and myself, thousand year upon thousand year; a waste of the quest which has brought me thus far, from street to field, from battle-song to plainchant to rural silence, conveyed as I have been into and beyond the light and the dark.

Now, a species of causal time and thinking later, the Sun is so warm my feet begin to sweat within these green, old, well-worn Wellington boots as I still sit here on this fallen branch while more and more droplets of melting snow fall upon me from above. There is thus - and for the moment - a renewed apprehension of the truths evident in the unity of life. And so I smile, warm, peaceful, while the wisdom and knowledge last.

Two days past Ash Wednesday:
Because I do hope to know again...

February Sun

Two days - and all the snow has gone. The pond, though, is still frozen and the warm sunlight reflects from it as I sit again on my chosen branch hearing the cawing of Crows, the song and calls of birds - Blackbird, Thrush, Robin, and others. In the ice, bubbles of air are frozen in moments of causal time.

So warm in the Sun a fly buzzes by me, and the frost of night is all gone even in this morning hour - except in the shadow of hedge and tree. A rustle, there where the spreading Hawthorn bush in its corner is edging out the old and broken Holly tree. On the pond edge, a young living Nettle encased in cold ice. It is Sunday, again, and so begins the bells in the Church, their sounds two miles carried on the cool breeze under the unbroken blue of the sky. And I am so still the reclusive resident Coot ambles forth there from the tangle of tree, bush, of that shading coverful corner as small midges twist, turn, spiral in the life-breathing rays of the Sun here amid the clear pond edge where mud meets frost-wetted grass. Gradual -

ungraded - time flows, and there is movement to distract me, for some of the trapped bubbles move as the ice slowly melts from the edge.

Nearby, two Wrens rummage among the unrotted fallen leaves of Oak - so small I often cannot see them among the tufts of grass. Is that their call I hear? Or another bird, elsewhere? Certainly, the buzzards are back - no mistaking them; high, calling, circling. And that bird of prey - which hovers two fields distant to swoop to kill. A Kestrel? I do not

know for I cannot quite see from here where a midge, like a Whitefly, lands on the sleeve of my oilskin coat. So minute this insect it seems perfection in miniature.

It would be so easy to kill, this brief, minimal, emanation of Nature's life. But why? It is only resting, perhaps, and a brief breeze of the cold air catches it to snatch it away, away from my world. Is there a truth here, a revealing revealed by so sitting still? For this my slow often reclusive way is not the way of the city nor of they who know no toil. Was it easy - deemed necessary because of their disconnected being - for those who did not toil, who neither worked nor dwelt among Nature - to despoil, to kill? Had they become distracted, and needed goals to measure out their days, just as their thoughts themselves became abstracted, measuring out their lives in abstract ways as time itself became measured out into smaller and smaller segments until this time itself because a measure for many of those who lived, disconnected from ancestral ways?

Chiefs, leaders, monarchs - whomsoever in some position of power, unworking - able through wealth, spoils, booty or war-like gain to rampage forth for any cause or none; able to sally forth from their desire, known and unknown, to test themselves, pit themselves, occupy themselves. And how many others - oh how so many day upon day, year upon year, century upon century - followed them, even needed them, being, becoming thus armies, gangs, legions, movements, groups. Killing, maiming, dying - each generation had its cause, or created one; each century its ideas, its traditions and its ways. Disconnected; inauthentic - all. There was no Nature, there; no silent knowing of the wisdom of dark night when the child-within was pleased but lightly fearing, hearing the Owl. There was no Nature, there, no silent seeing toiling to nurture forth through free working hands the food, the bare essential things that kept hunger, exposure, away and made one happy in the moments of one's own labour. No, no Nature there in those abstract things, genesis of cities with their measured time. No, no evolution, no empathy there: except in a few. But are and were those necessary few worth the many: worth the damage done by so many?

Thus am I, here, feeling the need for dwelling and for toil - a toil just enough and born of freedom to keep us tired, connected and still, content to be where we dwell, undamaging of Nature. And yet - yet there lives even now within me here memories, feelings, to sally forth for some known, unknown cause, desire.

Such life there; such ecstatic unthinking living; such surpassing, consuming joy; such life through struggle, questing.

Should we, I - can we, can I - go beyond this? To some balance, synthesis of change, of dwelling, honour, exploration, adventure, empathy - and Art?

There are clouds now, forming on the horizon, threatening to cover the warmth of the Sun, and I stretch my numbing limbs, wondering: have I lived long enough?

Early March Another Year

There is a brief spell of warm Sun after a heavy storm of hail, and I am sitting by a hedge between a Chestnut tree and the entrance to a Badger sett on a day that has been mostly rainy, and, in this brief respite from work and rain, I shall endeavour to pontificate yet again.

I feel the music of JS Bach often expresses not only the numinous but also ourselves as in parts of the first and last movements of Concerto in D Minor BWV 1052 reconstructed for violin where the violin soars into new realms beyond our mundane causal world: realms where we have, for the present, to suspend our ordinary concepts because the words, the ideas, even the images, we possess cannot do justice to these realms. We can perhaps, and sometimes, grasp part of such realms through the feelings, the intuition, the empathy that such profound music can produce in us. And in such music, JS Bach still is the undisputed master.

These realms are the promise of our, my, future: the futures possible if we, I, can use our inner strength to change ourselves in a noble, honourable way.

Sometimes, many times, I cannot understand my deeds, my life, in any conventional sense. But my sorrow is in *Erbarme dich* (BWV 244); my quests in the *Allegro* of BWV 1052; my yearning, my hopes, in the opening bars of the *John Passion*; in part of BWV 565 heard in a great Cathedral, and in parts of BWV 1043.

What can I say now in words except strive to express the memory of a beautiful, peaceful, rural scene of the kind that still exists in parts of England, Germany and elsewhere, on a warm Spring, Summer or Autumn's day when we who work there, with our toiling hands, rest awhile while a warm Sun pleases us, and all we can hear are the sounds of birds, the breeze in the trees, and the insects - bees, flies - that move around us?

A thousand years of our culture has allowed this, has produced this: such serene, beautiful, numinous places. A thousand years of toil, suffering, warfare, striving and death. And now - now we possess the means, the understanding, the wisdom, to be in such places without some of those suffering, killing, harming, things which created them. For such places - and especially the life-giving fertile soil of small fields - are now a balance, between our own immediate, simple, needs, and the needs of Nature. We have created this balance; we have had this balance, this beautiful fertile soil of Yeoman-type fields, available to us, for the last eighty or so years. With this balance we can live, simply, without causing undue harm to Nature and the life which is Her emanation.

But are we doing this? Or are we destroying such places, such soil, through our greed, through our inability to transcend beyond our animalistic selves, through our lack of empathy; through the insatiable growth and urbanization that is fuelled by industry, usury and capitalism? *Wir setzen uns mit Tranen nieder.*

Is there any wonder then that I have arrived at a dislike of the modern world with its mechanistic progress, its rapacious, Nature-destroying, empathy-destroying, machines and means of transportation?

Is it surprising, then, that I have been, these last two years, returning occasionally - and out of a sense of duty - to the world of politics, of religion, to try in some small way to agitate for what I understood could be a change toward the numinous?

But such a returning is, I hope, finally over for my duty now is surely to strive to live only as empathy and honour indicate. So there should surely be for me now only a rural way of life, only a slow being where empathy and numinosity live and grow. Yet I know this may not be the end of the quest: that a restless, wandering, questing, yearning seeking may yet return to lead me astray for I have no lady now with whom to share dreams, love, hopes.

But my words are worthless after Bach's Erbarme dich.

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cc David Myatt
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