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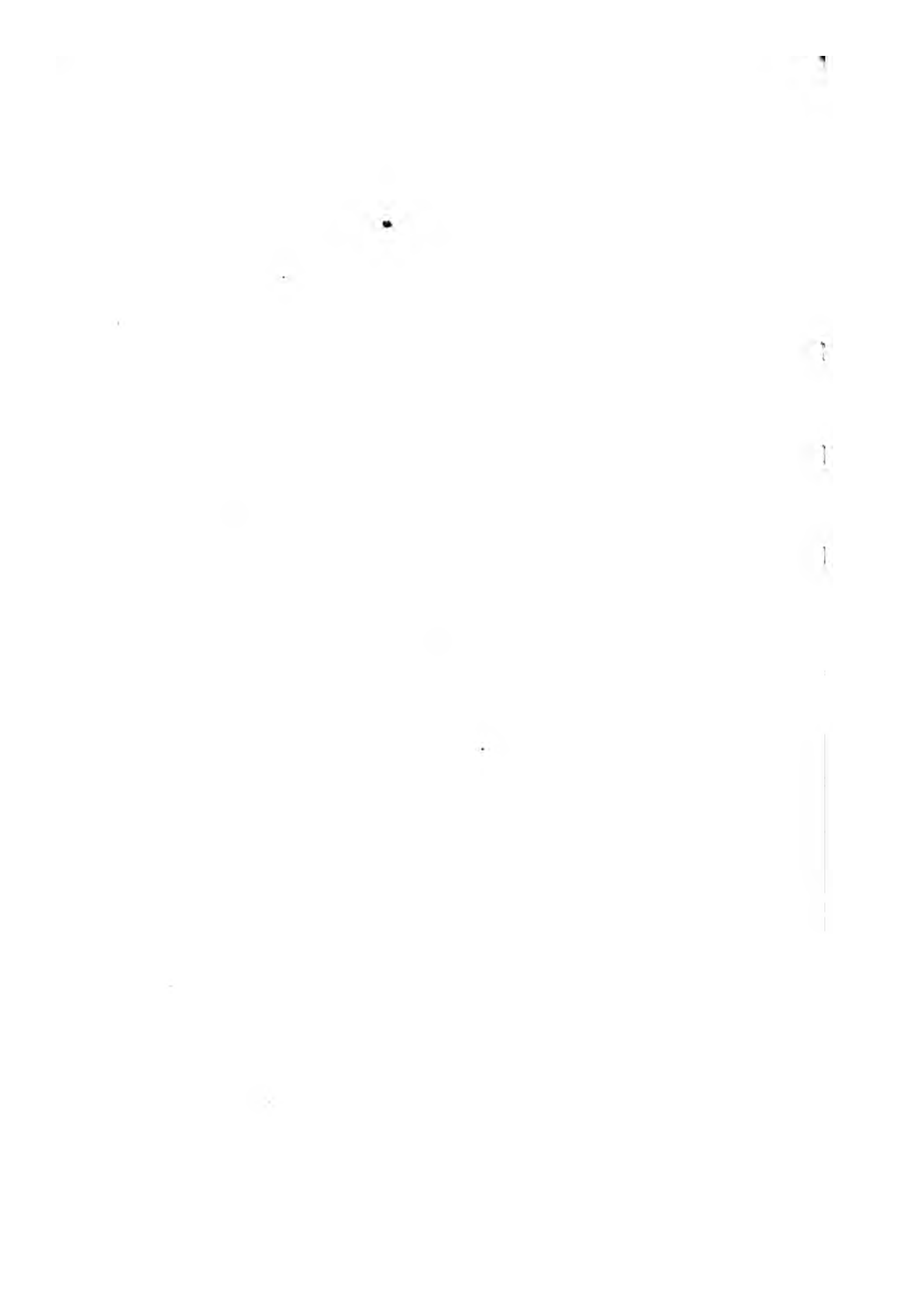
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THOMAS HARDY

THE POCKET
THOMAS HARDY

BEING SELECTIONS FROM
THE WESSEX NOVELS AND
POEMS OF THOMAS HARDY

MADE BY
ALFRED H. HYATT



LONDON
CHATTO & WINDUS
1906



N O T E

IN compiling this selection of passages from the Wessex Novels of Thomas Hardy, I have endeavoured to bring together some of the many familiar characters peopling his famous list of works, also extracts in which the novelist so faithfully describes the towns and scenery of a beautiful part of England, together with some of those striking incidents in which the novels so richly abound.

It is now some twelve years since Thomas Hardy gave us his last work of fiction, since which date we have in him recognized a poet of very high order, as his 'Wessex Poems,' 'Poems of the Past and the Present,' and 'The Dynasts' show. To his work in this direction I have in the following pages given due proportion.

My thanks are here acknowledged to the author and to Messrs. Macmillan and Co., Ltd., the publishers of the Collected Works of Thomas Hardy, for permission kindly given by them to make this selection.

A. H. H.

September, 1906.

THOMAS HARDY

SELECTED PASSAGES

IT is with cliffs and mountains as with persons ; they have what is called a presence, which is not necessarily proportionate to their actual bulk. A little cliff will impress you powerfully ; a great one not at all. It depends, as with man, upon the countenance of the cliff.

LITTLE towns are like little children in this respect, that they interest most when they are enacting native peculiarities unconscious of beholders. Discovering themselves to be watched they attempt to be entertaining by putting on an antic, and produce disagreeable caricatures which spoil them.

TO see persons looking with children's eyes at any ordinary scenery, is a proof that they possess the charming faculty of drawing new sensations from an old experience—a healthy sign, rare in these feverish days—the mark of an imperishable brightness of nature.

THE gray half-tones of daybreak are not the gray half-tones of the day's close, though the degree of their shade may be the same. In the twilight of the morning light seems active, darkness passive; in the twilight of evening it is the darkness which is active and crescent, and the light which is the drowsy reverse.

' I LOOK INTO MY GLASS '

I LOOK into my glass,
And view my wasting skin,
And say, ' Would God it came to pass
My heart had shrunk as thin !'

For then, I, undistrest
By hearts grown cold to me,
Could lonely wait my endless rest
With equanimity.

But Time, to make me grieve,
Part steals, lets part abide ;
And shakes this fragile frame at eve
With throbbings of noontide.

THOSE who have the power of reproaching in silence may find it a means more effective than words. There

are accents in the eye which are not on the tongue, and more tales come from pale lips than can enter an ear. It is both the grandeur and the pain of the remoter moods that they avoid the pathway of sound.

THERE are disappointments which wring us, and there are those which inflict a wound whose mark we bear to our graves. Such are so keen that no future gratification of the same desire can ever obliterate them : they become registered as a permanent loss of happiness.

WE learn that it is not the rays which bodies absorb, but those which they reject, that give them the colours they are known by ; and in the same way people are specialized by their dislikes and antagonisms, whilst their goodwill is looked upon as no attribute at all.

OUR evil actions do not remain isolated in the past, waiting only to be reversed : like locomotive plants they spread and re-root, till to destroy the original stem has no material effect in killing them.

THE SUPERSEDED

I

AS newer comers crowd the fore,
 We drop behind.
—We who have laboured long and sore
 Times out of mind,
And keen are yet, must not regret
 To drop behind.

II

Yet there are of us some who grieve
 To go behind ;
Staunch, strenuous souls who scarce
 believe
 Their fires declined,
And know none cares, remembers, spares
 Who go behind.

III

'Tis not that we have unfortold
 The drop behind ;
We feel the new must oust the old
 In every kind ;
But yet we think, must we, must *we*,
 Too, drop behind ?

I N the ill-judged execution of the well-
judged plan of things the call seldom
produces the comer, the man to love

rarely coincides with the hour for loving. Nature does not often say 'See!' to her poor creature at a time when seeing can lead to happy doing; or reply 'Here!' to a body's cry of 'Where?' till the hide-and-seek has become an irksome, outworn game. We may wonder whether at the acme and summit of the human progress these anachronisms will become corrected by a finer intuition, a closer interaction of the social machinery than that which now jolts us round and along; but such completeness is not to be prophesied, or even conceived as possible. Enough that in the present case, as in millions, it was not the two halves of a perfect whole that confronted each other at the perfect moment; a missing counterpart wandered independently about the earth waiting in crass obtuseness till the late time came. Out of which maladroit delay sprang anxieties, disappointments, shocks, catastrophies, and passing strange destinies.

THE 'appetite for joy' which pervades all creation, that tremendous force which sways humanity to its purpose, as the tide sways the helpless weed, was not to be controlled by vague lucubrations over the social rubric.

WHAT woman, indeed, among the most faithful adherents of the truth, believes the promises and threats of the Word in the sense in which she believes in her own children, or would not throw her theology to the wind if weighed against their happiness ?

‘ ARE you afraid, Tess ?’

‘ O no, sir . . . not of outdoor things ; especially just now when the apple-blooth is falling, and everything so green.’ . . .

‘ The trees have inquisitive eyes, haven’t they ?—that is, seem as if they had. And the river says,—“ Why do ye trouble me with your looks ?” And you seem to see numbers of to-morrows just all in a line, the first of ’em the biggest and clearest, the others getting smaller and smaller as they stand farther away ; but they all seem very fierce and cruel and as if they said, “ I’m coming ! Beware o’ me ! Beware o’ me !” ’

WHERE the eyes of a multitude continuously beat like waves upon a countenance they seem to wear away its mobile power ; but in the still water of privacy every feeling and sentiment

unfolds in visible luxuriance, to be interpreted as readily as a printed word by an intruder.

HUMAN beings, in their generous endeavour to construct a hypothesis that shall not degrade a First Cause, have always hesitated to conceive a dominant power of lower moral quality than their own ; and, even while they sit down and weep by the waters of Babylon, invent excuses for the oppression which prompts their tears.

ASSUMING the value of taciturnity to a man among strangers, it is apt to express more than talkativeness when he dwells among friends. The countryman, who is obliged to judge the time of day from changes in external nature, sees a thousand successive tints and traits in the landscape which are never discerned by him who hears the regular chime of a clock, because they are never in request. In like manner do we use our eyes on our taciturn comrade. The infinitesimal movement of muscle, curve, hair, and wrinkle, which when accompanied by a voice goes unregarded, is watched and translated in the lack of it, till virtually

the whole surrounding circle of familiars is charged with the reserved one's moods and meanings.

A WELL-PROPORTIONED mind is one which shows no particular bias ; one of which we may safely say that it will never cause its owner to be confined as a madman, tortured as a heretic, or crucified as a blasphemer. Also, on the other hand, that it will never cause him to be applauded as a prophet, revered as a priest, or exalted as a king. Its usual blessings are happiness and mediocrity. It produces the poetry of Rogers, the paintings of West, the statecraft of North, the spiritual guidance of Sumner ; enabling its possessors to find their way to wealth, to wind up well, to slip with dignity off the stage, to die comfortably in their beds, and to get the decent monument which, in many cases, they deserve.

PEOPLE living insulated . . . by the solitude of a place, get charged with emotive fluid like a Leyden jar with electric, for want of some conductor at hand to disperse it. Human love is a subjective thing—the essence itself of man, as the great thinker Spinoza says—*ipsa hominis essentia*—it is joy accom-

panied by an idea which we project against any suitable object in the line of our vision, just as the rainbow iris is projected against an oak, ash, or elm tree indifferently.

THERE is always an inertia to be overcome in striking out a new line of conduct—not more in ourselves, it seems, than in circumscribing events, which appear as if leagued together to allow no novelties in the way of amelioration.

A MAN should be only partially before his time: to be completely to the vanward in aspirations is fatal to fame. Had Philip's warlike son been intellectually so far ahead as to have attempted civilization without bloodshed, he would have been twice the godlike hero that he seemed, but nobody would have heard of an Alexander.

IN the interests of renown the forwardness should lie chiefly in the capacity to handle things. Successful propagandists have succeeded because the doctrine they bring into form is that which their listeners have for some time felt without being able to shape. A man who advocates æsthetic effort and depre-

cates social effort is only likely to be understood by a class to which social effort has become a stale matter. To argue upon the possibility of culture before luxury to the bucolic world may be to argue truly, but it is an attempt to disturb a sequence to which humanity has been long accustomed.

MEN thin away to insignificance and oblivion quite as often by not making the most of good spirits when they have them as by lacking good spirits when they are indispensable.

THERE is an outer chamber of the brain in which thoughts unowned, unsolicited, and of noxious kind, are sometimes allowed to wander for a moment prior to being sent off whence they came.

ANYBODY'S life may be just as romantic and strange and interesting if he or she fail or if he or she succeed. All the difference is, that the last chapter is wanting in the story. If a man of power tries to do a great deed, and just falls short of it by an accident not his fault, up to that time his history had as much in it as that of a great man who has done his great deed. It is whimsical of

the world to hold that particulars of how a lad went to school and so on should be as an interesting romance or as nothing to them, precisely in proportion to his after renown.

A SENSATION of being profoundly experienced serves as a sort of consolation to people who are conscious of having taken wrong turnings. Contradictory as it seems, there is nothing truer than that people who have always gone right do not know half as much about the nature and ways of going right as those do who have gone wrong.

HAP

IF but some vengeful god would call to
me
From up the sky, and laugh: 'Thou
suffering thing,
Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy,
That thy love's loss is my hate's profit-
ing!'

Then would I bear, and clench myself,
and die,
Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited;
Half-eased in that a Powerfuller than I
Had willed and meted me the tears I
shed.

But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain,
And why unblooms the best hope ever
sown ?

—Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and
rain,
And dicing Time for gladness casts a
moan. . . .

These purblind Doomsters had as
readily strown

Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.

THE monotony of life we associate with people of small incomes in districts out of the sound of the railway whistle, has one exception, which puts into shade the experience of dwellers about the great centres of population—that is, in travelling. Every journey there is more or less an adventure; adventurous hours are necessarily chosen for the most commonplace outing.

THERE are instances of persons, who, without clear ideas of the things they criticize, have yet had clear ideas of the relations of those things. Blacklock, a poet blind from his birth, could describe visual objects with accuracy; Professor Sanderson, who was also blind, gave excellent lectures on colour, and taught others the theory of ideas which

they had and he had not. In the social sphere these gifted ones are mostly women; they can watch a world which they never saw, and estimate forces of which they have only heard. We call it intuition.

What was the great world to Mrs. Yeobright? A multitude whose tendencies could be perceived, though not its essences. Communities were seen by her as from a distance; she saw them as we see the throngs which cover the canvases of Sallaert, Van Alsloot, and others of that school—vast masses of beings, jostling, zigzagging, and processioning in definite directions, but whose features are indistinguishable by the very comprehensiveness of the view.

TO have lost the godlike conceit that we may do what we will, and not to have acquired a homely zest for doing what we can, shows a grandeur of temper which cannot be objected to in the abstract, for it denotes a mind that, though disappointed, forswears compromise. But, if congenial to philosophy, it is apt to be dangerous to the commonwealth. In a world where doing means marrying, and the commonwealth is one of hearts and hands, the same peril attends the condition.

IN justice to desponding men, it is as well to remember that the brighter endurance of women at these epochs—invaluable, sweet, angelic, as it is—owes more of its origin to a narrower vision, that shuts out many of the leaden-eyed despairs in the van, than to a hopefulness intense enough to quell them.

IT depends entirely upon what is meant by being truly great. But the long and the short of the matter is, that men must stick to a thing if they want to succeed in it—not giving way to overmuch admiration for the flowers they see growing in other people's borders. . . . Adherence to a course with persistence sufficient to ensure success is possible to widely appreciative minds only when there is also found in them a power—commonplace in its nature, but rare in such combination—the power of assuming to conviction that in the outlying paths which appear so much more brilliant than their own, there are bitternesses equally great—unperceived simply on account of their remoteness.

GRAYE was handsome, frank, and gentle. He had a quality of thought which, exercised on homeliness, was

humour ; on nature, picturesqueness ; on abstractions, poetry. Being, as a rule, broadcast, it was all three. Of the wickedness of the world he was too forgetful. To discover evil in a new friend is to most people only an additional experience : to him it was ever a surprise.

THERE is in us an unquenchable expectation, which at the gloomiest time persists in inferring that because we are *ourselves*, there must be a special future in store for us, though our nature and antecedents to the remotest particular have been common to thousands.

REVULSION

THOUGH I waste watches framing
words to fetter
Some spirit to mine own to clasp and
kiss,
Out of the night there looms a sense 'twere
better
To fail obtaining whom one fails to miss.

For winning love we win the risk of losing,
And losing love is as one's life were
riven ;
It cuts like contumely and keen ill-using
To cede what was superfluously given.

Let me then feel no more the fateful
thrilling
That devastates the love-worn wooer's
frame,
The hot ado of fevered hopes, the chilling
That agonizes disappointed aim !
So may I live no junctive laws fulfilling,
And my heart's table bear no woman's
name.

NOW, it is a noticeable fact that we do not much mind what men think of us, or what humiliating secret they discover of our means, parentage, or object, provided that each thinks and acts thereupon in isolation. It is the exchange of ideas about us that we dread most ; and the possession by a hundred acquaintances, severally insulated, of the knowledge of our skeleton-closet's whereabouts, is not so distressing to the nerves as a chat over it by a party of half-a-dozen—exclusive depositaries though these may be.

CHANGE of scene—and that to untravelled eyes—conjoined with the sensation of freedom from supervision, revives the sparkle of a warm young nature ready enough to take advantage of any adventitious restoratives. Point-blank grief tends rather to seal up happiness for a time than to produce that

attrition which results from griefs of anticipation that move onward with the days : these may be said to furrow away the capacity for pleasure.

BUT what is Wisdom really ? A steady handling of any mean to bring about any end necessary to happiness.

Yet whether one's end be the usual end—a wealthy position in life—or no, the name of wisdom is seldom applied but to the means to that usual end.

IT is both painful and satisfactory to think how often these antitheses are to be observed in the individual most open to our observation—ourselves. We pass the evening with faces lit up by some flaring illumination or other : we get up the next morning—the fiery jets have all gone out, and nothing confronts us but a few crinkled pipes and sooty wirework, hardly ever recalling the outline of the blazing picture that arrested our eyes before bedtime.

Emotions would be half starved if there were no candle-light. Probably nine-tenths of the gushing letters of indiscreet confession are written after nine or ten o'clock in the evening, and sent off before day returns to leer invidiously upon them. Few that remain open

to catch our glance as we rise in the morning, survive the frigid criticism of dressing-time.

MIDDLE-AGE ENTHUSIASMS

WE passed where flag and flower
Signalled a jocund throng ;
We said : ' Go to, the hour
Is apt !'—and joined the song ;
And, kindling, laughed at life and care,
Although we knew no laugh lay there.

We walked where shy birds stood
Watching us, wonder-dumb ;
Their friendship met our mood ;
We cried : ' We'll often come :
We'll come morn, noon, eve, everywhen !'
—We doubted we should come again.

—We joyed to see strange sheens
Leap from quaint leaves in shade ;
A secret light of greens
They'd for their pleasure made.
We said : ' We'll set such sorts as these !'
—We knew with night the wish would cease.

' So sweet the place,' we said,
' Its tacit tales so dear,
Our thoughts, when breath has sped,
Will meet and mingle here !' . . .
' Words !' mused we. ' Passed the mortal
door,
Our thoughts will reach this nook once
more.'

EMOTIONS will attach themselves to scenes that are simultaneous—however foreign in essence these scenes may be—as chemical waters will crystallize on twigs and wires.

SOME women kindle emotion so rapidly in a man's heart that the judgment cannot keep pace with its rise, and finds, on comprehending the situation, that faithfulness to the old love is already treachery to the new. Such women are not necessarily the greatest of their sex, but there are very few of them.

PERHAPS the moral compensation for all a woman's petty cleverness under thriving conditions is the real nobility that lies in her extreme foolishness at these other times; her sheer inability to be simply just, her exercise of an illogical power entirely denied to men in general—the power not only of kissing, but of delighting to kiss the rod by a punctilious observance of the self-immolating doctrines in the Sermon on the Mount.

SPRINGROVE had long since passed that peculiar line which lies across the course of falling in love—if, indeed, it may not be called the initial itself of the complete passion—a longing to

cherish ; when the woman is shifted in a man's mind from the region of mere admiration to the region of warm fellowship. At this assumption of her nature, she changes to him in tone, hue, and expression. All about the loved one that said 'She' before, says 'We' now. Eyes that were to be subdued become eyes to be feared for ; a brain that was to be probed by cynicism becomes a brain that is to be tenderly assisted ; feet that were to be tested in the dance become feet that are not to be distressed ; the once-criticized accent, manner, and dress, become the clients of a special pleader.

SMITH was not at all the man Knight would have deliberately chosen as a friend—or even for one of a group of a dozen friends—he somehow was his friend. Circumstance, as usual, did it all. How many of us can say of our most intimate *alter ego*, leaving alone friends of the outer circle, that he is the man we should have chosen, as embodying the net result after adding up all the points in human nature that we love, and principles we hold, and subtracting all that we hate ? The man is really somebody we got to know by mere physical juxtaposition long maintained, and was taken into our confidence, and even heart, as a makeshift.

ANY woman who has ever tried will know without explanation what an unpalatable task it is to dismiss, even when she does not love him, a man who has all the natural and moral qualities she would desire, and only fails in the social. Would-be lovers are not so numerous, even with the best women, that the sacrifice of one can be felt as other than a good thing wasted, in a world where there are few good things.

THE PROBLEM

SHALL we conceal the Case, or tell it—
We who believe the evidence ?
Here and there the watch-towers knell it
With a sullen significance,
Heard of the few who hearken intently
and carry an eagerly upstrained sense.

Hearts that are happiest hold not by it ;
Better we let, then, the old view reign ;
Since there is peace in it, why decry it ?
Since there is comfort, why disdain ?
Note not the pigment the while that the
painting determines humanity's joy
and pain !

NEW love is brightest, and long love is
greatest ; but revived love is the
tenderest thing known upon earth.

A HALF knowledge of another's life mostly does injustice to the life half known.

WITH all, the beautiful things of earth become more dear as they elude pursuit; but with some natures utter elusion is the one special event which will make a passing love permanent for ever.

THE determination to love one's best will carry a heart a long way towards making that best an ever-growing thing.

UNEXPECTEDLY grand fruits are sometimes forced forth by harsh pruning.

PERSONS with any weight of character carry, like planets, their atmospheres along with them in their orbits.

IN respect of character a face may make certain admissions by its outline; but it fully confesses only in its changes. So much is this the case that what is called the play of the features often helps more in understanding a man or woman than the earnest labours of all the other members together.

FICKLENESS means getting weary of a thing while the thing remains the same. . . . To see the creature who has hitherto been perfect, divine, lose under your very gaze the divinity which has informed her, grow commonplace, turn from flame to ashes, from a radiant vitality to a corpse, is anything but a pleasure for any man. . . . Each mournful emptied shade stands ever after like the nest of some beautiful bird from which the inhabitant has departed and left it to fill with snow.

FOR in spite of a fashion which pervades the whole community at the present day—the habit of exclaiming that woman is not undeveloped man, but diverse, the fact remains that, after all, women are Mankind, and that in many of the sentiments of life the difference of sex is but a difference of degree.

HOW blissful it all is at first. Perhaps, indeed, the only bliss in the course of love which can truly be called Eden-like is that which prevails immediately after doubt has ended and before reflection has set in—at the dawn of the emotion, when it is not recognised by name, and before the consideration of what this love is, has given birth to the

consideration of what difficulties it tends to create ; when on the man's part, the mistress appears to the mind's eye in picturesque, hazy, and fresh morning lights, and soft morning shadows ; when, as yet, she is known only as the wearer of one dress, which shares her own personality ; as the stander in one special position, the giver of one bright particular glance, and the speaker of one tender sentence ; when, on her part, she is timidly careful over what she says and does, lest she should be misconstrued or under-rated to the breadth of a shadow of a hair.

IT is a melancholy truth for the middle classes, that in proportion as they develop, by the study of poetry and art, their capacity for conjugal love of the highest and purest kind, they limit the possibility of their being able to exercise it—the very act putting out of their power the attainment of means sufficient for marriage. The man who works up a good income has had no time to learn love to its solemn extreme ; the man who has learnt that has had no time to get rich.

EVERY woman who makes a permanent impression on a man is usually recalled to his mind's eye as she appeared

in one particular scene, which seems ordained to be her special form of manifestation throughout the pages of his memory. As the patron Saint has her attitude and accessories in mediæval illumination, so the sweetheart may be said to have hers upon the table of her true Love's fancy, without which she is rarely introduced there except by effort; and this though she may, on further acquaintance, have been observed in many other phases which one would imagine to be far more appropriate to love's young dream.

LOVE frequently dies of time alone—much more frequently of displacement. . . . Directly domineering ceases in the man, snubbing begins in the woman; the trite but no less unfortunate fact being that the gentler creature rarely has the capacity to appreciate fair treatment from her natural complement.

PERHAPS there is nothing more hardening to the tone of young minds than thus to discover how their dearest and strongest wishes become gradually attuned by Time the Cynic to the very note of some selfish policy which in earlier days they despised.

THE TEMPORARY THE ALL

CHANGE and chancefulness in my
flowering youthtime,
Set me sun by sun near to one unchosen ;
Wrought us fellowly, and despite diver-
gence,

Friends interblent us.

' Cherish him can I while the true one
forthcome—

Come the rich fulfiller of my prevision ;
Life is roomy yet, and the odds un-
bounded.'

So self-communed I.

Thwart my wistful way did a damsel
saunter,

Fair, the while unformed to be all-eclipsing ;
' Maiden meet,' held I, ' till arise my
forefelt

Wonder of women.'

Long a visioned hermitage deep desiring,
Tenements uncouth I was fain to house in ;
' Let such lodging be for a breath-while,'
thought I,

' Soon a more seemly.

' Then, high handiwork will I make my
life-deed,

Truth and Light outshow ; but the ripe
time pending,

Intermissive aim at the thing sufficeth.'

Thus I . . . But lo, me !

Mistress, friend, place, aims to be bettered
straightway,
Bettered not has Fate or my hand's
achieving ;
Sole the showance those of my onward
earth-track—
Never transcended !

IT appears that ordinary men take wives because possession is not possible without marriage, and that ordinary women accept husbands because marriage is not possible without possession ; with totally differing aims the method is the same on both sides.

THE wondrous power of flattery in *passados* at woman is a perception so universal as to be remarked upon by many people almost as automatically as they repeat a proverb, or say what they are Christians and the like, without thinking much of the enormous corollaries which spring from the proposition. Still less is it acted upon for the good of the complemental being alluded to. With the majority such an opinion is shelved with all those trite aphorisms which require some catastrophe to bring their tremendous meanings thoroughly home. When expressed with some amount of reflectiveness it seems co-ordinate with a

belief that this flattery must be reasonable to be effective. It is to the credit of men that few attempt to settle the question by experiment, and it is for their happiness, perhaps, that accident has never settled it for them. Nevertheless, that a male dissembler who by deluging her with untenable fictions charms the female wisely, may acquire powers reaching to the extremity of perdition, is a truth taught to many by unsought and wringing occurrences. And some profess to have attained to the same knowledge by experiment as aforesaid, and jauntily continue their indulgence in such experiments with terrible effect.

THIS good-fellowship—*camaraderie*—usually occurring through similarity of pursuits, is unfortunately seldom super-added to love between the sexes, because men and women associate, not in their labours, but in their pleasures merely. Where, however, happy circumstance permits its development, the compounded feeling proves itself to be the only love which is strong as death—that love which many waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown, beside which the passion usually called by the name is evanescent as steam.

THE only superiority in woman that is tolerable to the rival sex is, as a rule, that of the unconscious kind ; but a superiority which recognizes itself may sometimes please by suggesting possibilities of capture to the subordinated man.

THERE is no regular path for getting out of love as there is for getting in. Some people look upon marriage as a short cut that way, but it has been known to fail.

TO those musing weather-beaten West-country folk who pass the greater part of their days and nights out of doors, Nature seems to have moods in other than a poetical sense : predilections for certain deeds at certain times, without any apparent law to govern or season to account for them. She is read as a person with a curious temper ; as one who does not scatter kindnesses and cruelties alternately, impartially, and in order, but heartless severities or overwhelming generousities in lawless caprice. Man's case is always that of the prodigal's favourite or the miser's pensioner. In her unfriendly moments there seems a feline

fun in her tricks, begotten by a fore-
taste of her pleasure in swallowing the
victim.

FROM 'THE DYNASTS'

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

BUT out of tune the Mode and meritless
That quickens sense in shapes whom,
thou hast said,
Necessitation sways! A life there was
Among these self-same frail ones—
Sophocles—
Who visioned it too clearly, even the
while
He dubbed the Will 'the gods.' Truly
said he,
'Such gross injustice to their own creation
Burdens the time with mournfulness for
us,
And for themselves with shame'*—
Things mechanized
By coils and pivots set to foreframed
codes
Would, in a thorough-sphered melodic
rule,
And governance of sweet consistency,
Be cessed no pain, whose burnings would
abide
With That Which holds responsibility,
Or inexists.

* Soph., *Trach.*, 1266-72.

CHORUS OF THE PITIES (aerial music)

Yea, yea, yea !
Thus would the Mover pay
The score each puppet owes.
The Reaper reap what his contrivance
sows !
Why make Life debtor when it did not
buy ?
Why wound so keenly Right that it would
die ?

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Nay, blame not ! For what judgment
can ye blame ?—
In that immense unweeting Mind is shown
One far above forethinking ; purposive,
Yet superconscious ; a Clairvoyancy
That knows not what It knows, yet works
therewith.—
The cognizance ye mourn, Life's doom to
feel,
If I report it meetly, came unmeant,
Emerging with blind gropes from imper-
cipience
By random sequence—luckless, tragic
Chance,
If ye will call it so. 'Twas needed not
In the economy of Vitality,
Which might have ever kept a sealed
cognition
As doth the Will Itself.

CHORUS OF THE YEARS (aerial music)

Yea, yea, yea !
Your hasty judgments stay,
Until the topmost cyme
Have crowned the last entablature of
Time.
O heap not blame on that in-brooding
Will ;
O pause, till all things all their days
fulfil !

THE BEAUTIFUL VALE OF
BLACKMOOR

THE village of Marlott lay amid the north-eastern undulations of the beautiful Vale of Blakemore or Blackmooe. . . .

It is a vale whose acquaintance is best made by viewing it from the summits of the hills that surround it—except perhaps during the droughts of summer. An unguided ramble into its recesses in bad weather is apt to engender dissatisfaction with its narrow, tortuous, and miry ways.

This fertile and sheltered tract of country, in which the fields are never brown and the springs never dry, is bounded on the south by the bold chalk ridge that embraces the prominences of

Hambledon Hill, Bulbarrow, Nettlecombe-Tout, Dogbury, High Stoy, and Bubb Down. The traveller from the coast, who, after plodding northward for a score of miles over calcareous downs and cornlands, suddenly reaches the verge of one of these escarpments, is surprised and delighted to behold, extended like a map beneath him, a country differing absolutely from that which he has passed through. Behind him the hills are open, the sun blazes down upon fields so large as to give an unenclosed character to the landscape, the lanes are white, the hedges low and plashed, the atmosphere colourless. Here, in the valley, the world seems to be constructed upon a smaller and more delicate scale; the fields are mere paddocks, so reduced that from this height their hedgerows appear a network of dark green threads overspreading the paler green of the grass. The atmosphere beneath is languorous, and is so tinged with azure that what artists call the middle distance partakes also of that hue, while the horizon beyond is of the deepest ultramarine. Arable lands are few and limited; with but slight exceptions the prospect is a broad rich mass of grass and trees, mantling minor hills and dales within the major. Such is the Vale of Blackmoor.

NIGHT IN BLACKMOOR VALE

TESS plunged into the chilly equinoctial darkness as the clock struck ten, for her fifteen miles' walk under the steely stars. In lonely districts night is a protection rather than a danger to a noiseless pedestrian, and knowing this Tess pursued the nearest course along by-lanes that she would have almost feared in the daytime ; but marauders were wanting now, and spectral fears were driven out of her mind by thoughts of her mother. Thus she proceeded mile after mile, ascending and descending till she came to Bulbarrow, and about midnight looked from that height into the abyss of chaotic shade which was all that revealed itself of the vale on whose further side she was born. Having already traversed about five miles on the upland she had now some ten or eleven in the lowland before her journey would be finished. The winding road downwards became just visible to her under the wan starlight as she followed it, and soon she paced a soil so contrasting with that above it that the difference was perceptible to the tread and to the smell. It was the heavy clay land of Blackmoor Vale, and a part of the Vale to which turnpike-roads had never penetrated. Superstitions linger

longest on these heavy soils. Having once been forest, at this shadowy time it seemed to assert something of its old character, the far and the near being blended, and every tree and tall hedge making the most of its presence. The harts that had been hunted here, the witches that had been pricked and ducked, the green-spangled fairies that 'whickered' at you as you passed ;—the place teemed with beliefs in them still, and they formed an impish multitude now.

At Nuzzlebury she passed the village inn, whose sign creaked in response to the greeting of her footsteps, which not a human soul heard but herself. Under the thatched roofs her mind's eye beheld relaxed tendons and flaccid muscles, spread out in the darkness beneath coverlets made of little purple patchwork squares, and undergoing a bracing process at the hands of sleep for renewed labour on the morrow, as soon as a hint of pink nebulosity appeared on Hambledon Hill.

A DESERTED WESSEX HIGHWAY

THE rambler who, for old association's sake, should trace the forsaken coach-road running almost in a meridional line from Bristol to the south

shore of England, would find himself during the latter half of his journey in the vicinity of some extensive woodlands, interspersed with apple-orchards. Here the trees, timber or fruit-bearing as the case may be, make the wayside hedges ragged by their drip and shade, their lower limbs stretching in level repose over the road, as though reclining on the insubstantial air. At one place, on the skirts of Blackmoor Vale, where the bold brow of High-Stoy Hill is seen a mile or two ahead, the leaves lie so thick in autumn as to completely bury the track. The spot is lonely, and when the days are darkening the many gay charioteers now perished who have rolled along the way, the blistered soles that have trodden it, and the tears that have wetted it, return upon the mind of the loiterer.

The physiognomy of a deserted highway expresses solitude to a degree that is not reached by mere dales or downs, and bespeaks a tomb-like stillness more emphatic than that of glades and pools. The contrast of what is with what might be, probably accounts for this. To step, for instance, at the place under notice, from the edge of the plantation into the adjoining thoroughfare, and pause amid its emptiness for a moment, was to

exchange by the act of a single stride the simple absence of human companionship for an incubus of the forlorn. . . . Thus they rode on, and High-Stoy Hill grew larger ahead. At length could be discerned in the dusk, about half-a-mile to one side, gardens and orchards sunk in a concave, and, as it were, snipped out of the woodland. From this self-contained place rose in stealthy silence tall stems of smoke, which the eye of imagination could trace downward to their root on quiet hearthstones, festooned overhead with hams and flitches. It was one of those sequestered spots outside the gates of the world where may usually be found more meditation than action, and more listlessness than meditation; where reasoning proceeds on narrow premises, and results in inferences wildly imaginative; yet where, from time to time, dramas of a grandeur and unity truly Sophoclean are enacted in the real, by virtue of the concentrated passions and closely-knit interdependence of the lives therein.

THE VALLEY OF THE GREAT DAIRIES

TESS had never before visited this part of the country, and yet she felt akin to the landscape. Not so very far to the

left of her she could discern a dark patch in the scenery, which inquiry confirmed her in supposing to be trees marking the environs of Kingsbere—in the church of which parish the bones of her ancestors—her useless ancestors—lay entombed. . . .

The journey over the intervening uplands and lowlands of Egdon, when she reached them, was a more troublesome walk than she had anticipated, the distance being actually but a few miles. In two hours, after sundry wrong turnings, she found herself on a summit commanding the long-sought-for vale, the Valley of the Great Dairies, the valley in which milk and butter grew to rankness, and were produced more profusely, if less delicately, than at her home—the verdant plain so well watered by the river Var or Froom.

It was intrinsically different from the Vale of Little Dairies, Blackmoor Vale, which, save during her disastrous sojourn at Trantridge, Tess had exclusively known till now. The world was drawn to a larger pattern here. The enclosures numbered fifty acres instead of ten, the farmsteads were more extended, the groups of cattle formed tribes here about ; there only families. These myriads of cows stretching under her eyes from the far east to the far west outnumbered any

she had ever seen at one glance before. The green lea was speckled as thickly with them as a canvas by Van Alsloot or Sallaert with burghers. The ripe hue of the red and dun kine absorbed the evening sunlight, which the white-coated animals returned to the eye in rays almost dazzling, even at the distant elevation on which she stood.

The bird's-eye perspective before her was not so luxuriantly beautiful, perhaps, as that other one which she knew so well ; yet it was more cheering. It lacked the intensely blue atmosphere of the rival vale, and its heavy soils and scents ; the new air was clear, bracing, ethereal. The river itself, which nourished the grass and cows of these renowned dairies, flowed not like the streams in Blackmoor. Those were slow, silent, often turbid ; flowing over beds of mud into which the incautious wader might sink and vanish unawares. The Var waters were clear as the pure River of Life shown to the Evangelist, rapid as the shadow of a cloud, with pebbly shallows that prattled to the sky all day long. There the water-flower was the lily ; the crow-foot here. . . . Her hopes mingled with the sunshine in an ideal photosphere which surrounded her as she bounded along against the soft south wind.

EGDON HEATH

A SATURDAY afternoon in November was approaching the time of twilight, and the vast tract of unenclosed wild known as Egdon Heath embrowned itself moment by moment. Overhead the hollow stretch of whitish cloud shutting out the sky was as a tent which had the whole heath for its floor.

The heaven being spread with this pallid screen and the earth with the darkest vegetation, their meeting-line at the horizon was clearly marked. In such contrast the heath wore the appearance of an instalment of night which had taken up its place before its astronomical hour was come : darkness had to a great extent arrived hereon, while day stood distinct in the sky. . . .

The place became full of a watchful intentness now ; for when other things sank brooding to sleep the heath appeared slowly to awake and listen. Every night its Titanic form seemed to await something ; but it had waited thus, unmoved, during so many centuries, through the crises of so many things, that it could only be imagined to await one last crisis—the final overthrow.

It was a spot which returned upon the memory of those who loved it with an

aspect of peculiar and kindly congruity. Smiling champaigns of flowers and fruit hardly do this, for they are permanently harmonious only with an existence of better reputation as to its issues than the present. Twilight combined with the scenery of Egdon Heath to evolve a thing majestic without severity, impressive without showiness, emphatic in its admonitions, grand in its simplicity. The qualifications which frequently invest the façade of a prison with far more dignity than is found in the façade of a palace double its size lent to this heath a sublimity in which spots renowned for beauty of the accepted kind are utterly wanting. Fair prospects wed happily with fair times ; but alas, if times be not fair ! Men have oftener suffered from the mockery of a place too smiling for their reason than from the oppression of surroundings over-sadly tinged. Haggard Egdon appealed to a subtler and scarcer instinct, to a more recently learnt emotion, than that which responds to the sort of beauty called charming and fair.

Indeed, it is a question if the exclusive reign of this orthodox beauty is not approaching its last quarter. The new Vale of Tempe may be a gaunt waste in Thule : human souls may find themselves in closer and closer harmony

with external things wearing a sombreness distasteful to our race when it was young. The time seems near, if it has not actually arrived, when the chastened sublimity of a moor, a sea, or a mountain will be all of nature that is absolutely in keeping with the moods of the more thinking among mankind. And ultimately, to the commonest tourist, spots like Iceland may become what the vineyards and myrtle-gardens of South Europe are to him now ; and Heidelberg and Baden be passed unheeded as he hastens from the Alps to the sand-dunes of Scheveningen.

The most thorough-going ascetic could feel that he had a natural right to wander on Egdon : he was keeping within the line of legitimate indulgence when he laid himself open to influences such as these. Colours and beauties so far subdued were, at least, the birthright of all. Only in summer days of highest feather did its mood touch the level of gaiety. Intensity was more usually reached by way of the solemn than by way of the brilliant, and such a sort of intensity was often arrived at during winter darkness, tempests, and mists. Then Egdon was aroused to reciprocity ; for the storm was its lover, and the wind its friend. Then it became the home of strange phantoms ; and it was found to

be the hitherto unrecognized original of those wild regions of obscurity which are vaguely felt to be compassing us about in midnight dreams of flight and disaster, and are never thought of after the dream till revived by scenes like this.

It was at present a place perfectly accordant with man's nature—neither ghastly, hateful, nor ugly: neither commonplace, unmeaning, nor tame; but, like man, slighted and enduring; and withal singularly colossal and mysterious in its swarthy monotony. As with some persons who have long lived apart, solitude seemed to look out of its countenance. It had a lonely face, suggesting tragical possibilities. . . .

Here at least were intelligible facts regarding landscape—far-reaching proofs productive of genuine satisfaction. The untameable, Ishmaelitish thing that Egdon now was it always had been. Civilization was its enemy; and ever since the beginning of vegetation its soil had worn the same antique brown dress, the natural and invariable garment of the particular formation. In its venerable one coat lay a certain vein of satire on human vanity in clothes. A person on a heath in raiment of modern cut and colours has more or less an anomalous look. We seem to want the oldest and simplest

human clothing where the clothing of the earth is so primitive.

To recline on a stump of thorn in the central valley of Egdon, between afternoon and night, as now, where the eye could reach nothing of the world outside the summits and shoulders of heathland which filled the whole circumference of its glance, and to know that everything around and underneath had been from prehistoric times as unaltered as the stars overhead, gave ballast to the mind adrift on change, and harassed by the irrepressible New. The great inviolate place had an ancient permanence which the sea cannot claim. Who can say of a particular sea that it is old? Distilled by the sun, kneaded by the moon, it is renewed in a year, in a day, or in an hour. The sea changed, the fields changed, the rivers, the villages, and the people changed, yet Egdon remained.

NATURE'S QUESTIONING

WHEN I look forth at dawning,
pool,
Field, flock, and lonely tree,
All seem to gaze at me
Like chastened children sitting silent in a
school ;

Their faces dulled, constrained, and worn,
As though the master's ways
Through the long teaching days
Their first terrestrial zest had chilled and
overborne.

And on them stirs, in lippings mere
(As if once clear in call,
But now scarce breathed at all)—
' We wonder, even wonder, why we find
us here !

' Has some Vast Imbecility,
Mighty to build and blend,
But impotent to tend,
Framed us in jest, and left us now to
hazardry ?'

' Or come we of an Automaton
Unconscious of our pains ? . . .
Or are we live remains
Of Godhead dying downwards, brain and
eye now gone ?

' Or is it that some high Plan betides,
As yet not understood,
Of Evil stormed by Good,
We the Forlorn Hope over which Achieve-
ment strides ?'

Thus things around. No answerer I . . .
Meanwhile the winds, and rains,
And Earth's old glooms and pains
Are still the same, and gladdest Life
Death neighbours nigh.

NIGHT ON NORCOMBE HILL

NORCOMBE HILL—not far from lonely Toller-Down—was one of those spots which suggest to a passer-by that he is in the presence of a shape approaching the indestructible as nearly as any to be found on earth. It was a featureless convexity of chalk and soil—an ordinary specimen of those smoothly-outlined protuberances of the globe which may remain undisturbed on some great day of confusion, when far grander heights and dizzy granite precipices topple down.

The hill was covered on its northern side by an ancient and decaying plantation of beeches, whose upper verge formed a line over the crest, fringing its arched curve against the sky, like a mane. To-night these trees sheltered the southern slope from the keenest blasts, which smote the wood and floundered through it with a sound as of grumbling, or gushed over its crowning boughs in a weakened moan. . . .

Between this half-wooded, half-naked hill, and the vague, still horizon that its summit indistinctly commanded, was a mysterious sheet of fathomless shade—the sounds from which suggested that what it concealed bore some humble resemblance to features here. The thin grasses, more or less coating the hill,

were touched by the wind in breezes of differing powers, and almost of differing natures—one rubbing the blades heavily, another raking them piercingly, another brushing them like a soft broom. The instinctive act of human-kind was to stand and listen, and learn how the trees on the right and the trees on the left wailed or chaunted to each other in the regular antiphonies of a cathedral choir; how hedges and other shapes to leeward then caught the note, lowering it to the tenderest sob; and how the hurrying gust then plunged into the south, to be heard no more.

The sky was clear—remarkably clear—and the twinkling of all the stars seemed to be but throbs of one body, timed by a common pulse. The North Star was directly in the wind's eye, and since evening the Bear had swung round it outwardly to the east, till he was now at a right angle with the meridian. A difference of colours in the stars—oftener read of than seen in England—was really perceptible here. The kingly brilliancy of Sirius pierced the eye with a steely glitter, the star called Capella was yellow, Aldebaran and Betelgueux shone with a fiery red.

To persons standing alone on a hill during a clear midnight such as this, the roll of the world eastward is almost a palpable

movement. The sensation may be caused by the panoramic glide of the stars past earthly objects, which is perceptible in a few minutes of stillness, or by the better outlook upon space that a hill affords, or by the wind, or by the solitude ; but whatever be its origin, the impression of riding along is vivid and abiding. The poetry of motion is a phrase much in use, and to enjoy the epic form of that gratification it is necessary to stand on a hill at a small hour of the night, and, having first expanded with a sense of difference from the mass of civilized mankind, who are dreamwapt and disregardful of all such proceedings at this time, long and quietly watch your stately progress through the stars. After such a nocturnal reconnoitre it is hard to get back to earth, and to believe that the consciousness of such majestic speeding is derived from a tiny human frame.

CASTERBRIDGE

‘ **W**HAT an old - fashioned place it seems to be !’ said Elizabeth-Jane, while her silent mother mused on other things than topography. ‘ It is huddled all together ; and it is shut in by a square wall of trees, like a plot of garden ground by a box-edging.’

Its squareness was, indeed, the characteristic which most struck the eye in this antiquated borough—the borough of Casterbridge—at that time, recent as it was, untouched by the faintest sprinkle of modernism. It was compact as a box of dominoes. It had no suburbs—in the ordinary sense. County and town met at a mathematical line.

To birds of the more soaring kind Casterbridge must have appeared on this fine evening as a mosaic-work of subdued reds, browns, greys, and crystals, held together by a rectangular frame of deep green. To the level eye of humanity it stood as an indistinct mass behind a dense stockade of limes and chestnuts, set in the midst of miles of rotund down and concave field. The mass became gradually dissected by the vision into towers, gables, chimneys, and casements, the highest glazings shining bleared and bloodshot with the coppery fire they caught from the belt of sunlit cloud in the west. From the centre of each side of this tree-bound square ran avenues east, west, and south into the wide expanse of corn-land and combe to the distance of a mile or so. . .

The lamplights now glimmered through the engirdling trees, conveying a sense of great snugness and comfort inside, and rendering at the same time the unlighted

country without strangely solitary and vacant in aspect, considering its nearness to life. The difference between burgh and champaign was increased, too, by sounds which now reached them above others—the notes of a brass band. The travellers returned into the High Street, where there were timber houses with overhanging stories, whose small-paned lattices were screened by dimity curtains on a drawing-string, and under whose barge-boards old cobwebs waved in the breeze. There were houses of brick-nogging, which derived their chief support from those adjoining. There were slate roofs patched with tiles, and tile roofs patched with slate, with occasionally a roof of thatch.

The agricultural and pastoral character of the people upon whom the town depended for its existence was shown by the class of objects displayed in the shop windows. Scythes, reap-hooks, sheep-shears, bill-hooks, spades, mattocks, and hoes at the ironmonger's; bee-hives, butter-firkins, churns, milking-stools and pails, hay-rakes, field-flagons, and seed-lips at the cooper's; cart-ropes and plough-harness at the saddler's; carts, wheel-barrows, and mill-gear at the wheelwright's and machinist's; horse-embrocations at the chemist's; at the glover's and leather-cutter's, hedging-

gloves, thatcher's knee-caps, ploughman's leggings, villager's pattens and clogs.

They came to a grizzled church, whose massive square tower rose unbroken into the darkening sky, the lower parts being illuminated by the nearest lamps sufficiently to show how completely the mortar from the joints of the stonework had been nibbled out by time and weather, which had planted in the crevices thus made little tufts of stone-crop and grass almost as far up as the very battlements. From this tower the clock struck eight, and thereupon a bell began to toll with a peremptory clang. The curfew was still rung in Casterbridge, and it was utilized by the inhabitants as a signal for shutting their shops. No sooner did the deep notes of the bell throb between the house-fronts than a clatter of shutters arose through the whole length of the High Street. In a few minutes business at Casterbridge was ended for the day.

ARCHITECTURAL MASKS

I.

THERE is a house with ivied walls,
And mullioned windows worn and
old,
And the long dwellers in those halls
Have souls that know but sordid calls,
And daily dote on gold.

II.

In blazing brick and plated show
Not far away a ' villa ' gleams,
And here a family few may know,
With book and pencil, viol and bow,
Lead inner lives of dreams.

III.

The philosophic passers say,
' See that old mansion mossed and fair,
Poetic souls therein are they :
And O that gaudy box ! Away,
You vulgar people there.'

IN CASTERBRIDGE STREETS

THE front doors of the private houses were mostly left open at this warm autumn time, no thought of umbrella stealers disturbing the minds of the placid Casterbridge burgesses. Hence, through the long, straight, entrance passages thus unclosed could be seen, as through tunnels, the mossy gardens at the back, glowing with nasturtiums, fuchsias, scarlet geraniums, ' bloody warriors,' snapdragons, and dahlias, this floral blaze being backed by crusted grey stone-work remaining from a yet remoter Casterbridge than the venerable one visible in the street. The old-fashioned fronts of these houses, which had older than old-fashioned

backs, rose sheer from the pavement, into which the bow-windows protruded like bastions, necessitating a pleasing *chassez-déchassez* movement to the time-pressed pedestrian at every few yards. He was bound also to evolve other Terpsichorean figures in respect of door-steps, scrapers, cellar-hatches, church buttresses, and the overhanging angles of walls which, originally unobtrusive, had become bow-legged and knock-kneed.

In addition to these fixed obstacles which spoke so cheerfully of individual unrestraint as to boundaries, movables occupied the path and roadway to a perplexing extent. First the vans of the carriers in and out of Casterbridge, who hailed from Mellstock, Weatherbury, The Hintocks, Sherton - Abbas, Kingsbere, Overcombe, and many other towns and villages round. Their owners were numerous enough to be regarded as a tribe, and had almost distinctiveness enough to be regarded as a race. . . . Over the pavement on the sunny side of the way hung shopblinds so constructed as to give the passenger's hat a smart buffet off his head, as from the unseen hands of Cranstoun's Goblin Page, celebrated in romantic lore. . . .

The yeomen, farmers, dairymen, and townfolk, who came to transact business

in these ancient streets, spoke in other ways than by articulation. Not to hear the words of your interlocutor in metropolitan centres is to know nothing of his meaning. Here the face, the arms, the hat, the stick, the body throughout spoke equally with the tongue. To express satisfaction the Casterbridge market-man added to his utterance a broadening of the cheeks, a crevicing of the eyes, a throwing back of the shoulders, which was intelligible from the other end of the street. . . .

Thus Casterbridge was in most respects but the pole, focus, or nerve-knot of the surrounding country life ; differing from the many manufacturing towns which are as foreign bodies set down, like boulders on a plain, in a green world with which they have nothing in common. Casterbridge lived by agriculture at one remove further from the fountain-head than the adjoining villages—no more. The townsfolk understood every fluctuation in the rustic's condition, for it affected their receipts as much as the labourer's ; they entered into the troubles and joys which moved the aristocratic families ten miles round—for the same reason. And even at dinner-parties of the professional families the subjects of discussion were corn, cattle-disease, sowing and reaping,

fencing and planting ; while politics were viewed by them less from their own standpoint of burgesses with rights and privileges than from the standpoint of their county neighbours.

ROMAN CASTERBRIDGE

THE Ring at Casterbridge was merely the local name of one of the finest Roman Amphitheatres, if not the very finest, remaining in Britain.

Casterbridge announced old Rome in every street, alley, and precinct. It looked Roman, bespoke the art of Rome, concealed dead men of Rome. It was impossible to dig more than a foot or two deep about the town fields and gardens without coming upon some tall soldier or other of the Empire, who had lain there in his silent unobtrusive rest for a space of fifteen hundred years. He was mostly found lying on his side, in an oval scoop in the chalk, like a chicken in its shell ; his knees drawn up to his chest ; sometimes with the remains of his spear against his arm ; a fibula or brooch of bronze on his breast or forehead ; an urn at his knees, a jar at his throat, a bottle at his mouth ; and mystified conjecture pouring down upon him from the eyes of Casterbridge street-boys and men, who

had turned a moment to gaze at the familiar spectacle as they passed by.

Imaginative inhabitants, who would have felt an unpleasantness at the discovery of a comparatively modern skeleton in their gardens, were quite unmoved by these hoary shapes. They had lived so long ago, their time was so unlike the present, their hopes and motives were so widely removed from ours, that between them and the living there seemed to stretch a gulf too wide for even a spirit to pass.

The Amphitheatre was a huge circular enclosure, with a notch at opposite extremities of its diameter north and south. From its sloping internal form it might have been called the spittoon of the Jötuns. It was to Casterbridge what the ruined Coliseum is to modern Rome, and was nearly of the same magnitude. The dusk of evening was the proper hour at which a true impression of this suggestive place could be received. Standing in the middle of the arena at that time there by degrees became apparent its real vastness, which a cursory view from the summit at noon-day was apt to obscure. Melancholy, impressive, lonely, yet accessible from every part of the town, the historic circle was the frequent spot for appointments of a furtive kind. Intrigues were arranged there ; tentative meetings were there ex-

perimented after divisions and feuds. But one kind of appointment—in itself the most common of any—seldom had place in the Amphitheatre : that of happy lovers.

A SPOT

IN years defaced and lost,
Two sat here, transport-tossed,
Lit by a living love
The wilted world knew nothing of :
Scared momentarily
By gaingivings,
Then hoping things
That could not be.

Of love and us no trace
Abides upon the place ;
The sun and shadows wheel,
Season and season sereward steal ;
Foul days and fair
Here, too, prevail,
And gust and gale
As everywhere.

But lonely shepherd souls
Who bask amid these knolls
May catch a faery sound
On sleepy noontides from the ground :
' O not again
Till Earth outwears
Shall love like theirs
Suffuse this glen !'

A STREET OF FARMERS' HOME-STEADS

CASTERBRIDGE, as has been hinted, was a place deposited in the block upon a corn-field. There was no suburb in the modern sense, or transitional intermixture of town and down. It stood, with regard to the wide fertile land adjoining, clean-cut and distinct, like a chess-board on a green table-cloth. The farmer's boy could sit under his barley-mow and pitch a stone into the office-window of the town-clerk; reapers at work among the sheaves nodded to their acquaintances standing on the pavement-corner; the red-robed judge, when he condemned a sheep-stealer, pronounced sentence to the tune of Baa, that floated in at the window from the remainder of the flock browsing hard by; and at executions the waiting crowd stood in a meadow immediately before the drop, out of which the cows had been temporarily driven to give the spectators room.

The corn grown on the upland side of the borough was garnered by farmers who lived in an eastern purlieu called Durnover. Here wheat-ricks overhung the old Roman street, and thrust their eaves against the church tower; green-thatched barns, with doorways as high

as the gates of Solomon's temple, opened directly upon the main thoroughfare. Barns indeed were so numerous as to alternate with every half-dozen houses along the way. Here lived burgesses who daily walked the fallow ; shepherds in an intra-mural squeeze. A street of farmers' homesteads—a street ruled by a mayor and corporation, yet echoing with the thump of flail, the flutter of the winnowing fan, and the purr of the milk into the pails—a street which had nothing urban in it whatever—this was the Durnove end of Casterbridge.

THE BRIDGES

TWO bridges stood near the lower part of Casterbridge town. . . . These bridges had speaking countenances. Every projection in each was worn down to obtuseness, partly by weather, more by friction from generations of loungers, whose toes and heels had from year to year made restless movements against these parapets, as they had stood there meditating on the aspect of affairs. In the case of the more friable bricks and stones even the flat faces were worn into hollows by the same mixed mechanism. The masonry of the top was clamped with iron at each joint ; since it had been

no uncommon thing for desperate men to wrench the coping off and throw it down the river, in reckless defiance of the magistrates.

For to this pair of bridges gravitated all the failures of the town ; those who had failed in business, in love, in sobriety, in crime. Why the unhappy hereabout usually chose the bridges for their meditations in preference to a railing, a gate, or a stile, was not so clear.

There was a marked difference of quality between the personages who haunted the near bridge of brick, and the personages who haunted the far one of stone. Those of lowest character preferred the former, adjoining the town ; they did not mind the glare of the public eye. They had been of comparatively no account during their successes ; and, though they might feel dispirited, they had no particular sense of shame in their ruin. Their hands were mostly kept in their pockets ; they wore a leather strap round their waists, and boots that required a great deal of lacing, but seemed never to get any. Instead of sighing at their adversities they spat, and instead of saying the iron had entered into their souls, they said they were down on their luck. Jopp in his times of distress had often stood here ; so had Mother Cuxsom,

Christopher Coney, and poor Abel Whittle.

The *misérables* who would pause on the remoter bridge were of a politer stamp. They included bankrupts, hypochondriacs, persons who were what is called 'out of a situation' from fault of lucklessness, the inefficient of the professional class—shabby-genteel men, who did not know how to get rid of the weary time between breakfast and dinner, and the yet more weary time between dinner and dark. The eyes of this species were mostly directed over the parapet upon the running water below. A man seen there looking thus fixedly into the river was pretty sure to be one whom the world did not treat kindly for some reason or other. While one in straits on the townward bridge did not mind who saw him so, and kept his back to the parapet to survey the passers-by, one in straits on this never faced the road, never turned his head at coming footsteps, but, sensitive to his own condition, watched the current whenever a stranger approached, as if some strange fish interested him, though every finned thing had been poached out of the river years before.

There and thus they would muse; if their grief were the grief of oppression

they would wish themselves kings ; if their grief were poverty, wish themselves millionaires ; if sin, they would wish they were saints or angels ; if despised love, that they were some much-courted Adonis of county fame. Some had been known to stand and think so long with this fixed gaze downward, that eventually they had allowed their poor carcasses to follow that gaze ; and they were discovered the next morning in the pool beneath out of reach of their troubles.

WEATHERBURY

IN comparison with cities, Weatherbury was immutable. The citizen's *Then* is the rustic's *Now*. In London, twenty or thirty years ago are old times ; in Paris ten years, or five ; in Weatherbury three or four score years were included in the mere present, and nothing less than a century set a mark on its face or tone. Five decades hardly modified the cut of a gaiter, the embroidery of a smock-frock, by the breadth of a hair. Ten generations failed to alter the turn of a single phrase. In these Wessex nooks the busy outsider's ancient times are only old ; his old times are still new ; his present is futurity.

THE GURGOYLE ON WEATHER- BURY CHURCH

THE tower of Weatherbury Church was a square erection of fourteenth-century date, having two stone gargoyles on each of the four faces of its parapet. Of these eight carved protuberances only two at this time continued to serve the purpose of their erection—that of spouting the water from the lead roof within. One mouth in each front had been closed by bygone churchwardens as superfluous, the two others were broken away and choked—a matter not of much consequence to the well-being of the tower, for the two mouths which still remained open and active were gaping enough to do all the work.

It has been sometimes argued that there is no truer criterion of the vitality of any given art-period than the power of the master-spirits of that time in grotesque; and certainly in the instance of Gothic art there is no disputing the proposition. Weatherbury tower was a somewhat early instance of the use of an ornamental parapet in parish as distinct from cathedral churches, and the gargoyles, which are the necessary correlatives of a parapet, were exceptionally prominent—of the boldest cut that the

hand could shape, and of the most original design that a human brain could conceive. There was, so to speak, that symmetry in their distortion which is less the characteristic of British than of Continental grotesques of the period. All the eight were different from each other. A beholder was convinced that nothing on earth could be more hideous than those he saw on the north side until he went round to the south. Of the two on this latter face, that at the southeastern corner . . . was too human to be called like a dragon, too impish to be like a man, too animal to be like a fiend, and not enough like a bird to be called a griffin. This horrible stone entity was fashioned as if covered with a wrinkled hide; it had short, erect ears, eyes starting from their sockets, and its fingers and hands were seizing the corners of its mouth, which they thus seemed to pull open to give free passage to the water it vomited. The lower row of teeth was quite washed away, though the upper still remained. Here and thus, jutting a couple of feet from the wall against which its feet rested as a support, the creature had for four hundred years laughed at the surrounding landscape, voicelessly in dry weather, and in wet with a gurgling and snorting sound.

IN A EWELEAZE NEAR WEATHER-
BURY

THE years have gathered grayly
 Since I danced upon this leaze
With one who kindled gaily
 Love's fitful ecstasies !
But despite the term as teacher,
 I remain what I was then
In each essential feature
 Of the fantasies of men.

Yet I note the little chisel
 Of never-napping Time,
Defacing ghast and grizzle
 The blazon of my prime.
When at night he thinks me sleeping,
 I feel him boring sly
Within my bones, and heaping
 Quaintest pains for by-and-by.

Still, I'd go the world with Beauty,
 I would laugh with her and sing,
I would shun divinest duty
 To resume her worshipping.
But she'd scorn my brave endeavour,
 She would not balm the breeze
By murmuring 'Thine for ever !'
 As she did upon this leaze.

MARYGREEN

IT was as old-fashioned as it was small, and it rested in the lap of an undulating upland adjoining the North Wessex downs. Old as it was, however, the well-shaft was probably the only relic of the local history that remained absolutely unchanged. Many of the thatched and dormered dwelling-houses had been pulled down of late years, and many trees felled on the green. Above all, the original church, hump-backed, wood-turreted, and quaintly hipped, had been taken down, and either cracked up into heaps of road-metal in the lane, or utilized as pig-sty walls, garden seats, guard-stones to fences, and rockeries in the flower-beds of the neighbourhood. In place of it a tall new building of German-Gothic design, unfamiliar to English eyes, had been erected on a new piece of ground by a certain obliterator of historic records who had run down from London and back in a day. The site whereon so long had stood the ancient temple to the Christian divinities was not even recorded on the green and level grass-plot that had immemorially been the churchyard, the obliterated graves being commemorated by ninepenny cast-iron crosses warranted to last five years. . . .

‘How ugly it is here!’ Jude murmured.

The fresh harrow-lines seemed to stretch like the channellings in a piece of new corduroy, lending a meanly utilitarian air to the expanse, taking away its gradations, and depriving it of all history beyond that of the few recent months, though in every clod and stone there really lingered associations enough and to spare—echoes of songs from ancient harvest-days, of spoken words, and of sturdy deeds. Every inch of ground had been the site, first or last, of energy, gaiety, horse-play, bickerings, weariness. Groups of gleaners had squatted in the sun on every square yard. Love-matches that had populated the adjoining hamlet had been made up there between reaping and carrying. Under the hedge which divided the field from a distant plantation girls had given themselves to lovers who would not turn their heads to look at them by the next harvest ; and in that ancient corn-field many a man had made love-promises to a woman at whose voice he had trembled by the next seed-time after fulfilling them in the church adjoining. But this neither Jude nor the rooks around him considered.

TO LIFE

O LIFE with the sad seared face,
I weary of seeing thee,
And thy draggled cloke, and thy hobbling
pace,
And thy too-forced pleasantry !

I know what thou would'st tell
Of Death, Time, Destiny—
I have known it long, and know, too, well
What it all means for me.

But canst thou not array
Thyself in rare disguise,
And feign like truth, for one mad day,
That earth is Paradise ?

I'll tune me to the mood,
And mumm with thee till eve ;
And maybe what as interlude
I feign, I shall believe !

JUDE FAWLEY VIEWS CHRIST- MINSTER

JUDE went out feeling more than ever
his existence to be an undemanded
one. . . . Growing up brought respon-
sibilities, he found. Events did not
rhyme quite as he had thought. Nature's
logic was too horrid for him to care for.

That mercy towards one set of creatures was cruelty towards another sickened his sense of harmony. As you got older, and felt yourself to be at the centre of your time, and not at a point in its circumference, as you had felt when you were little, you were seized with a sort of shuddering, he perceived. All around you there seemed to be something glaring, garish, rattling, and the noises and glares hit upon the little cell called your life, and shook it, and scorched it. . . .

The boy had never before strayed so far north as this from the nestling hamlet of Marygreen in which he had been deposited by the carrier from a railway station southward, one dark evening some few months earlier, and till now he had had no suspicion that such a wide, flat, low-lying country lay so near at hand, under the very verge of his upland world. The whole northern semicircle between east and west, to a distance of forty or fifty miles, spread itself before him; a bluer, moister atmosphere, evidently, than that he breathed up here.

Not far from the road stood a weather-beaten old barn of reddish-gray brick and tile. It was known as the Brown House by the people of the locality. He was about to pass it when he perceived a ladder against the eaves; and the reflec-

tion that the higher he got, the further he could see, led Jude to stand and regard it. On the slope of the roof two men were repairing the tiling. He turned into the ridgeway and drew towards the barn.

When he had wistfully watched the workmen for some time he took courage, and ascended the ladder till he stood beside them.

‘ Well, my lad, and what may you want up here ? ’

‘ I wanted to know where the city of Christminster is, if you please. ’

‘ Christminster is out across there, by that clump. You can see it—at least you can on a clear day. Ah, no, you can’t now. ’

The other tiler, glad of any kind of diversion from the monotony of his labour, had also turned to look towards the quarter designated. ‘ You can’t often see it in weather like this, ’ he said. ‘ The time I’ve noticed it is when the sun is going down in a blaze of flame, and it looks like—I don’t know what. ’

‘ The heavenly Jerusalem, ’ suggested the serious urchin.

‘ Ay — though I should never ha’ thought of it myself. . . . But I can’t see no Christminster to-day. ’

The boy strained his eyes also ; yet neither could he see the far-off city. He

descended from the barn, and abandoning Christminster with the versatility of his age he walked along the ridge-track, looking for any natural objects of interest that might lie in the banks thereabout. When he repassed the barn to go back to Marygreen he observed that the ladder was still in its place, but that the men had finished their day's work and gone away.

It was waning towards evening ; there was still a faint mist, but it had cleared a little except in the damper tracts of subjacent country and along the river-courses. He thought again of Christminster, and wished, since he had come two or three miles from his aunt's house on purpose, that he could have seen for once this attractive city of which he had been told. But even if he waited here it was hardly likely that the air would clear before night. Yet he was loth to leave the spot, for the northern expanse became lost to view on retreating towards the village only a few hundred yards.

He ascended the ladder to have one more look at the point the men had designated, and perched himself on the highest rung, overlying the tiles. He might not be able to come so far as this for many days. Perhaps if he prayed, the wish to see Christminster might be forwarded. People said that, if you prayed, things

sometimes came to you, even though they sometimes did not. He had read in a tract that a man who had begun to build a church, and had no money to finish it, knelt down and prayed, and the money came in by the next post. Another man tried the same experiment, and the money did not come ; but he found afterwards that the breeches he knelt in were made by a wicked Jew. This was not discouraging, and turning on the ladder, Jude knelt on the third rung, where, resting against those above it, he prayed that the mist might rise.

He then seated himself again, and waited. In the course of ten or fifteen minutes the thinning mist dissolved altogether from the northern horizon, as it had already done elsewhere, and about a quarter of an hour before the time of sunset the westward clouds parted, the sun's position being partially uncovered, and the beams streaming out in visible lines between two bars of slaty cloud. The boy immediately looked back in the old direction.

Some way within the limits of the stretch of landscape, points of light like the topaz gleamed. The air increased in transparency with the lapse of minutes, till the topaz points showed themselves to be the vanes, windows, wet roof slates,

and other shining spots upon the spires, domes, freestone-work, and varied outlines that were faintly revealed. It was Christminster, unquestionably; either directly seen, or miraged in the peculiar atmosphere.

The spectator gazed on and on till the windows and vanes lost their shine, going out almost suddenly like extinguished candles. The vague city became veiled in mist. Turning to the west, he saw that the sun had disappeared. The foreground of the scene had grown funereally dark, and near objects put on the hues and shapes of chimæras.

JUDE'S DREAMS OF CHRIST- MINSTER

JUDE'S dreams were as gigantic as his surroundings were small. Through the solid barrier of cold cretaceous upland to the northward he was always beholding a gorgeous city—the fancied place he had likened to the new Jerusalem, though there was perhaps more of the painter's imagination and less of the diamond merchant's in his dreams thereof than in those of the Apocalyptic writer. And the city acquired a tangibility, a permanence, a hold on his life, mainly from the one nucleus of fact that the man

(Mr. Phillotson, the schoolmaster) for whose knowledge and purposes he had so much reverence was actually living there ; not only so, but living among the more thoughtful and mentally shining ones therein.

In sad wet seasons, though he knew it must rain at Christminster too, he could hardly believe that it rained so drearily there. Whenever he could get away from the confines of the hamlet for an hour or two, which was not often, he would steal off to the Brown House on the hill and strain his eyes persistently ; sometimes to be rewarded by the sight of a dome or spire, at other times by a little smoke, which in his estimate had some of the mysticism of incense.

Then the day came when it suddenly occurred to him that if he ascended to the point of view after dark, or possibly went a mile or two further, he would see the night lights of the city. It would be necessary to come back alone, but even that consideration did not deter him, for he could throw a little manliness into his mood, no doubt.

]The project was duly executed. It was not late when he arrived at the place of outlook, only just after dusk ; but a black north-east sky, accompanied by a wind from the same quarter, made the

occasion dark enough. He was rewarded ; but what he saw was not the lamps in rows, as he had half expected. No individual light was visible, only a halo or glow-fog over-arching the place against the black heavens behind it, making the light and the city seem distant but a mile or so.

He set himself to wonder on the exact point in the glow where the schoolmaster might be—he who never communicated with anybody at Marygreen now ; who was as if dead to them here. In the glow he seemed to see Phillotson promenading at ease, like one of the forms in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace.

He had heard that breezes travelled at the rate of ten miles an hour, and the fact now came into his mind. He parted his lips as he faced the north-east, and drew in the wind as if it were a sweet liquor.

' You,' he said, addressing the breeze caressingly, ' were in Christminster city between one and two hours ago, floating along the streets, pulling round the weather-cocks, touching Mr. Phillotson's face, being breathed by him, and now you be here, breathed by me—you, the very same.'

Suddenly there came along this wind something towards him—a message from

the place—from some soul residing there, it seemed. Surely it was the sound of bells, the voice of the city, faint and musical, calling to him, ‘We are happy here!’

JUDE VISITS CHRISTMINSTER

JUDE was walking towards Christminster City, at a point a mile or two to the south-west. He had at last found himself clear of Marygreen and Alfredston. . . . He now paused at the top of a crooked and gentle declivity, and obtained his first near view of the city. Grey-stoned and dun-roofed, it stood within hail of the Wessex border, and almost with the tip of one small toe within it, at the northernmost point of the crinkled line along which the leisurely Thames strokes the field of that ancient kingdom. The buildings now lay quiet in the sunset, a vane here and there on their many spires and domes giving sparkle to a picture of sober secondary and tertiary hues.

Reaching the bottom, he moved along the level way between pollard willows growing indistinct in the twilight, and soon confronted the outmost lamps of the town—some of those lamps which had sent into the sky the gleam and glory

that caught his strained gaze in his days of dreaming, so many years ago. They winked their yellow eyes at him dubiously, and as if, though they had been awaiting him all these years, in disappointment at his tarrying, they did not much want him now. . . .

It was a windy, whispering, moonless night. To guide himself he opened under a lamp a map he had brought. The breeze ruffled and fluttered it, but he could see enough to decide on the direction he should take to reach the heart of the place.

After many turnings he came up to the first ancient mediæval pile that he had encountered. It was a college, as he could see by the gateway. He entered it, walked round, and penetrated to dark corners which no lamplight reached. Close to this college was another ; and a little further on another ; and then he began to be encircled as it were with the breath and sentiment of the venerable city. When he passed objects out of harmony with its general expression he allowed his eyes to slip over them as if he did not see them.

A bell began clanging, and he listened till a hundred and one strokes had sounded. He must have made a mistake, he thought : it was meant for a hundred.

When the gates were shut, and he could

no longer get into the quadrangles, he rambled under the walls and doorways, feeling with his fingers the contours of their mouldings and carving. The minutes passed, fewer and fewer people were visible, and still he serpentined among the shadows, for had he not imagined these scenes through ten bygone years, and what mattered a night's rest for once? High against the black sky the flash of a lamp would show crocketed pinnacles and indented battlements. Down obscure alleys, apparently never trodden now by the foot of man, and whose very existence seemed to be forgotten, there would jut into the path porticoes, oriels, doorways of enriched and florid middle-age design, their extinct air being accentuated by the rottenness of the stones. It seemed impossible that modern thought could house itself in such decrepit and superseded chambers.

Knowing not a human being here, Jude began to be impressed with the isolation of his own personality, as with a self-spectre, the sensation being that of one who walked, but could not make himself seen or heard. He drew his breath pensively, and, seeming thus almost his own ghost, gave his thoughts to the other ghostly presences with which the nooks were haunted. . . . He had read and

learnt almost all that could be read and learnt by one in his position, of the worthies who had spent their youth within these reverend walls, and whose souls had haunted them in their maturer age. Some of them, by the accidents of his reading, loomed out in his fancy disproportionately large by comparison with the rest. The brushings of the wind against the angles, buttresses, and door-jambes were as the passing of these only other inhabitants, the tappings of each ivy-leaf on its neighbour were as the mutterings of their mournful souls, the shadows as their thin shapes in nervous movement, making him comrades in his solitude. In the gloom it was as if he ran against them without feeling their bodily frames.

The streets were now deserted, but on account of these things he could not go in. There were poets abroad, of early date and of late, from the friend and eulogist of Shakespeare down to him who had recently passed into silence, and that musical one of the tribe who is still among us. Speculative philosophers passed along, not always with wrinkled foreheads and hoary hair, as in framed portraits, but pink-faced, slim, and active, as in youth; modern divines sheeted in their surplices, among whom the most real to Jude Fawley were the founders of the

religious school called Tractarian ; the well-known three, the enthusiast, the poet, and the formularist, the echoes of whose teachings had influenced him even in his obscure home. A start of aversion appeared in his fancy to move them at sight of those sons of the place, the form in the full-bottomed wig, statesman, rake, reasoner, and sceptic ; the smoothly shaven historian so ironically civil to Christianity ; with others of the same incredulous temper, who knew each quad as well as the faithful, and took equal freedom in haunting its cloisters.

He regarded the statesmen in their various types, men of firmer movement and less dreamy air ; the scholar, the speaker, the plodder ; the man whose mind grew with his growth in years, and the man whose mind contracted with the same.

The scientists and philologists followed on in his mind-sight in an odd impossible combination, men of meditative faces, lined foreheads, and weak-eyed as bats with constant research ; then official characters — such men as Governor-Generals and Lord-Lieutenants, in whom he took little interest ; Chief-Justices and Lord Chancellors, silent thin-lipped figures of whom he knew barely the names. A keener regard attached to the prelates by reason of his own former hopes. Of

them he had an ample band—some men of heart, others rather men of head ; he who apologized for the Church in Latin ; the saintly author of the Evening Hymn ; and near them the great itinerant preacher, hymn-writer, and zealot. . . .

Jude went home and to bed, after reading up a little about these men and their several messages to the world from a book or two that he had brought with him concerning the sons of the University. As he drew towards sleep various memorable words of theirs that he had just been conning seemed spoken by them in muttering utterances ; some audible, some unintelligible to him. One of the spectres (who afterwards mourned Christminster as ‘ the home of lost causes,’ though Jude did not remember this) was now apostrophizing her thus :

‘ Beautiful city ! so venerable, so lovely, so unravaged by the fierce intellectual life of our century, so serene ! . . . Her ineffable charm keeps ever calling us to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection.’

SHASTON

SHASTON, the ancient British Palladium,

‘ From whose foundations first such strange reports arise,’

(as Drayton sang it), was, and is, in itself the city of a dream. Vague imaginings of its castle, its three mints, its magnificent apsidal Abbey, the chief glory of South Wessex, its twelve churches, its shrines, chantries, hospitals, its gabled freestone mansions—all now ruthlessly swept away—throw the visitor, even against his will, into a pensive melancholy, which the stimulating atmosphere and limitless landscape around him can scarcely dispel. The spot was the burial-place of a king and a queen, of abbots and abbesses, saints and bishops, knights and squires. The bones of King Edward 'the Martyr,' carefully removed hither for holy preservation, brought Shaston a renown which made it the resort of pilgrims from every part of Europe, and enabled it to maintain a reputation extending far beyond English shores. To this fair creation of the great Middle-Age the Dissolution was, as historians tell us, the death-knell. With the destruction of the enormous abbey the whole place collapsed in a general ruin: the Martyr's bones met with the fate of the sacred pile that held them, and not a stone is now left to tell where they lie.

The natural picturesqueness and singularity of the town still remain; but strange to say these qualities, which were noted by many writers in ages when scenic

beauty is said to have been unappreciated, are passed over in this, and one of the queerest and quaintest spots in England stands virtually unvisited to-day.

It has a unique position on the summit of an almost perpendicular scarp, rising on the north, south, and west sides of the borough out of the deep alluvial Vale of Blackmoor, the view from the Castle Green over three counties of verdant pasture—South, Mid, and Nether Wessex—being as sudden a surprise to the unexpectant traveller's eyes as the medicinal air is to his lungs. Impossible to a railway, it can best be reached on foot, next best by light vehicles; and it is hardly accessible to these but by a sort of isthmus on the north-east, that connects it with the high chalk table-land on that side.

Such is, and such was, the now world-forgotten Shaston or Palladour. Its situation rendered water the great want of the town; and within living memory, horses, donkeys and men may have been seen toiling up the winding ways to the top of the steep, laden with tubs and barrels filled from the wells beneath the mountain, and hawkers retailing their contents at the price of a halfpenny a bucketful.

This difficulty in the water supply,

together with two other odd facts, namely, that the chief graveyard slopes up as steeply as a roof behind the church, and that in former times the town passed through a curious period of corruption, conventual and domestic, gave rise to the saying that Shaston was remarkable for three consolations to man, such as the world afforded not elsewhere. It was a place where the churchyard lay nearer heaven than the church steeple, where beer was more plentiful than water, and where there were more wanton women than honest wives and maids. It is also said that after the Middle Ages the inhabitants were too poor to pay their priests, and hence were compelled to pull down their churches, and refrain altogether from the public worship of God; a necessity which they bemoaned over their cups in the settles of their inns on Sunday afternoons. In those days Shastonians were apparently not without a sense of humour.

There was another peculiarity—this a modern one—which Shaston appeared to owe to its site. It was the resting-place and head-quarters of the proprietors of wandering vans, shows, shooting-galleries, and other itinerant concerns, whose business lay largely at fairs and markets. As strange wild birds are seen assembled on some lofty promontory, meditatively

pausing for longer flights, or to return by the course they followed thither, so here, in this cliff-town, stood in stultified silence the yellow and green caravans bearing names not local, as if surprised by a change in the landscape so violent as to hinder their further progress ; and here they usually remained all the winter till they turned to seek again their old tracks in the following spring.

DITTY

BENEATH a knap where flown
Nestlings play,
Within walls of weathered stone,
Far away
From the files of formal houses,
By the bough the firstling browses,
Lives a Sweet : no merchants meet,
No man barter, no man sells
Where she dwells.

Upon that fabric fair
‘ Here is she !’
Seems written everywhere
Unto me.
But to friends and nodding neighbours,
Fellow-wights in lot and labours,
Who descry the times as I,
No such lucid legend tells
Where she dwells.

Should I lapse to what I was
Ere we met ;
(Such can not be, but because
Some forget
Let me feign it)—none would notice
That where she I know by rote is
Spread a strange and withering
change,
Like a drying of the wells
Where she dwells.

To feel I might have kissed—
Loved as true—
Otherwise, nor Mine have missed
My life through,
Had I never wandered near her,
Is a smart severe—severer
In the thought that she is nought,
Even as I, beyond the dells
Where she dwells.

And Devotion droops her glance
To recall
What bond-servants of Chance
We are all.
I but found her in that, going
On my errant path unknowing,
I did not out-skirt the spot
That no spot on earth excels,—
—Where she dwells !

MELCHESTER

MELCHESTER was a quiet and soothing place, almost entirely ecclesiastical in its tone ; a spot where worldly learning and intellectual smartness had no establishment ; where the altruistic feeling that Jude did not possess would perhaps be more highly estimated than a brilliancy which he did not. . . . Jude walked out into the dull winter light over the town bridge, and turned the corner towards the Close. The day was foggy, and standing under the walls of the most graceful architectural pile in England he paused and looked up. The lofty building was visible as far as the roof-ridge ; above, the dwindling spire rose more and more remotely, till its apex was quite lost in the mist drifting across it.

The lamps now began to be lighted, and turning to the west front he walked round. He took it as a good omen that numerous blocks of stone were lying about, which signified that the cathedral was undergoing restoration or repair to a considerable extent. It seemed to him, full of the superstitions of his beliefs, that this was an exercise of forethought on the part of a ruling Power, that he might find plenty to do in the art he practised while waiting for a call to higher labours.

STOKE-BAREHILLS

THERE is in Upper Wessex an old town of nine or ten thousand souls ; the town may be called Stoke-Barehills. It stands with its gaunt, unattractive, ancient church, and its new red brick suburb, amid the open, chalk-soiled cornlands, near the middle of an imaginary triangle which has for its three corners the towns of Aldbrickham and Wintoncester, and the important military station of Quartershot. The great western highway from London passes through it, near a point where the road branches into two, merely to unite again some twenty miles further westward. Out of this bifurcation and reunion there used to arise among wheeled travellers, before railway days, endless questions of choice between the respective ways. But the question is now as dead as the scot-and-lot freeholder, the road waggoner, and the mail coachman who disputed it ; and probably not a single inhabitant of Stoke-Barehills is now even aware that the two roads which part in his town ever meet again ; for nobody now drives up and down the great western highway daily. The most familiar object in Stoke-Barehills nowadays is its cemetery, standing among some picturesque mediæval ruins beside the railway ; the modern

chapels, modern tombs, and modern shrubs, having a look of intrusiveness amid the crumbling and ivy-covered decay of the ancient walls.

WINTONCESTER

DEAR, delightful Wessex, whose statuesque dynasties are even now only just beginning to feel the shaking of the new and strange spirit without, like that which entered the lonely valley of Ezekiel's vision and made the dry bones move: where the honest squires, tradesmen, parsons, clerks, and people still praise the Lord with one voice for His best of all possible worlds. . . .

Of all the romantic towns in Wessex, Wintoncester is probably the most convenient for meditative people to live in; since there you have a cathedral with a nave so long that it affords space in which to walk and summon your remoter moods without continually turning on your heel, or seeming to do more than take an afternoon stroll under cover from the rain or sun. In an uninterrupted course of nearly three hundred steps eastward, and again nearly three hundred steps westward, amid those magnificent tombs, you can, for instance, compare in the most leisurely way the dry dustiness which

ultimately pervades the persons of kings and bishops, with the damper dustiness that is usually the final shape of commoners, curates, and others who take their last rest out of doors. Then, if you are in love, you can, by sauntering in the chapels and behind the episcopal chantries, with the bright-eyed one, so steep and mellow your ecstasy in the solemnities around, that it will assume a rarer and finer tincture, even more grateful to the understanding, if not to the senses, than that form of the emotion which arises from such companionship in spots where all is life, and growth, and fecundity.

THE ISLE OF SLINGERS

A PERSON who differed from the local wayfarers was climbing the steep road which leads through the sea-skirted townlet definable as the Street of Wells, and forms a pass into that Gibraltar of Wessex, the singular peninsula once an island, and still called such, that stretches out like the head of a bird into the English Channel. It is connected with the mainland by a long thin neck of pebbles 'cast up by rages of the se,' and unparalleled in its kind in Europe. . . . What had seemed usual in the isle when he lived there always looked quaint and odd

after his later impressions. More than ever the spot seemed what it was said once to have been, the ancient Vindilia Island, and the Home of the Slingers. The towering rock, the houses above houses, one man's doorstep rising behind his neighbour's chimney, the gardens hung up by one edge to the sky, the vegetables growing on apparently almost vertical planes, the unity of the whole island as a solid and single block of limestone four miles long, were no longer familiar and common-place ideas. All now stood dazzlingly unique and white against the tinted sea, and the sun flashed on infinitely stratified walls of oolite,

' The melancholy ruins
Of cancelled cycles, . . . '

with a distinctiveness that called the eyes to it as strongly as any spectacle he had beheld afar.

KNOLLSEA

KNOLLSEA was a seaside village lying snug within two headlands as between a finger and thumb. Everybody in the parish who was not a boatman was a quarrier, unless he were the gentleman who owned half the property and had been a quarryman, or the other gentleman who owned the other half, and had been to sea.

The knowledge of the inhabitants was of the same special sort as their pursuits. The quarrymen in white fustian understood practical geology, the laws and accidents of dips, faults, and cleavage, far better than the ways of the world and mammon ; the seafaring men in Guernsey frocks had a clearer notion of Alexandria, Constantinople, the Cape, and the Indies than of any inland town in their own country. This, for them, consisted of a busy portion, the Channel, where they lived and laboured, and a dull portion, the vague unexplored miles of interior at the back of the ports, which they seldom thought of. . . .

Upon the irregular slope between the house and the quay was an orchard of aged trees wherein every apple ripening on the boughs presented its rubicund side towards the cottage, because that building chanced to lie upwards in the same direction as the sun. Under the trees were a few Cape sheep, and over them the stone chimneys of the village below : outside these lay the tanned sails of a ketch or smack, and the violet waters of the bay, seamed and creased by breezes sufficient to raise waves ; beyond all a curved wall of cliff, terminating in a promontory, which was flanked by tall and shining obelisks of chalk rising sheer

from the trembling blue race beneath. . . . On one of the spires of chalk into which the hill here had been split was perched a cormorant, silent and motionless, with wings spread out to dry in the sun after his morning's fishing, their white surface shining like mail. . . . Far below on the right hand it was a fine day, and the silver sunbeams lighted up a many-armed inland sea which stretched round an island with fir-trees and gorse, and amid brilliant crimson heaths wherein white paths and roads occasionally met the eye in dashes and zigzags like flashes of lightning. Outside, where the broad Channel appeared, a berylline and opalized variegation of ripples, currents, deeps, and shallows, lay as fair under the sun as a New Jerusalem, the shores being of gleaming sand.

THE CLIFF WITHOUT A NAME

THE shore and country about 'Castle Boterel' is now getting well known, and will be readily recognized. . . . It lies near to, or no great way beyond, the vague border of the Wessex kingdom on that side, which, like the westering verge of modern American settlements, was progressive and uncertain. This, however, is of little importance. The place is pre-

eminently (for one person at least) the region of dream and mystery. The ghostly birds, the pall-like sea, the frothy wind, the eternal soliloquy of the waters, the bloom of dark purple cast, that seems to exhale from the shoreward precipices, in themselves lend to the scene an atmosphere like the twilight of a night vision. . . . The crest of this terrible natural façade passed among the neighbouring inhabitants as being seven hundred feet above the water it overhung. It had been proved by actual measurement to be not a foot less than six hundred and fifty.

That is to say, it is nearly three times the height of Flamborough, half as high again as the South Foreland, a hundred feet higher than Beachy Head—the loftiest promontory on the east or south side of this island—twice the height of St. Aldhelm's, thrice as high as the Lizard, and just double the height of St. Bee's. One sea-bord point on the western coast is known to surpass it in altitude, but only by a few feet. This is Great Orme's Head in Caernarvonshire.

And it must be remembered that the cliff exhibits an intensifying feature which some of those are without—sheer perpendicularity from the half-tide level. Yet this remarkable rampart forms no

headland : it rather walls in an inlet—the promontory on each side being much lower. Thus, far from being salient, its horizontal section is concave. The sea, rolling direct from the shores of North America, has in fact eaten a chasm into the middle of a hill, and the giant, embayed and unobtrusive, stands in the rear of pigmy supporters. Not least singularly, neither hill, chasm, nor precipice has a name.

SONG FROM 'THE DYNASTS'

(SCENE : *King George's watering-place, South Wessex. The interior of the 'Old Rooms' Inn. Boat men and burghers are sitting on settles round the fire, smoking and drinking).*

I.

IN the wild October night-time, when
the wind raved round the land,
And the Back-sea* met the Front-sea,
and our doors were blocked with sand,
And we heard the drub of Dead-man's
Bay, where bones of thousands are,
We knew not what the day had done for
us at Trafalgar.

(*All*) Had done,
Had done,
For us at Trafalgar !

* In those days the hind-part of the harbour, adjoining this scene, was so called.

II.

' Pull hard, and make the Nothe, or down
we go !' one says, says he.
We pulled ; and bedtime brought the
storm ; but snug at home slept we.
Yet all the while our gallants after fight-
ing through the day,
Were beating up and down the dark, sou'-
west of Cadiz Bay.

(*All*) The dark,
The dark,
Sou'-west of Cadiz Bay.

III.

The victors and the vanquished then the
storm it tossed and tore,
As hard they strove, those worn-out men,
upon the surly shore ;
Dead Nelson and his half-dead crew, his
foes from near and far,
Were rolled together on the deep that
night at Trafalgar.

(*All*) The deep,
The deep,
That night at Trafalgar !

FARMER BOLDWOOD

FARMER BOLDWOOD was tenant of
what was called Little Weatherbury
Farm, and his person was the nearest

approach to aristocracy that this remoter quarter of the parish could boast of. . . . Pacing up and down at the heels of his animals was Farmer Boldwood himself. This place was his almonry and cloister in one : here, after looking to the feeding of his four-footed dependants, the celibate would walk and meditate of an evening till the moon's rays streamed in through the cobwebbed windows, or total darkness enveloped the scene.

His square-framed perpendicularity showed more fully now than in the crowd and bustle of the market-house. In this meditative walk his foot met the floor with heel and toe simultaneously, and his fine reddish-fleshed face was bent downwards just enough to render obscure the still mouth and the well-rounded though rather prominent and broad chin. A few clear and thread-like horizontal lines were the only interruption to the otherwise smooth surface of his large forehead.

The phases of Boldwood's life were ordinary enough, but his was not an ordinary nature. That stillness, which struck casual observers more than anything else in his character and habit, and seemed so precisely like the rest of inaction, may have been the perfect balance of enormous antagonistic forces

—positives and negatives in fine adjustment. His equilibrium disturbed, he was in extremity at once. If an emotion possessed him at all, it ruled him; a feeling not mastering him was entirely latent. Stagnant or rapid, it was never slow. He was always hit mortally, or he was missed. He had no light and careless touches in his constitution, either for good or for evil. Stern in the outlines of action, mild in the details, he was serious throughout all. He saw no absurd sides to the follies of life, and thus, though not quite companionable in the eyes of merry men and scoffers, and those to whom all things show life as a jest, he was not intolerable to the earnest and those acquainted with grief. Being a man who read all the dramas of life seriously, if he failed to please when they were comedies, there was no frivolous treatment to reproach him for when they chanced to end tragically.

FARMER OAK

WHEN Farmer Oak smiled, the corners of his mouth spread till they were within an unimportant distance of his ears, his eyes were reduced to mere chinks, and diverging wrinkles appeared round them, extending upon

his countenance like the rays in a rudimentary sketch of the rising sun.

His Christian name was Gabriel, and on working days he was a young man of sound judgment, easy motions, proper dress, and general good character. On Sundays he was a man of misty views, rather given to postponing, and hampered by his best clothes and umbrella: upon the whole, one who felt himself to occupy morally that vast middle space of Laodicean neutrality which lay between the Communion people of the parish and the drunken section,—that is, he went to church, but yawned privately by the time the congregation reached the Nicene Creed, and thought of what there would be for dinner when he meant to be listening to the sermon. Or, to state his character as it stood in the scale of public opinion, when his friends and critics were in tantrums, he was considered rather a bad man; when they were pleased, he was rather a good man; when they were neither, he was a man whose moral colour was a kind of pepper-and-salt mixture.

Since he lived six times as many working-days as Sundays, Oak's appearance in his old clothes was most peculiarly his own—the mental picture formed by his neighbours in imagining him being

always dressed that way. He wore a low-crowned felt hat, spread out at the base by tight jamming upon the head for security in high winds, and a coat like Dr. Johnson's; his lower extremities being encased in ordinary leather leggings and boots emphatically large, affording to each foot a roomy apartment so constructed that any wearer might stand in a river all day long and know nothing about it—their maker being a conscientious man who always endeavoured to compensate for any weakness in his cut by unstinted dimension and solidity. . . .

But some thoughtful persons, who had seen him walking across one of his fields on a certain December morning—sunny and exceedingly mild—might have regarded Gabriel Oak in other aspects than these. In his face one might notice that many of the hues and curves of youth had tarried on to manhood: there even remained in his remoter crannies some relics of the boy. His height and breadth would have been sufficient to make his presence imposing, had they been exhibited with due consideration. But there is a way some men have, rural and urban alike, for which the mind is more responsible than flesh and sinew: it is a way of curtailing their dimensions by their manner of showing them. And

from a quiet modesty that would have become a vestal, which seemed continually to impress upon him that he had no great claim on the world's room, Oak walked unassumingly, and with a faintly perceptible bend, quite distinct from a bowing of the shoulders. This may be said to be a defect in an individual if he depends for his valuation more upon his appearance than upon his capacity to wear well, which Oak did not.

He had just reached the time of life at which 'young' is ceasing to be the prefix of 'man' in speaking of one. He was at the brightest period of masculine growth, for his intellect and his emotions were clearly separated: he had passed the time during which the influence of youth indiscriminately mingles them in the character of impulse, and he had not yet arrived at the stage wherein they become united again, in the character of prejudice, by the influence of a wife and family. In short, he was twenty-eight, and a bachelor.

ELIZABETH-JANE

TO Elizabeth-Jane the time was a most triumphant one. The freedom she experienced, the indulgence with which she was treated, went beyond

her expectations. The reposeful, easy, affluent life to which her mother's marriage had introduced her was, in truth, the beginning of a great change in Elizabeth. She found she could have nice personal possessions and ornaments for the asking, and, as the mediæval saying puts it, 'Take, have, and keep, are pleasant words.' With peace of mind came development, and with development beauty. Knowledge—the result of great natural insight—she did not lack; learning, accomplishments—those, alas! she had not; but as the winter and spring passed by, her thin face and figure filled out in rounder and softer curves; . . . the muddiness of skin which she had looked upon as her lot by nature departed with a change to abundance of good things, and a bloom came upon her cheek. Perhaps, too, her grey thoughtful eyes revealed an arch gaiety sometimes; but this was infrequent; the sort of wisdom which looked from their pupils did not readily keep company with these lighter moods. Like all people who have known rough times, light-heartedness seemed to her too irrational and inconsequent to be indulged in except as a reckless dram now and then; for she had been too early habituated to anxious reasoning to drop the habit suddenly. She felt none of

those ups and downs of spirit which beset so many people without cause ; never—to paraphrase a recent poet—never a gloom in Elizabeth-Jane's soul but she well knew how it came there ; and her present cheerfulness was fairly proportionate to her solid guarantees for the same.

It might have been supposed that, given a girl rapidly becoming good-looking, comfortably circumstanced, and for the first time in her life commanding ready money, she would go and make a fool of herself by dress. But no. The reasonableness of almost everything that Elizabeth did was nowhere more conspicuous than in this question of clothes. To keep in the rear of opportunity in matters of indulgence is as valuable a hint as to keep abreast of opportunity in matters of enterprise. This unsophisticated girl did it by an innate perceptiveness that was almost genius. Thus she refrained from bursting out like a water-flower that spring, and clothing herself in puffings and knick-knacks, as most of the Casterbridge girls would have done in her circumstances. Her triumph was tempered by circumspection ; she had still that field-mouse fear of the coulter of destiny despite fair promise, which is common among the thoughtful who have suffered early from

poverty and oppression. . . . She discovered that with the clarification of her complexion and the birth of pink cheeks her skin had grown more sensitive to the sun's rays. She protected those cheeks forthwith, deeming spotlessness part of womanliness.

STEPHEN SMITH

STEPHEN SMITH . . . was at this time of his life but a youth in appearance, and barely a man in years. Judging from his look, London was the last place in the world that one would have imagined to be the scene of his activities : such a face surely could not be nourished amid smoke and mud and fog and dust ; such an open countenance could never even have seen anything of ' the weariness, the fever, and the fret ' of Babylon the Second. His complexion was as fine as Elfride Swancourt's own ; the pink of his cheeks as delicate. His mouth as perfect as Cupid's bow in form, and as cherry-red in colour as hers. Bright curly hair ; bright sparkling blue-gray eyes ; a boy's blush and manner ; neither whisker nor moustache, unless a little light-brown fur on his upper lip deserved the latter title : this composed the London professional man. . . .

His constitution was made up of very simple particulars ; was one which, rare in the spring-time of civilizations, seems to grow abundant as a nation gets older, individuality fades, and education spreads ; that is, his brain had extraordinary receptive powers, and no great creativeness. Quickly acquiring any kind of knowledge he saw around him, and having a plastic adaptability more common in woman than in man, he changed colour like a chameleon as the society he found himself in assumed a higher and more artificial tone. He had not many original ideas, and yet there was scarcely an idea to which, under proper training, he could not have added a respectable co-ordinate.

SWITHIN ST. CLEEVE

HE was a youth who might properly have been characterized by a word the judicious chronicler would not readily use in such a connection, preferring to reserve it for raising images of the opposite sex. Whether because no deep felicity is likely to arise from the condition, or from any other reason, to say in these days that a youth is beautiful is not to award him that amount of credit which the expression would have carried with it

if he had lived in the times of the Classical Dictionary. So much, indeed, is the reverse the case that the assertion creates an awkwardness in saying anything more about him. . . . Such as he was, there the lad sat. The sun shone full in his face, and on his head he wore a black velvet skull-cap, leaving to view below it a curly margin of very light shining hair, which accorded well with the flush upon his cheek.

He had such a complexion as that with which Raffaele enriches the countenance of the youthful son of Zacharias,—a complexion which, though clear, is far enough removed from virgin delicacy, and suggests plenty of sun and wind as its accompaniment. His features were sufficiently straight in the contours to correct the beholder's first impression that the head was the head of a girl. Beside him stood a little oak table, and in front was the telescope. . . .

Looking again at him, Lady Constantine's eyes became so sentimentally fixed on his face that it seemed as if she could not withdraw them. There lay, in the shape of an Antinous, no *amoroso*, no gallant, but a guileless philosopher. His parted lips were lips which spoke, not of love, but of millions of miles; those were eyes which habitually gazed, not into the

depths of other eyes, but into other worlds. Within his temples dwelt thoughts, not of woman's looks, but of stellar aspects and the configuration of constellations.

Thus, to his physical attractiveness was added the attractiveness of mental inaccessibility. The ennobling influence of scientific pursuits was demonstrated by the speculative purity which expressed itself in his eyes whenever he looked at her in speaking, and in the childlike faults of manner which arose from his obtuseness to their difference of sex. He had never, since becoming a man, looked even so low as to the level of a Lady Constantine. His heaven at present was truly in the skies, and not in that only other place where they say it can be found, in the eyes of some daughter of Eve. Would any Circe or Calypso—and if so, what one?—ever check this pale-haired scientist's nocturnal sailings into the interminable spaces overhead, and hurl all his mighty calculations on cosmic force and stellar fire into Limbo? Oh, the pity of it, if such should be the case!

A BROKEN APPOINTMENT

YOU did not come,
And marching Time drew on,
and wore me numb.—

Yet less for loss of your dear presence
there
Than that I thus found lacking in your
make
That high compassion which can overbear
Reluctance for pure loving-kindness' sake.
Grieved I, when, as the hope-hour stroked
its sum,
You did not come.

You love not me,
And love alone can lend you loyalty ;
—I know and knew it. But, unto the
store
Of human deeds divine in all but name,
Was it not worth a little hour or more
To add yet this : Once, you, a woman,
came
To soothe a time-torn man ; even though
it be
You love not me ?

EUSTACIA VYE

EUSTACIA VYE was the raw material
of a divinity. On Olympus she
would have done well with a little prepara-
tion. She had the passions and instincts
which make a model goddess—that is,
those which make not quite a model
woman. Had it been possible for the earth
and mankind to be entirely in her grasp for

a while, had she handled the distaff, the spindle, and the shears at her own free will, few in the world would have noticed the change of government. There would have been the same inequality of lot, the same heaping up of favours here, of contumely there, the same generosity before justice, the same perpetual dilemmas, the same captious alternation of caresses and blows that we endure now.

She was in person full-limbed and somewhat heavy ; without ruddiness, as without pallor ; and soft to the touch as a cloud. To see her hair was to fancy that a whole winter did not contain darkness enough to form its shadow : it closed over her forehead like nightfall extinguishing the western glow.

Her nerves extended into those tresses, and her temper could always be softened by stroking them down. When her hair was brushed she would instantly sink into stillness and look like a Sphinx. If, in passing under one of Egdon banks, any of its thick skeins were caught, as they sometimes were, by a prickly tuft of the large *Ulex Europæus*—which will act as a sort of hairbrush—she would go back a few steps, and pass against it a second time.

She had Pagan eyes, full of nocturnal mysteries. Their light, as it came and

went, and came again, was partially hampered by their oppressive lids and lashes; and of these the under lid was much fuller than it usually is with English women. This enabled her to indulge in reverie without seeming to do so: she might have been believed capable of sleeping without closing them up. Assuming that the souls of men and women were visible essences, you could fancy the colour of Eustacia's soul to be flame-like. The sparks from it that rose into her dark pupils gave the same impression.

The mouth seemed formed less to speak than to quiver, less to quiver than to kiss. Some might have added, less to kiss than to curl. Viewed sideways, the closing-line of her lips formed, with almost geometric precision, the curve so well known in the arts of design as the *cima-recta*, or *ogee*. The sight of such a flexible bend as that on grim Egdon was quite an apparition. It was felt at once that that mouth did not come over from Sleswig with a band of Saxon pirates whose lips met like the two halves of a muffin. One had fancied that such lip-curves were mostly lurking underground in the South as fragments of forgotten marbles. So fine were the lines of her lips that, though full, each corner of her mouth was as clearly cut as the point of a spear.

The keenness of corners was only blunted when she was given over to sudden fits of gloom, one of the phases of the night-side of sentiment which she knew too well for her years.

Her presence brought memories of such things as Bourbon roses, rubies, and tropical midnights; her moods recalled lotus-eaters and the march in 'Athalie'; her motions, the ebb and flow of the sea; her voice, the viola. In a dim light, and with a slight rearrangement of her hair, her general figure might have stood for that of either of the higher female deities. The new moon behind her head, an old helmet upon it, a diadem of accidental dewdrops round her brow, would have been adjuncts sufficient to strike the note of Artemis, Athena, or Hera respectively, with as close an approximation to the antique as that which passes muster on many respected canvases. . . .

To be loved to madness—such was her great desire. Love was to her the one cordial which could drive away the eating loneliness of her days. And she seemed to long for the abstraction called passionate love more than for any particular lover.

She could show a most reproachful look at times, but it was directed less against human beings than against certain

creatures of her mind, the chief of these being Destiny, through whose interference she dimly fancied it arose that love alighted only on gliding youth—that any love she might win would sink simultaneously with the sand in the glass. She thought of it with an ever-growing consciousness of cruelty, which tended to breed actions of reckless unconventionality, framed to snatch a year's, a week's, even an hour's passion from anywhere while it could be won. Through want of it she had sung without being merry, possessed without enjoying, outshone without triumphing. Her loneliness deepened her desire. On Egdon, coldest and meanest kisses were at famine prices; and where was a mouth matching hers to be found? . . . Her high gods were William the Conqueror, Strafford, and Napoleon Buonaparte, as they had appeared in the Lady's History used at the establishment in which she was educated. Had she been a mother she would have christened her boys such names as Saul or Sisera in preference to Jacob or David, neither of whom she admired. At school she had used to side with the Philistines in several battles, and had wondered if Pontius Pilate were as handsome as he was frank and fair. . . . She seldom schemed, but when she did

scheme, her plans showed rather the comprehensive strategy of a general than the small arts called womanish, though she could utter oracles of Delphian ambiguity when she did not choose to be direct. In heaven she will probably sit between the Héloïses and the Cleopatras.

CLEMENT YEOBRIGHT

TO one of middle age the countenance was that of a young man, though a youth might hardly have seen any necessity for the term of immaturity. But it was really one of those faces which convey less the idea of so many years as its age than of so much experience as its store. The number of their years may have adequately summed up Jared, Mahalaleel, and the rest of the antediluvians, but the age of a modern man is to be measured by the intensity of his history.

The face was well shaped, even excellently. But the mind within was beginning to use it as a mere waste tablet whereon to trace its idiosyncrasies as they developed themselves. The beauty here visible would in no long time be ruthlessly overrun by its parasite, thought, which might just as well have fed upon a plainer exterior where

there was nothing it could harm. Had Heaven preserved Yeobright from a wearing habit of meditation, people would have said, 'A handsome man.' Had his brain unfolded under sharper contours they would have said, 'A thoughtful man.' But an inner strenuousness was preying upon an outer symmetry, and they rated his look as singular.

Hence people who began by beholding him ended by perusing him. His countenance was overlaid with legible meanings. Without being thought-worn he yet had certain marks derived from a perception of his surroundings, such as are not unfrequently found on men at the end of the four or five years of endeavour which follow the close of placid pupilage. He already showed that thought is a disease of flesh, and indirectly bore evidence that ideal physical beauty is incompatible with emotional development and a full recognition of the coil of things. Mental luminousness must be fed with the oil of life, even though there is already a physical need for it; and the pitiful sight of two demands on one supply was just showing itself here.

When standing before certain men the philosopher regrets that thinkers are but perishable tissue, the artist that perish-

able tissue has to think. Thus to deplore, each from his point of view, the mutually destructive interdependence of spirit and flesh would have been instinctive with these in critically observing Yeobright.

As for his look, it was a natural cheerfulness striving against depression from without, and not quite succeeding. The look suggested isolation, but it revealed something more. As is usual with bright natures, the deity that lies ignominiously chained within an ephemeral human carcass shone out of him like a ray. . . .

In Clym Yeobright's face could be dimly seen the typical countenance of the future. Should there be a classic period to art hereafter, its Pheidias may produce such faces. The view of life as a thing to be put up with, replacing that zest for existence which was so intense in early civilizations, must ultimately enter so thoroughly into the constitution of the advanced races that its facial expression will become accepted as a new artistic departure. People already feel that a man who lives without disturbing a curve of feature, or setting a mark of mental concern anywhere upon himself, is too far removed from modern perceptiveness to be a modern type. Physically beautiful men—the glory of the race when it was young—are almost

an anachronism now ; and we may wonder whether, at some time or other, physically beautiful woman may not be an anachronism likewise.

The truth seems to be that a long line of disillusionive centuries has permanently displaced the Hellenic idea of life, or whatever it may be called. What the Greeks only suspected we know well ; what their Æschylus imagined our nursery children feel. That old-fashioned reveling in the general situation grows less and less possible as we uncover the defects of natural laws, and see the quandary that man is in by their operation.

The lineaments which will get embodied in ideals based upon this new recognition will probably be akin to those of Yeobright. The observer's eye was arrested, not by his face as a picture, but by his face as a page ; not by what it was, but by what it recorded. His features were attractive in the light of symbols, as sounds intrinsically common become attractive in language, and as shapes intrinsically simple become interesting in writing.

He had been a lad of whom something was expected. Beyond this all had been chaos. That he would be successful in an original way, or that he would go to the dogs in an original way, seemed equally

probable. The only absolute certainty about him was that he would not stand still. . . . Hence, when his name was casually mentioned by neighbouring yeomen, the listener said, 'Ah, Clym Yeobright: what is he doing now?' When the instinctive question about a person is, What is he doing? it is felt that he will not be found to be, like most of us, doing nothing in particular. There is an indefinite sense that he must be invading some region of singularity, good or bad. The devout hope is that he is doing well. The secret faith is that he is making a mess of it.

THE REDDLEMAN

REDDLEMEN of the old school are now but seldom seen. Since the introduction of railways into Wessex farmers have managed to do without these Mephistophelian visitants, and the bright pigment so largely used by shepherds in preparing sheep for the fair is obtained by other routes. Even those who yet survive are losing the poetry of existence which characterized them when the pursuit of the trade meant periodical journeys to the pit whence the material was dug, a regular camping out from month to month, except in the depth of

winter, a peregrination among farms which could be counted by the hundred, and in spite of this Arab existence the preservation of that respectability which is insured by the never-failing production of a well-lined purse.

Reddle spreads its lively hues over everything it lights on, and stamps unmistakably, as with the mark of Cain, any person who has handled it half an hour.

A child's first sight of a reddleman was an epoch in his life. The blood-coloured figure was a sublimation of all the horrid dreams which had afflicted the juvenile spirit since imagination began. 'The reddleman is coming for you!' had been the formulated threat of Wessex mothers for many generations. He was successfully supplanted for a while, at the beginning of the last century, by Buonaparte; but as process of time rendered the latter personage stale and ineffective the older phrase resumed its early prominence. And now the reddleman has in his turn followed Buonaparte to the land of worn-out bogeys, and his place is filled by modern inventions.

The reddleman lived like a gipsy; but gipsies he scorned. He was about as thriving as travelling basket and mat makers; but he had nothing to do with

them. He was more decently born and brought up than the cattle-drovers who passed and repassed him in his wanderings; but they merely nodded to him. His stock was more valuable than that of pedlars; but they did not think so, and passed his cart with eyes straight ahead. He was such an unnatural colour to look at that the men of roundabouts and wax-work shows seemed gentlemen beside him; but he considered them low company, and remained aloof. Among all these squatters and folks of the road the reddleman continually found himself; yet he was not of them. His occupation tended to isolate him, and isolated he was mostly to be seen. It was suggested that reddlemen were criminals for whose misdeeds other men had wrongfully suffered: that in escaping the law they had not escaped their own consciences, and had taken to the trade as a lifelong penance. Else why should they have chosen it?

GRACE MELBURY

IT would have been difficult to describe Grace Melbury with precision. . . . Nay, from the highest point of view, to precisely describe a human being, the focus of a universe, how impossible!

But apart from transcendentalism, there never probably lived a person who was in herself more completely a *reductio ad absurdum* of attempts to appraise a woman, even externally, by items of face and figure. . . . In simple corporeal presentment she was of a fair and clear complexion, rather pale than pink, slim in build and elastic in movement. Her look expressed a tendency to wait for others' thoughts before uttering her own ; possibly also to wait for others' deeds before her own doing. In her small, delicate mouth, which had hardly settled down to its matured curves, there was a gentleness that might hinder sufficient self-assertion for her own good. She had well-formed eyebrows, which, had her portrait been painted, would probably have been done in Prouts's or Vandyke brown.

There was nothing remarkable in her dress just now, beyond a natural fitness, and a style that was recent for the streets of Sherton. But, had it been quite striking, it would have meant just as little. For there can be hardly anything less connected with a woman's personality than drapery which she has neither designed, manufactured, cut, sewed, nor even seen, except by a glance of approval when told that such and such a shape and

colour must be had because it has been decided by others as imperative at that particular time.

What people therefore saw of her in a cursory view was very little ; in truth, mainly something that was not she. The woman herself was a conjectural creature who had little to do with the outlines presented to Sherton eyes ; a shape in the gloom, whose true quality could only be approximated by putting together a movement now and a glance then, in that patient attention which nothing but watchful loving-kindness ever troubles to give.

WILLIAM DEWY

WILLIAM DEWY—otherwise grandfather William—was now about seventy ; yet an ardent vitality still preserved a warm and roughened bloom upon his face, which reminded gardeners of the sunny side of a ripe ribstone-pippin ; though a narrow strip of forehead, that was protected from the weather by lying above the line of his hat-brim, seemed to belong to some town man, so gentlemanly was its whiteness. His was a humorous and kindly nature, not unmixed with a frequent melancholy ; and he had a firm religious

faith. But to his neighbours he had no character in particular. If they saw him pass by their windows when they had been bottling off old mead, or when they had just been called long-headed men who might do anything in the world if they chose, they thought concerning him, 'Ah, there's that good-hearted man—open as a child!' If they saw him just after losing a shilling or half-a-crown, or accidentally letting fall a piece of crockery, they thought, 'There's that poor weak-minded man Dewy again! Ah, he'll do much in the world either!' If he passed when fortune neither smiled nor frowned on them, they merely thought him old William Dewy.

SUE BRIDEHEAD

FROM his window Jude could perceive the spire of Christminster Cathedral, and the ogee dome under which resounded the great bell of the city. The tall tower, tall belfry windows, and tall pinnacles of the college by the bridge he could also get a glimpse of by going to the staircase. These objects he used as stimulants when his faith in the future was dim. . . . With an altogether singular pleasure he walked at his earliest spare minutes past the shops

answering to his great-aunt's description ; and beheld in one of them a young girl sitting behind a desk, who was suspiciously like the original of the portrait. He ventured to enter on a trivial errand. . . . It contained Anglican books, stationery, texts, and fancy goods : little plaster angels on brackets, Gothic-framed pictures of saints, ebony crosses that were almost crucifixes, prayer-books that were almost missals. He felt very shy of looking at the girl in the desk ; she was so pretty that he could not believe it possible that she should belong to him. Then she spoke to one of the two older women behind the counter ; and he recognized in the accents certain qualities of his own voice ; softened and sweetened, but his own. What was she doing ? He stole a glance round. Before her lay a piece of zinc, cut to the shape of a scroll three or four feet long, and coated with a dead-surface paint on one side. Hereon she was designing or illuminating, in characters of Church text, the single word

A L L E L U J A .

‘A sweet, saintly, Christian business, hers !’ thought he.

Her presence here was now fairly enough explained, her skill in work of this

sort having no doubt been acquired from her father's occupation as an ecclesiastical worker in metal. The lettering on which she was engaged was clearly intended to be fixed up in some chancel to assist devotion. . . .

Sue was not a large figure ; she was light and slight, of the type dubbed elegant. That was about all Jude had seen. There was nothing statuesque in her ; all was nervous motion. She was mobile, living, yet a painter might not have called her handsome or beautiful. But the much that she was surprised him. She was quite a long way removed from the rusticity that was his. How could one of his cross-grained, unfortunate, almost accursed stock, have contrived to reach this pitch of niceness ? London had done it, he supposed. . . . He would have to think of Sue with only a relative's mutual interest in one belonging to him ; regard her in a practical way as some one to be proud of ; to talk and nod to ; later on, to be invited to tea by, the emotion spent on her being rigorously that of a kinsman and well-wisher. So would she be to him a kindly star, an elevating power, a companion in Anglican worship, a tender friend.

‘ LITTLE FATHER TIME ’

I N the down train that was timed to reach Aldbrickham station about ten o'clock . . . a small, pale child's face could be seen in the gloom of a third-class carriage. He had large, frightened eyes, and wore a white woollen cravat, over which a key was suspended round his neck by a piece of common string : the key attracting attention by its occasional shine in the lamplight. In the band of his hat his half-ticket was stuck. His eyes remained mostly fixed on the back of the seat opposite, and never turned to the window even when a station was reached and called. On the other seat were two or three passengers, one of them a working woman who held a basket on her lap, in which was a tabby kitten. The woman opened the cover now and then, whereupon the kitten would put out its head, and indulge in playful antics. At these the fellow-passengers laughed, except the solitary boy bearing the key and ticket, who, regarding the kitten with his saucer eyes : seemed mutely to say : ‘ All laughing comes from misapprehension. Rightly looked at there is no laughable thing under the sun.’ Occasionally at a stoppage the guard would look into the compartment and say to the boy, ‘ All right,

my man. Your box is safe in the van.' The boy would say, 'Yes,' without animation, would try to smile, and fail.

He was Age masquerading as Juvenility, and doing it so badly that his real self showed through crevices. A ground swell from ancient years of night seemed now and then to lift the child in this his morning-life, when his face took a back view over some great Atlantic of time, and appeared not to care about what he saw.

When the other travellers closed their eyes, which they did one by one—even the kitten curling itself up in the basket, weary of its too circumscribed play—the boy remained just as before. He then seemed to be doubly awake, like an enslaved and dwarfed Divinity, sitting passive and regarding his companions as if he saw their whole rounded lives rather than their immediate figures.

This was Arabella's boy. . . . It could have been seen that the boy's ideas of life were different from those of the local boys. Children begin with detail, and learn up to the general; they begin with the contiguous, and gradually comprehend the universal. The boy seemed to have begun with the generals of life, and never to have concerned himself with the particulars. To him the houses, the willows, the obscure fields beyond, were

apparently regarded not as brick residences, pollards, meadows ; but as human dwellings in the abstract, vegetation, and the wide dark world. . . .

‘ His face is like the tragic mask of Melpomene,’ said Sue. ‘ What is your name, dear ? Did you tell us ?’

‘ Little Father Time is what they always called me. It is a nickname ; because I look so aged, they say.’

THE HOME OF THE GARLANDS

IN the days of high-waisted and muslin-gowned women . . . there lived in a village near the Wessex coast two ladies of good report, though unfortunately of limited means. The elder was a Mrs. Martha Garland, a landscape - painter’s widow, and the other was her only daughter Anne.

Anne was fair, very fair, in a poetical sense ; but in complexion she was of that particular tint between blonde and brunette which is inconveniently left without a name. Her eyes were honest and inquiring, her mouth cleanly cut and yet not classical, the middle point of her upper lip scarcely descending so far as it should have done by rights, so that at the merest pleasant thought, not to mention a smile, portions of two or three white teeth were

uncovered whether she would or not. Some people said that this was very attractive. She was graceful and slender, and, though but little above five feet in height, could draw herself up to look tall. In her manner, in her comings and goings, in her 'I'll do this,' or 'I'll do that,' she combined dignity with sweetness as no other girl could do; and any impressionable stranger youths who passed by were led to yearn for a windfall of speech from her, and to see at the same time that they would not get it. In short, beneath all that was charming and simple in this young woman there lurked a real firmness, unperceived at first, as the speck of colour lurks unperceived in the heart of the palest parsley flower.

She wore a white handkerchief to cover her white neck, and a cap on her head with a pink ribbon round it, tied in a bow at the front. She had a great variety of these cap-ribbons, the young men being fond of sending them to her as presents until they fell definitely in love with a special sweetheart elsewhere, when they left off doing so. Between the border of her cap and her forehead were ranged a row of round brown curls, like swallows' nests under eaves.

She lived with her widowed mother in a portion of an ancient building formerly

a manor-house, but now a mill, which, being too large for his own requirements, the miller had found it convenient to divide and appropriate in part to these highly respectable tenants. In this dwelling Mrs. Garland's and Anne's ears were soothed morning, noon, and night, by the music of the mill, the wheels and cogs of which, being of wood, produced notes that might have borne in their minds a remote resemblance to the wooden tones of a stopped diapason in an organ. Occasionally, when the miller was bolting, there was added to these continuous sounds the cheerful clicking of the hopper, which did not deprive them of rest except when it was kept going all night ; and over and above all this they had the pleasure of knowing that there crept in through every crevice, door, and window of their dwelling, however tightly closed, a subtle mist of superfine flour from the grinding-room, quite invisible, but making its presence known in the course of time by giving a pallid and ghostly look to the best furniture. The miller frequently apologized to his tenants for the intrusion of this insidious dry fog ; but the widow was of a friendly and thankful nature, and she said that she did not mind it at all, being as it was, not nasty dirt, but the blessed staff of life.

By good-humour of this sort, and in other ways, Mrs. Garland acknowledged her friendship for her neighbour (Miller Loveday), with whom Anne and herself associated to an extent which she never could have anticipated when, tempted by the lowness of the rent, they first removed thither after her husband's death from a larger house at the other end of the village. Those who have lived in remote places where there is what is called no society will comprehend the gradual levelling of distinctions that went on in this case at some sacrifice of gentility on the part of one household. The widow was sometimes sorry to find with what readiness Anne caught up some dialect-word or accent from the miller and his friends ; but he was so good and true-hearted a man, and she so easy-minded, unambitious a woman, that she would not make life a solitude for fastidious reasons. More than all, she had good ground for thinking that the miller secretly admired her, and this added a piquancy to the situation. . . .

The partitioning between the Lovedays and the Garlands was not very thorough, consisting in many cases of a simple screwing up of the doors in the dividing walls ; and thus when the mill began any new performances they proclaimed them-

selves at once in the more private dwelling. The smell of Miller Loveday's pipe came down Mrs. Garland's chimney of an evening with the greatest regularity. Every time that he poked his fire they knew from the vehemence or deliberateness of the blows the precise state of his mind ; and when he wound his clock on Sunday nights the whirr of that monitor reminded the widow to wind hers.

LONG PLIGHTED

IS it worth while, dear, now,
To call for bells, and sally forth
arrayed
For marriage-rites—discussed, decried,
delayed
So many years ?

Is it worth while, dear, now,
To stir desire for old fond purposings,
By feints that Time still serves for dally-
ings,
Though quittance nears ?

Is it worth while, dear, when
The day being so far spent, so low the
sun,
The undone thing will soon be as the
done,
And smiles as tears ?

Is it worth while, dear, when
Our cheeks are worn, our early brown is
 gray ;
When, meet or part we, none says yea or
 nay,
 Or heeds, or cares ?

Is it worth while, dear, since
We still can climb old Yell'ham's wooded
 mounds
Together, as each season steals its rounds
 And disappears ?

Is it worth while, dear, since
As mates in Mellstock churchyard we can
 lie,
Till the last crash of all things low and
 high
 Shall end the spheres ?

ANNE GARLAND AND JOHN
LOVEDAY

ANNE, who really had not the slightest wish to throw her heart away upon a soldier, but merely wanted to displace old thoughts by new, turned into the inner garden from day to day, and passed a good many hours there, the pleasant birds singing to her, and the delightful butterflies alighting on her hat, and the horrid ants running up her stockings.

This garden was undivided from Miller

Loveday's, the two having originally been the single garden of the whole house. It was a quaint old place, enclosed by a thorn hedge so shapely and dense from incessant clipping that the mill-boy could walk along the top without sinking in—a feat which he often performed as a means of filling out his day's work. . . . The lower half of the garden, farthest from the road, was the most snug and sheltered part of this snug and sheltered enclosure, and it was well watered as the land of Lot. . . . This was where Anne liked best to linger when her excursions became restricted to her own premises ; and in a spot of the garden not far removed the trumpet-major, John Loveday, loved to linger also.

Having by virtue of his office no stable duty to perform, he came down from the camp to the mill almost every day ; and Anne, finding that he adroitly walked and sat in his father's portion of the garden whenever she did so in the other half, could not help smiling and speaking to him. So his epaulettes and blue jacket, and Anne's yellow gipsy hat, were often seen in different parts of the garden at the same time ; but he never intruded into her part of the enclosure, nor did she into Loveday's. She always spoke to him when she saw him there, and he re-

plied in deep, firm accents across the gooseberry bushes, or through the tall rows of flowering peas, as the case might be. He thus gave her accounts at fifteen paces of his experiences in camp, in quarters, in Flanders, and elsewhere; of the difference between line and column, of forced marches, billeting, and such-like, together with his hopes of promotion. Anne listened at first indifferently; but knowing no one else so good-natured and experienced, she grew interested in him as in a brother. By degrees his gold lace, buckles, and spurs lost all their strangeness, and were as familiar to her as her own clothes.

MILLER LOVEDAY OF OVERCOMBE MILL

MILLER LOVEDAY was the representative of an ancient family of corn-grinders whose history is lost in the mists of antiquity. His ancestral line was contemporaneous with that of De Ros, Howard, and De La Zouche; but, owing to some trifling deficiency in the possessions of the house of Loveday, the individual names and intermarriages of its members were not recorded during the Middle Ages, and thus their private lives in any given century were uncertain. [But

it was known that the family had formed matrimonial alliances with farmers not so very small, and once with a gentleman-tanner, who had for many years purchased after their death the horses of the most aristocratic persons in the county—fiery steeds that earlier in their career had been valued at many hundred guineas.

It was also ascertained that Mr. Love-day's great-grandparents had been eight in number, and his great-great-grandparents sixteen, every one of whom reached to years of discretion : at every stage backwards his sires and gammers thus doubled and doubled till they became a vast body of Gothic ladies and gentlemen of rank known as ceorls or villeins, full of importance to the country at large, and ramifying throughout the unwritten history of England. His immediate father had greatly improved the value of their residence by building a new chimney, and setting up an additional pair of mill-stones.

Overcombe Mill presented at one end the appearance of a hard-worked house slipping into the river, and at the other of an idle, genteel place, half-cloaked with creepers at this time of the year, and having no visible connexion with flour. It had hips instead of gables, giving it a round-shouldered look ; four chimneys

with no smoke coming out of them; two zigzag cracks in the wall; several open windows, with a looking-glass here and there inside, showing its warped back to the passer-by; snowy dimity curtains waving in the draught; two mill doors, one above the other, the upper enabling a person to step out upon nothing at a height of ten feet from the ground; a gaping arch vomiting the river, and a lean, long-nosed fellow looking out from the mill doorway, who was the hired grinder, except when a bulging fifteen-stone man occupied the same place, namely, the miller himself.

Behind the mill door, and invisible to the mere wayfarer who did not visit the family, were chalked addition and subtraction sums, many of them originally done wrong, and the figures half rubbed out and corrected, noughts being turned into nines, and ones into twos. These were the miller's private calculations. There were also chalked in the same place rows and rows of strokes like open palings, representing the calculations of the grinder, who in his youthful ciphering studies had not gone so far as Arabic figures. . . .

The miller above mentioned was a hale man of fifty-five or sixty—hale all through, as many were in those days, and

not merely venerated with purple by exhilarating victuals and drinks, though the latter were not at all despised by him. His face was indeed rather pale than otherwise, for he had just come from the mill. It was capable of immense changes of expression : mobility was its essence, a roll of flesh forming a buttress to his nose on each side, and a deep ravine lying between his lower lip and the tumulus represented by his chin. These fleshy lumps moved stealthily, as if of their own accord, whenever his fancy was tickled.

OLD MR. DERRIMAN OF OXWELL HALL

ONE solitary newspaper occasionally found its way into the village of Overcombe. It was lent by the postmaster at Budmouth (who, in some mysterious way, got it for nothing through his connexion with the mail) to Mr. Derriman at the Hall, by whom it was handed on to Mrs. Garland when it was not more than a fortnight old. . . . Notwithstanding his compact with Mrs. Garland, old Mr. Derriman kept the paper so long, and was so chary of wasting his man's time on a merely intellectual errand, that unless she sent for the journal it seldom reached her hands. . . .

Oxwell Hall was once the seat of a family now extinct, and of late years used as a farmhouse. Benjamin Derriman, who owned the crumbling place, had originally been only the occupier and tenant-farmer of the fields around. His wife had brought him a small fortune, and during the growth of their only son there had been a partition of the Oxwell estate, giving the farmer, now a widower, the opportunity of acquiring the building and a small portion of the land attached on exceptionally low terms. But two years after the purchase the boy died, and Derriman's existence was paralyzed forthwith. It was said that since that event he had devised the house and fields to a distant female relative, to keep them out of the hands of his detested nephew ; but this was not certainly known.

The hall was as interesting as mansions in a state of declension usually are, as the excellent county history showed. That popular work in folio contained an old plate dedicated to the last scion of the original owners, from which drawing it appeared that in 1750, the date of publication, the windows were covered with little scratches like black flashes of lightning ; that a horn of hard smoke came out of each of the twelve chimneys ; that a lady and a lap-dog stood on the

lawn in a strenuously walking position ; and a substantial cloud and nine flying birds of no known species hung over the trees to the north-east.

The rambling and neglected dwelling had all the romantic excellencies and practical drawbacks which such mildewed places share in common with caves, mountains, wildernesses, glens, and other homes of poesy that people of taste wish to live and die in. Mustard and cress could have been raised on the inner plaster of the dewy walls at any height not exceeding three feet from the floor ; and mushrooms of the most refined and thin-stemmed kinds grew up through the chinks of the larder paving. As for the outside, Nature, in the ample time that had been given her, had so mingled her filings and effacements with the marks of human wear and tear upon the house that it was often hard to say in which of the two, or if in both, any particular obliteration had its origin. The keenness was gone from the mouldings of the doorways, but whether worn out by the rubbing past of innumerable people's shoulders, and the moving of their heavy furniture, or by Time in a grander and more abstract form, did not appear. The iron stanchions inside the window-panes were eaten away to the size of wires at

the bottom where they entered the stone, the condensed breathings of generations having settled there in pools and rusted them. The panes themselves had either lost their shine altogether or become iridescent as a peacock's tail. In the middle of the porch was a vertical sundial, whose gnomon swayed loosely about when the wind blew, and cast its shadow hither and thither, as much as to say, 'Here's your fine model dial ; here's any time for any man ; I am an old dial ; and shiftiness is the best policy.'

A GREAT DISCOVERY

ON an evening in the latter part of May a middle-aged man was walking homeward from Shaston to the village of Marlott, in the adjoining Vale of Blackmore or Blackmoor. . . .

'Good-night t'ee,' said the man with the basket.

'Good-night, Sir John,' said the parson.

The pedestrian, after another pace or two, halted, and turned round.

'Now, sir, begging your pardon ; we met last market-day on this road about this time, and I zaid "Good-night," and you made reply, "*Good-night, Sir John,*" as now.'

'I did,' said the parson.

'And once before that—near a month ago.'

'I may have.'

'Then what might your meaning be in calling me "Sir John" these different times, when I be plain Jack Durbeyfield, the haggler?'

The parson rode a step or two nearer.

'It was only my whim,' he said; and, after a moment's hesitation: 'It was on account of a discovery I made some little time ago, whilst I was hunting up pedigrees for the new county history. I am Parson Tringham, the antiquary, of Stag-foot Lane. Don't you really know, Durbeyfield, that you are the lineal representative of the ancient and knightly family of the D'Urbervilles, who derive their descent from Sir Pagan D'Urberville, that renowned knight who came from Normandy with William the Conqueror, as appears by Battle Abbey Roll?'

'Never heard it before, sir!'

'Well, it's true. Throw up your chin a moment, so that I may catch the profile of your face better. Yes, that's the D'Urber-ville nose and chin—a little debased. Your ancestor was one of the twelve knights who assisted the Lord of Estremavilla in Normandy in his conquest of Glamorganshire. Branches of your family

held manors over all this part of England ; their names appear in the Pipe Rolls in the time of King Stephen. . . . Aye, there have been generations of Sir Johns among you, and if knighthood were hereditary, like a baronetcy, as it practically was in old times, when men were knighted from father to son, you would be Sir John now.'

'Ye don't say so !'

'In short,' continued the parson, decisively smacking his leg with his switch, 'there's hardly such another family in England.'

'Daze my eyes, and isn't there ?' said Durbeyfield. 'And here have I been knocking about, year after year, from pillar to post, as if I was no more than the commonest feller in the parish.'

* * * * *

When Parson Tringham was gone Durbeyfield walked a few steps in a profound reverie, and then sat down upon the grassy bank by the roadside, depositing his basket before him. In a few minutes a youth appeared in the distance, walking in the same direction as that which had been pursued by Durbeyfield. The latter, on seeing him, held up his hand, and the lad quickened his pace and came near.

'Boy, take up that basket ! I want 'ee to go on an errand for me.'

The lath-like stripling frowned. 'Who be you, then, John Durbeyfield, to order me about and call me "boy"?' You know my name as well as I know yours!'

'Do you, do you? That's the secret—that's the secret! Now obey my orders, and take the message I'm going to charge 'ee wi'. . . . Well, Fred, I don't mind telling you that the secret is that I'm one of a noble race—it has been just found out by me this present a'ternoon, P.M.' And as he made the announcement, Durbeyfield, declining from his sitting position, luxuriously stretched himself out upon the bank among the daisies.

The lad stood before Durbeyfield, and contemplated his length from crown to toe.

'Sir John D'Urberville—that's who I be,' continued the prostrate man. 'That is if knights were baronets—which they be. 'Tis recorded in history all about me. Dost know of such a place, lad, as Kingsbere-sub-Greenhill?'

'Ees. I've been there to Greenhill Fair.'

'Well, under the church of that city there lie——'

''Tisn't a city, the place I mean; leastwise 'twaddn' when I was there—'twas a little one-eyed, blinking sort o' place.'

'Never you mind the place, boy, that's

not the question before us. Under the church of that there parish lie my ancestors—hundreds of 'em—in coats of mail and jewels, in gr't lead coffins weighing tons and tons. There's not a man in the county o' South-Wessex that's got grander and nobler skillentons in his family than I.'

'Oh?'

'Now take up that basket, and goo on to Marlott, and when you've come to The Pure Drop Inn, tell 'em to send a horse and carriage to me immed'ately, to carry me hwome. And in the bottom o' the carriage they be to put a noggin o' rum in a small bottle, and chalk it up to my account. And when you've done that goo on to my house with the basket, and tell my wife to put away that washing, because she needn't finish it, and wait till I come hwome, as I've news to tell her.'

THE 'CLUB-WALKING'

THE forests have departed, but some old customs of their shades remain. Many, however, linger only in a metamorphosed or disguised form. The May-Day dance, for instance, was to be discerned . . . in the guise of the club revel, or 'club-walking,' as it was there called.

It was an interesting event to the younger inhabitants of Marlott, though its real interest was not observed by the participators in the ceremony. Its singularity lay less in the retention of a custom of walking in procession and dancing on each anniversary than in the members being solely women. In men's clubs such celebrations were, though expiring, less uncommon; but either the natural shyness of the softer sex, or a sarcastic attitude on the part of male relatives, had denuded such women's clubs as remained (if any other did) of this their glory and consummation. The club of Marlott alone lived to uphold the local Cerealia. It had walked for hundreds of years, if not as benefit-club, as votive sisterhood of some sort; and it walked still.

The banded ones were all dressed in white gowns—a gay survival from Old Style days, when cheerfulness and May-time were synonyms—days before the habit of taking long views had reduced emotions to a monotonous average. Their first exhibition of themselves was in a processional march of two and two round the parish. Ideal and real clashed slightly as the sun lit up their figures against the green hedges and creeper-laced house-fronts; for, though the whole troop wore white garments, no two

whites were alike among them. Some approached pure blanching ; some had a bluish pallor ; some worn by the older characters (which had possibly lain by folded for many a year) inclined to a cadaverous tint, and to a Georgian style.

In addition to the distinction of a white frock, every woman and girl carried in her right hand a peeled willow wand, and in her left a bunch of white flowers. The peeling of the former, and the selection of the latter, had been an operation of personal care.

There were a few middle-aged and even elderly women in the train, their silver-wiry hair and wrinkled faces, scourged by time and trouble, having almost a grotesque, certainly a pathetic, appearance in such a jaunty situation. In a true view, perhaps, there was more to be gathered and told of each anxious and experienced one, to whom the years were drawing nigh when she should say, 'I have no pleasure in them,' than of her juvenile comrades. But let the elder be passed over here for those under whose bodices the life throbbed quick and warm.

The young girls formed, indeed, the majority of the band, and their heads of luxuriant hair reflected in the sunshine every tone of gold, and black, and brown. Some had beautiful eyes, others a beauti-

ful nose, others a beautiful mouth and figure: few, if any, had all. A difficulty of arranging their lips in this crude exposure to public scrutiny, an inability to balance their heads, and to dissociate self-consciousness from their features, was apparent in them, and showed that they were genuine country girls, unaccustomed to many eyes.

And as each and all of them were warmed without by the sun, so each had a private little sun for her soul to bask in; some dream, some affection, some hobby, at least some remote and distant hope which, though perhaps starving to nothing, still lived on, as hopes will. Thus they were all cheerful, and many of them merry.

THE DURBEYFIELD HOUSEHOLD

‘**B**UT where is father?’ Tess asked again.

Her mother put on a deprecating look. ‘Now don’t you be bursting out angry. The poor man—he felt so rafted after his uplifting by the pa’son’s news—that he went up to Rolliver’s half an hour ago. He do want to get up his strength for his journey to-morrow with that load of beehives, which must be delivered, family or no. He’ll have to start shortly after

twelve to-night, as the distance is so long.'

'Get up his strength!' said Tess impetuously, the tears welling to her eyes. 'O my God! Go to a public-house to get up his strength! And you as well agreed as he, mother!'

Her rebuke and her mood seemed to fill the whole room, and to impart a cowed look to the furniture, and candle, and children playing about, and to her mother's face.

'No,' said the latter touchily, 'I be not agreed. I have been waiting for 'ee to bide and keep house while I go to fetch him. . . .'

This going to hunt up her shiftless husband at the inn was one of Mrs. Durbeyfield's still extant enjoyments in the muck and muddle of rearing children. To discover him at Rolliver's, to sit there for an hour or two by his side and dismiss all thought and care of the children during the interval, made her happy. A sort of halo, an occidental glow, came over life then. Troubles and other realities took on themselves a metaphysical impalpability, sinking to mere mental phenomena for serene contemplation, and no longer as pressing concretions which chafed body and soul. The youngsters, not immediately within sight,

seemed rather bright and desirable appurtenances than otherwise; the incidents of daily life were not without humorousness and jollity in their aspect there. She felt a little as she had used to feel when she sat by her now wedded husband in the same spot during his wooing, shutting her eyes to his defects of character and regarding him only in his ideal presentation as lover. . . .

Tess busied herself with sprinkling the linen dried during the daytime, in company with her nine-year-old brother Abraham, and her sister Eliza-Louisa of twelve and a half, called 'Liza-Lu,' the youngest ones being put to bed. There was an interval of four years and more between Tess and the next of the family, the two who had filled the gap having died in their infancy, and this lent her a deputy-maternal attitude when she was alone with her juniors. Next in juvenility to Abraham came two more girls, Hope and Modesty; then a boy of three, and then the baby, who had just completed his first year.

All these young souls were passengers in the Durbeyfield ship—entirely dependent on the judgment of the two Durbeyfield adults for their pleasures, their necessities, their health, even their existence. If the heads of the Durbey-

field household chose to sail into difficulty, disaster, starvation, disease, degradation, death, thither were these half-dozen little captives hatches compelled to sail with them—six helpless creatures, who had never been asked if they wished for life on any terms, much less if they wished for it on such hard conditions as were involved in being of the shiftless house of Durbeyfield. Some people would like to know whence the poet whose philosophy is in these days deemed as profound and trustworthy as his song is breezy and pure, gets his authority for speaking of 'Nature's holy plan.'

It grew later, and neither father nor mother reappeared. Tess looked out of the door, and took a mental journey through Marlott. The village was shutting its eyes. Candles and lamps were being put out everywhere: she could inwardly behold the extinguisher and the extended hand. . . .

'Abraham,' she said to her little brother, 'do you put on your hat—you bain't afraid?—and go up to Rolliver's, and see what has gone wi' father and mother.'

The boy jumped promptly from his seat, and opened the door, and the night swallowed him up. Half an hour passed

yet again ; neither man, woman, nor child returned. Abraham, like his parents, seemed to have been lured and caught by the ensnaring inn.

‘ I must go myself,’ she said.

THE GATHERING AT ROLLIVER’S INN

ROLLIVER’S inn, the single ale-house at this end of the long and broken village, could only boast of an off-license ; hence, as nobody could legally drink on the premises, the amount of overt accommodation for consumers was strictly limited to a little board about six inches wide and two yards long, fixed to the garden palings by pieces of wire, so as to form a ledge. On this board thirsty strangers deposited their cups as they stood in the road and drank, and threw the dregs on the dusty ground to the pattern of Polynesia, and wished they could have a restful seat inside.

Thus the strangers. But there were also local customers who felt the same wish ; and where there’s a will there’s a way.

In a large bedroom upstairs, the window of which was thickly curtained with a great woollen shawl lately discarded by the landlady Mrs. Rolliver, were gathered on this evening nearly a dozen persons, all

seeking beatitude ; all old inhabitants of the nearer end of Marlott, and frequenters of this retreat. Not only did the distance to The Pure Drop, the fully-licensed tavern at the further part of the dispersed village, render its accommodation practically unavailable for dwellers at this end ; but the far more serious question, the quality of the liquor, confirmed the prevalent opinion that it was better to drink with Rolliver in a corner of the housetop than with the other landlord in a wide house.

A gaunt four-post bedstead which stood in the room afforded sitting-space for several persons gathered round three of its sides ; a couple more men had elevated themselves on a chest of drawers ; another rested on the oak-carved 'cwoffer' ; two on the wash-stand ; another on the stool ; and thus all were, somehow, seated at their ease. The stage of mental comfort to which they had arrived at this hour was one wherein their souls expanded beyond their skins, and spread their personalities warmly through the room. In this process the chamber and its furniture grew more and more dignified and luxurious ; the shawl hanging at the window took upon itself the richness of tapestry ; the brass handles of the chest of drawers were as

golden knockers ; and the carved bed-posts seemed to have some kinship with the magnificent pillars of Solomon's temple.

Mrs. Durbeyfield, having quickly walked hitherward after parting from Tess, opened the front door, crossed the downstairs room, which was in deep gloom, and then unfastened the stair-door like one whose fingers knew the tricks of the latches well. Her ascent of the crooked staircase was a slower process, and her face, as it rose into the light above the last stair, encountered the gaze of all the party assembled in the bedroom.

' ——— Being a few private friends I've asked in to keep up club-walking at my own expense,' the landlady exclaimed at the sound of footsteps, as glibly as a child repeating the Catechism, while she peered over the stairs. ' Oh, 'tis you, Mrs. Durbeyfield—Lard—how you frightened me !—I thought it might be some gaffer sent by Gover'ment.'

Mrs. Durbeyfield was welcomed with glances and nods by the remainder of the conclave, and turned to where her husband sat. He was humming absently to himself, in a low tone : ' I be as good as some folks here and there ! I've got a great family vault at Kingsbere-sub-Greenhill, and finer skillentons than any man in Wessex !'

AT AN INN

WHEN we as strangers sought
Their catering care,
Veiled smiles bespoke their thought
Of what we were.
They warmed as they opined
Us more than friends—
That we had all resigned
For love's dear ends.

And that swift sympathy
With living love
Which quicks the world—maybe
The spheres above,
Made them our ministers,
Moved them to say,
' Ah, God, that bliss like theirs
Would flush our day !'

And we were left alone
As Love's own pair ;
Yet never the love-light shone
Between us there !
But that which chilled the breath
Of afternoon,
And palsied unto death
The pane-fly's tune.

The kiss their zeal foretold,
And now deemed come,
Came not : within his hold
Love lingered numb.

Why cast he on our port
A bloom not ours ?
Why shaped us for his sport
In after-hours ?

As we seemed we were not
That day afar,
And now we seem not what
We aching are.
O severing sea and land,
O laws of men,
Ere death, once let us stand
As we stood then !

A BLIGHTED STAR

‘TESS!’ he said in a preparatory
tone, after a silence.

‘Yes, Abraham.’

‘Bain’t you glad that we’ve become
gentlefolk ?’

‘Not particular glad.’

‘But you be glad that you ’m going to
marry a gentleman ?’

‘What ?’ said Tess, lifting her face.

‘That our great relation will help ’ee
to marry a gentleman.’

‘I? Our great relation? We have
no such relation. What has put that
into your head ?’

‘I heard ’em talking about it up at
Rolliver’s when I went to find father.’

There's a rich lady of our family out at Trantridge, and mother said that if you claimed kin with the lady, she'd put 'ee in the way of marrying a gentleman.'

His sister became abruptly still, and lapsed into a pondering silence. Abraham talked on, rather for the pleasure of utterance than for audition, so that his sister's abstraction was of no account. He leant back against the hives, and with upturned face made observations on the stars, whose cold pulses were beating amid the black hollows above, in serene dissociation from these two wisps of human life. He asked how far away those twinklers were, and whether God was on the other side of them. But ever and anon his childish prattle recurred to what impressed his imagination even more deeply than the wonders of creation. If Tess were made rich by marrying a gentleman, would she have money enough to buy a spy-glass so large that it would draw the stars as near to her as Nettlecombe-Tout ?

The renewed subject, which seemed to have impregnated the whole family, filled Tess with impatience.

'Never mind that now !' she exclaimed.

'Did you say the stars were worlds, Tess ?'

‘ Yes.’

‘ All like ours ?’

‘ I don’t know ; but I think so. They sometimes seem to be like the apples on our stubborn-tree. Most of them splendid and sound—a few blighted.’

‘ Which do we live on—a splendid one or a blighted one ?’

‘ A blighted one.’

‘ ’Tis very unlucky that we didn’t pitch on a sound one, when there were so many more of ’em !’

‘ Yes.’

‘ Is it like that *really*, Tess ?’ said Abraham, turning to her much impressed on reconsideration of this rare information. ‘ How would it have been if we had pitched on a sound one ?’

‘ Well, father wouldn’t have coughed and creaped about as he does, and wouldn’t have got too tipsy to go this journey ; and mother wouldn’t have been always washing, and never getting finished.’

‘ And you would have been a rich lady ready-made, and not have had to be made rich by marrying a gentleman ?’

‘ O Aby, don’t—don’t talk of that any more !’

A PHASE OF CHILDHOOD

TESS DURBEYFIELD at this time of her life was a mere vessel of emotion untinged by experience. The dialect was on her tongue to some extent, despite the village school: the characteristic intonation of that dialect for this district being the voicing approximately rendered by the syllable UR, probably as rich an utterance as any to be found in human speech. The pouted-up deep red mouth to which this syllable was native had hardly as yet settled into its definite shape, and her lower lip had a way of thrusting the middle of her top one upward, when they closed together after a word.

Phases of her childhood lurked in her aspect still. As she walked along to-day, for all her bouncing handsome womanliness, you could sometimes see her twelfth year in her cheeks, or her ninth sparkling from her eyes; and even her fifth would flit over the curves of her mouth now and then.

Yet few knew, and fewer still considered this. A small minority, mainly strangers, would look long at her in casually passing by, and grow momentarily fascinated by her freshness, and wonder if they would ever see her again:

but to almost everybody she was a fine and picturesque country girl, and no more.

TESS'S GIRLHOOD

TESS walked to the hill-town called Shaston, and there took advantage of a van which twice in the week ran from Shaston eastward to Chaseborough, passing near Trantridge, the parish in which the vague and mysterious Mrs. D'Urberville had her residence.

Tess Durbeyfield's route on this memorable morning lay amid the north-eastern undulations of the Vale in which she had been born, and in which her life had unfolded. The Vale of Blackmoor was to her the world, and its inhabitants the races thereof. From the gates and stiles of Marlott she had looked down its length in the wondering days of infancy, and what had been mystery to her then was not much less than mystery to her now. She had seen daily from her chamber-window towers, villages, faint white mansions; above all the town of Shaston standing majestically on its height; its windows shining like lamps in the evening sun. She had hardly ever visited the place, only a small tract even of the Vale

and its environs being known to her by close inspection. Much less had she been far outside the valley. Every contour of the surrounding hills was as personal to her as that of her relatives' faces; but for what lay beyond her judgment was dependent on the teaching of the village school, where she had held a leading place at the time of her leaving, a year or two before this date.

In those early days she had been much loved by others of her own sex and age, and had used to be seen about the village as one of three—all nearly of the same year—walking home from school side by side; Tess the middle one—in a pink print pinafore, of a finely reticulated pattern, worn over a stuff frock that had lost its original colour for a nondescript tertiary—marching on upon stalky legs, in tight stockings which had little ladder-like holes at the knees, torn by kneeling in the roads and banks in search of vegetable and mineral treasures; her then earth-coloured hair hanging like pot-hooks; the arms of the two outside girls resting round the waist of Tess; her arms on the shoulders of the two supporters.

As Tess grew older, and began to see how matters stood, she felt quite a Malthusian towards her mother for thoughtlessly giving her so many little sisters and

brothers, when it was such a trouble to nurse and provide for them. Her mother's intelligence was that of a happy child: Joan Durbeyfield was simply an additional one, and that not the eldest, to her own long family of waiters on Providence.

However, Tess became humanely beneficent towards the small ones. . . . Every day seemed to throw upon her shoulders more of the family burdens, and that Tess should be the representative of the Durbeyfields at the D'Urberville mansion came as a thing of course. In this instance it must be admitted that the Durbeyfields were putting their fairest side outward.

IN MARLOTT CHURCH

TESS revived sufficiently to show herself so far as was necessary to get to church one Sunday morning. She liked to hear the chanting—such as it was—and the old Psalms, and to join in the Morning Hymn. That innate love of melody, which she had inherited from her ballad-singing mother, gave the simplest music a power over her which could well-nigh drag her heart out of her bosom at times.

To be as much out of observation as possible for reasons of her own, and to

escape the gallantries of the young men, she set out before the chiming began, and took a back seat under the gallery, close to the lumber, where only old men and women came, and where the bier stood on end among the churchyard tools.

Parishioners dropped in by twos and threes, deposited themselves in rows before her, rested three-quarters of a minute on their foreheads as if they were praying, though they were not; then sat up, and looked around. When the chants came on one of her favourites happened to be chosen among the rest—the old double chant ‘Langdon’—but she did not know what it was called, though she would much have liked to know. She thought, without exactly wording the thought, how strange and godlike was a composer’s power, who from the grave could lead through sequences of emotion, which he alone had felt at first, a girl like her who had never heard of his name, and never would have a clue to his personality.

The people who had turned their heads turned them again as the service proceeded; and at last observing her they whispered to each other. She knew what their whispers were about, grew sick at heart, and felt that she could come to church no more. . . .

The only exercise that Tess took at this time was after dark ; and it was then, when out in the woods, that she seemed least solitary. She knew how to hit to a hair's-breadth that moment of evening when the light and the darkness are so evenly balanced that the constraint of day and the suspense of night neutralize each other, leaving absolute mental liberty. It is then that the plight of being alive becomes attenuated to its least possible dimensions. She had no fear of the shadows ; her sole idea seemed to be to shun mankind—or rather that cold accretion called the world, which, so terrible in the mass, is so unformidable, even pitiable, in its units.

NIGHT

ON these lonely hills and dales her quiescent glide was of a piece with the element she moved in. Tess's flexuous and stealthy figure became an integral part of the scene. At times her whimsical fancy would intensify natural processes around her till they seemed a part of her own story. Rather they became a part of it ; for the world is only a psychological phenomenon, and what they seemed they were. The midnight airs and gusts,

moaning amongst the tightly-wrapped buds and bark of the winter twigs, were formulæ of bitter reproach. A wet day was the expression of irremediable grief at her weakness in the mind of some vague ethical being whom she could not class definitely as the God of her childhood, and could not comprehend as any other.

But this encompassment of her own characterization, based on shreds of convention, peopled by phantoms and voices antipathetic to her, was a sorry and mistaken creation of Tess's fancy—a cloud of moral hobgoblins by which she was terrified without reason. It was they that were out of harmony with the actual world, not she. Walking among the sleeping birds in the hedges, watching the skipping rabbits on a moonlit warren, or standing under a pheasant-laden bough, she looked upon herself as a figure of Guilt intruding into the haunts of Innocence. But all the while she was making a distinction where there was no difference. Feeling herself in antagonism she was quite in accord. She had been made to break an accepted social law, but no law known to the environment in which she fancied herself such an anomaly.

NATURE'S GIFT OF JOY

TESS'S hopes mingled with the sunshine in an ideal photosphere which surrounded her as she bounded along against the soft south wind. She heard a pleasant voice in every breeze, and in every bird's note seemed to lurk a joy.

Her face had latterly changed with changing states of mind, continually fluctuating between beauty and ordinariness, according as the thoughts were gay or grave. One day she was pink and flawless; another pale and tragical. When she was pink she was feeling less than when pale; her more perfect beauty accorded with her less elevated mood; her more intense mood with her less perfect beauty. It was her best face physically that was now set against the south wind.

The irresistible, universal, automatic tendency to find sweet pleasure somewhere, which pervades all life, from the meanest to the highest, had at length mastered Tess. Being even now only a young woman of twenty, one who mentally and sentimentally had not finished growing, it was impossible that any event should have left upon her an impression that was not in time capable of transmutation.

And thus her spirits, and her thankfulness, and her hopes, rose higher and

higher. She tried several ballads, but found them inadequate ; till, recollecting the psalter that her eyes had so often wandered over of a Sunday morning before she had eaten of the tree of knowledge, she chanted : ' O ye Sun and Moon . . . O ye Stars . . . ye Green Things upon the Earth . . . ye Fowls of the Air . . . Beasts and Cattle . . . Children of Men . . . bless ye the Lord, praise Him and magnify Him for ever !'

She suddenly stopped and murmured : ' But perhaps I don't quite know the Lord as yet.'

And probably the half-unconscious rhapsody was a Fetichistic utterance in a Monotheistic setting ; women whose chief companions are the forms and forces of outdoor Nature retain in their souls far more of the Pagan fantasy of their remote forefathers than of the systematized religion taught their race at later date. However, Tess found at least approximate expression for her feelings in the old *Benedicite* that she had lisped from infancy ; and it was enough.

THE BAPTISM OF SORROW

THE household went to bed, and, distressed beyond measure, Tess retired also. She was continually waking

as she lay, and in the middle of the night found that the baby was still worse. It was obviously dying—quietly and painlessly, but none the less surely.

In her misery she rocked herself upon the bed. The clock struck the solemn hour of one, that hour when thought stalks outside reason, and malignant possibilities stand rock-firm as facts. She thought of the child consigned to the nethermost corner of hell, as its double doom for lack of baptism and lack of legitimacy; saw the arch-fiend tossing it with his three-pronged fork, like the one they used for heating the oven on baking days; to which picture she added many other quaint and curious details of torment taught the young in this Christian country. The lurid presentment so powerfully affected her imagination in the silence of the sleeping house that her nightgown became damp with perspiration, and the bedstead shook with each throb of her heart.

The infant's breathing grew more difficult, and the mother's mental tension increased. It was useless to devour the little thing with kisses; she could stay in bed no longer, and walked feverishly about the room.

'O merciful God, have pity; have pity upon my poor baby!' she cried. 'Heap

as much anger as you want to upon me, and welcome ; but pity the child !'

She leant against the chest of drawers, and murmured incoherent supplications for a long while, till she suddenly started up.

' Ah ! perhaps baby can be saved ! Perhaps it will be just the same !'

She spoke so brightly that it seemed as though her face might have shone in the gloom surrounding her.

She lit a candle, and went to a second and a third bed under the wall, where she awoke her young sisters and brothers, all of whom occupied the same room. Pulling out the washing-stand so that she could get behind it, she poured some water from a jug, and made them kneel around, putting their hands together with fingers exactly vertical. While the children, scarcely awake, awe-stricken at her manner, their eyes growing larger and larger, remained in this position, she took the baby from her bed—a child's child—so immature as scarce to seem a sufficient personality to endow its producer with the maternal title. Tess then stood erect with the infant on her arm beside the basin, the next sister held the Prayer-Book open before her, as the clerk at church held it before the parson ; and thus the girl set about baptizing her child.

Her figure looked singularly tall and imposing as she stood in her long white nightgown, a thick cable of twisted dark hair hanging straight down her back to her waist. The kindly dimness of the weak candle abstracted from her form and features the little blemishes which sunlight might have revealed—the stubble scratches upon her wrists, and the weariness of her eyes—her high enthusiasm having a transfiguring effect upon the face which had been her undoing, showing it as a thing of immaculate beauty, with an impress of dignity which was almost regal. The little ones kneeling round, their sleepy eyes blinking and red, awaited her preparations full of a suspended wonder which their physical heaviness at that hour would not allow to become active.

The most impressed of them said :

‘ Be you really going to christen him, Tess ?’

The girl-mother replied in a grave affirmative.

‘ What’s his name going to be ?’

She had not thought of that, but a name suggested by a phrase in the book of Genesis came into her head as she proceeded with the baptismal service, and now she pronounced it :

‘ SORROW, I baptize thee in the name

of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'

She sprinkled the water, and there was silence.

' Say " Amen," children.'

The tiny voices piped in obedient response ' Amen !'

Tess went on :

' We receive this child '—and so forth —' and do sign him with the sign of the Cross.'

Here she dipped her hand into the basin, and fervently drew an immense cross upon the baby with her forefinger, continuing with the customary sentences as to his manfully fighting against sin, the world, and the devil, and being a faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end. She duly went on with the Lord's Prayer, the children lisping it after her in a thin gnat-like wail, till, at the conclusion, raising their voices to clerk's pitch, they again piped into the silence, ' Amen !'

Then their sister, with much augmented confidence in the efficacy of this sacrament, poured forth from the bottom of her heart the thanksgiving that follows, uttering it boldly and triumphantly in the stopt-diapason note which her voice acquired when her heart was in her speech, and which will never be forgotten by those who knew her. The ecstasy of

faith almost apotheosized her; it set upon her face a glowing irradiation, and brought a red spot into the middle of each cheek; while the miniature candle-flame inverted in her eye-pupils shone like a diamond. The children gazed up at her with more and more reverence, and no longer had a will for questioning. She did not look like Sissy to them now, but as a being large, towering, and awful—a divine personage with whom they had nothing in common.

DAWN AT TALBOTHAYS DAIRY

THE season developed and matured. Another year's instalment of flowers, leaves, nightingales, thrushes, finches, and such ephemeral creatures, took up their positions where only a year ago others had stood in their place when these were nothing more than germs and inorganic particles. Rays from the sunrise drew forth the buds and stretched them into long stalks, lifted up sap in noiseless streams, opened petals, and sucked out scents in invisible jets and breathings. . . . Tess and Angel Clare met daily in that strange and solemn interval, the twilight of the morning, in the violet or pink dawn; for it was necessary to rise early, so very early, here. Milking was

done betimes ; and before the milking came the skimming, which began at a little past three. It usually fell to the lot of some one or other of them to wake the rest, the first being aroused by an alarm-clock ; and, as Tess was the latest arrival, and they soon discovered that she could be depended upon not to sleep through the alarm as the others did, this task was thrust most frequently upon her. No sooner had the hour of three struck and whizzed, than she left her room and ran to the dairyman's door ; then up the ladder to Angel's, calling him in a loud whisper ; then woke her fellow-milkmaids. By the time that Tess was dressed Clare was downstairs and out in the humid air. The remaining maids and the dairyman usually gave themselves another turn on the pillow, and did not appear till a quarter of an hour later. . . . Being so often—possibly not always by chance—the first two persons to get up at the dairy-house, they seemed to themselves the first persons up of all the world. In these early days of her residence here Tess did not skim, but went out of doors at once after rising, where he was generally awaiting her. The spectral, half-compounded, aqueous light which pervaded the open mead, impressed them with a feeling of isola-

tion, as if they were Adam and Eve. At this dim inceptive stage of the day Tess seemed to Clare to exhibit a dignified largeness both of disposition and physique, an almost regnant power, possibly because he knew that at that preternatural time hardly any woman so well endowed in person as she was likely to be walking in the open air within the boundaries of his horizon ; very few in all England. Fair women are usually asleep at midsummer dawns. She was close at hand, and the rest were nowhere.

The mixed, singular, luminous gloom in which they walked along together to the spot where the cows lay, often made him think of the Resurrection hour. He little thought that the Magdalen might be at his side. Whilst all the landscape was in neutral shade his companion's face, which was the focus of his eyes, rising above the mist stratum, seemed to have a sort of phosphorescence upon it. She looked ghostly, as if she were merely a soul at large. In reality her face, without appearing to do so, had caught the cold gleam of day from the north-east ; his own face, though he did not think of it, wore the same aspect to her.

It was then, as has been said, that she impressed him most deeply. She was no longer the milkmaid, but a visionary

essence of woman—a whole sex condensed into one typical form. He called her Artemis, Demeter, and other fanciful names half teasingly, which she did not like because she did not understand them.

‘Call me Tess,’ she would say askance ; and he did.

Then it would grow lighter, and her features would become simply feminine ; they had changed from those of a divinity who could confer bliss to those of a being who craved it.

At these non-human hours they could get quite close to the waterfowl. Herons came, with a great bold noise as of opening doors and shutters, out of the boughs of a plantation which they frequented at the side of the mead ; or, if already on the spot, hardily maintained their standing in the water as the pair walked by, watching them by moving their heads round in a slow, horizontal, passionless wheel, like the turn of puppets by clockwork.

They could then see the faint summer fogs in layers, woolly, level, and apparently no thicker than counterpanes, spread about the meadows in detached remnants of small extent. On the gray moisture of the grass were marks where the cows had lain through the night—dark-green islands of dry herbage the size of their

carcasses, in the general sea of dew. From each island proceeded a serpentine trail, by which the cow had rambled away to feed after getting up, at the end of which trail they found her ; the snoring puff from her nostrils, when she recognized them, making an intenser little fog of her own amid the prevailing one. Then they drove the animals back to the barton, or sat down to milk them on the spot, as the case might require.

Or perhaps the summer fog was more general, and the meadows lay like a white sea, out of which the scattered trees rose like dangerous rocks. Birds would soar through it into the upper radiance, and hang on the wing sunning themselves, or alight on the wet rails subdividing the mead, which now shone like glass rods. Minute diamonds of moisture from the mist hung, too, upon Tess's eyelashes, and drops upon her hair, like seed pearls. When the day grew quite strong and commonplace these dried off her ; moreover, Tess then lost her strange and ethereal beauty ; her teeth, lips, and eyes scintillated in the sunbeams, and she was again the dazzlingly fair dairymaid only, who had to hold her own against the other women of the world. . . . The milking progressed, till towards the end Tess and Clare, in common with the rest,

could hear the heavy breakfast-table dragged out from the wall in the kitchen by Mrs. Crick, this being the invariable preliminary to each meal ; the same horrible scrape accompanying its return journey when the table had been cleared.

AN INCIDENT AT TALBOTHAYS DAIRY

THEY came downstairs yawning next morning ; but skimming and milking were proceeded with as usual, and they went indoors to breakfast. Dairyman Crick was discovered stamping about the house. He had received a letter, in which a customer had complained that the butter had a twang.

‘ And begad, so ’t have !’ said the dairyman, who held in his left hand a wooden slice on which a lump of butter was stuck. ‘ Yes—taste for yourself !’

Several of them gathered round him ; and Mr. Clare tasted, Tess tasted, also the indoor milkmaids, one or two of the milking-men, and last of all Mrs. Crick, who came out from the waiting breakfast-table. There certainly was a twang.

The dairyman, who had thrown himself into abstraction to better realize the taste, and so divine the particular species of

noxious weed to which it appertained, suddenly exclaimed—

‘ ’Tis garlic ! and I thought there wasn’t a blade left in that mead !’

Then all the old hands remembered that a certain dry mead, into which a few of the cows had been admitted of late, had, in years gone by, spoilt the butter in the same way. The dairyman had not recognized the taste at that time, and thought the butter bewitched.

‘ We must overhaul that mead !’ he resumed ; ‘ this mustn’t continny !’

All having armed themselves with old pointed knives they went out together. As the inimical plant could only be present in very microscopic dimensions to have escaped ordinary observation, to find it seemed rather a hopeless attempt in the stretch of rich grass before them. However, they formed themselves into line, all assisting, owing to the importance of the search ; the dairyman at the upper end with Mr. Clare, who had volunteered to help ; then Tess, Marian, Izz Huett, and Retty ; then Bill Lewell, Jonathan, and the married dairywomen — Beck Knibbs, with her woolly black hair and rolling eyes, and flaxen Frances, consumptive from the winter damps of the water-meads—who lived in their respective cottages.

With eyes fixed upon the ground they crept slowly across a strip of the field, returning a little further down in such a manner that, when they should have finished, not a single inch of the pasture but would have fallen under the eye of some one of them. It was a most tedious business, not more than half a dozen shoots of garlic being discoverable in the whole field ; yet such was the herb's pungency that probably one bite of it by one cow had been sufficient to season the whole dairy's produce for the day.

Differing one from another in natures and moods so greatly as they did, they yet formed, bending, a curiously uniform row—automatic, noiseless ; and an alien observer passing down the neighbouring lane might well have been excused for massing them as 'Hodge.' As they crept along, stooping low to discern the plant, a soft yellow gleam was reflected from the buttercups into their shaded faces, giving them an elfish, moonlit aspect, though the sun was pouring upon their backs in all the strength of noon.

Angel Clare, who communistically stuck to his rule by taking part with the rest in everything, glanced up now and then. It was not, of course, by accident that he walked next to Tess.

THE MILKMAID

UNDER a daisied bank
There stands a rich red ruminating
cow,
And hard against her flank
A cotton-hooded milkmaid bends her
brow.

The flowery river-ooze
Upheaves and falls ; the milk purrs in
the pail ;

Few pilgrims but would choose
The peace of such a life in such a vale.

The maid breathes words—to vent,
It seems, her sense of Nature's scenery,
Of whose life, sentiment,
And essence, very part itself is she.

She bends a glance of pain,
And, at a moment, lets escape a tear ;
Is it that passing train,
Whose alien whirr offends her country
ear ?—

Nay ! Phyllis does not dwell
On visual and familiar things like these ;
What moves her is the spell
Of inner themes and inner poetries :

Could but by Sunday morn
Her gay new gown come, meads might
dry to dun,
Trains shriek till ears were torn,
If Fred would not prefer that Other One.

ANGEL CLARE'S ESTIMATE OF TESS

AMID the oozing fatness and warm ferments of the Var Vale, at a season when the rush of juices could almost be heard below the hiss of fertilization, it was impossible that the most fanciful love should not grow passionate. The ready bosoms existing there were impregnated by their surroundings.

July passed over their heads, and the Thermidorean weather which came in its wake seemed an effort on the part of Nature to match the state of hearts at Talbothays Dairy. The air of the place, so fresh in the spring and early summer, was stagnant and enervating now. Its heavy scents weighed upon them, and at mid-day the landscape seemed lying in a swoon. Ethiopic scorchings browned the upper slopes of the pastures, but there was still bright green herbage here where the watercourses purred. And as Angel Clare was oppressed by the outward heats, so was he burdened inwardly by waxing fervour of passion for the soft and silent Tess. . . . How very lovable her face was to him. Yet there was nothing ethereal about it; all was real vitality, real warmth, real incarnation. And it was in her mouth that this culminated.

Eyes almost as deep and speaking he had seen before, and cheeks perhaps as fair ; brows as arched, a chin and throat almost as shapely ; her mouth he had seen nothing to equal on the face of the earth. To a young man with the least fire in him that little upward lift in the middle of her red top lip was distracting, infatuating, maddening. He had never before seen a woman's lips and teeth which forced upon his mind with such persistent iteration the old Elizabethan simile of roses filled with snow. Perfect, he, as a lover, might have called them off-hand. But no—they were not perfect. And it was the touch of the imperfect upon the would-be perfect that gave the sweetness, because it was that which gave the humanity.

A DRIVE AND A CONFESSION

ANGEL CLARE and Tess crept along towards a point in the expanse of shade before them at which a feeble light was beginning to assert its presence, a spot where, by day, a fitful white streak of steam at intervals upon the dark green background denoted intermittent moments of contact between their secluded world and modern life. Modern life stretched out its steam feeler to this point three or four times a day, touched

the native existences, and quickly withdrew its feeler again, as if what it touched had been uncongenial.

They reached the feeble light, which came from the smoky lamp of a little railway station ; a poor enough terrestrial star, yet in one sense of more importance to Talbothays Dairy and mankind than the celestial ones to which it stood in such humiliating contrast. The cans of new milk were unladen in the rain, Tess getting a little shelter from a neighbouring holly-tree.

Then there was the hissing of a train, which drew up almost silently upon the wet rails, and the milk was rapidly swung can by can into the truck. The light of the engine flashed for a second upon Tess Durbeyfield's figure, motionless under the great holly-tree. No object could have looked more foreign to the gleaming cranks and wheels than this unsophisticated girl, with the round bare arms, the rainy face and hair, the suspended attitude of a friendly leopard at pause, the print gown of no date or fashion, and the cotton bonnet drooping on her brow.

She mounted again beside her lover, with a mute obedience characteristic of impassioned natures at times, and when they had wrapped themselves up over

head and ears in the sail-cloth again, they plunged back into the now thick night. Tess was so receptive that the few minutes of contact with the whirl of material progress lingered in her thought.

‘ Londoners will drink it at their breakfasts to-morrow, won’t they ?’ she asked. ‘ Strange people that we have never seen.’

‘ Yes—I suppose they will. Though not as we send it. When its strength has been lowered, so that it may not get up into their heads.’

‘ Noble men and noble women, ambassadors and centurions, ladies and tradeswomen, and babies who have never seen a cow.’

‘ Well, yes ; perhaps ; particularly centurions.’

‘ Who don’t know anything of us, and where it comes from ; or think how we two drove miles across the moor to-night in the rain that it might reach ’em in time ?’

‘ We did not drive entirely on account of these precious Londoners ; we drove a little on our own—on account of that anxious matter which you will, I am sure, set at rest, dear Tess. Now, permit me to put it in this way. You belong to me already, you know ; your heart, I mean. Does it not ?’

‘ You know as well as I. O yes—yes !’

‘ Then, if your heart does, why not your hand ?’

‘ My only reason was on account of you—on account of a question. I have something to tell you——’

‘ But suppose it to be entirely for my happiness, and my worldly convenience also ?’

‘ O yes ; if it is for your happiness and worldly convenience. But my life afore I came here—I want——’

‘ Well, it is for my convenience as well as my happiness. If I have a very large farm, either English or colonial, you will be invaluable as a wife to me ; better than a woman out of the largest mansion in the country. So please—please, dear Tessy, disabuse your mind of the feeling that you will stand in my way.’

‘ But my history. I want you to know it—you must let me tell you—you will not like me so well !’

‘ Tell it if you wish to, dearest. This precious history, then. Yes, I was born at so-and-so, Anno Domini——’

‘ I was born at Marlott,’ she said, catching at his words as a help, lightly as they were spoken. ‘ And I grew up there. And I was in the Sixth Standard when I left school, and they said I had great aptness, and should make a good teacher, so it was settled that I should be one.’

But there was trouble in my family ;
father was not very industrious, and he
drank a little.'

' Yes, yes. Poor child ! Nothing new.'
He pressed her more closely to his side.

' And then—there is something very
unusual about it—about me. I—I was——'

Tess's breath quickened.

' Yes, dearest. Never mind.'

' I—I—am not a Durbeyfield, but a
D'Urberville—a descendant of the same
family as those that owned the old house
we passed. And—we be all gone to
nothing !'

' A D'Urberville !—Indeed ! And is
that all the trouble, dear Tess ?'

' Yes,' she answered faintly.

' BETWEEN US NOW '

BETWEEN us now and here—
Two thrown together
Who are not wont to wear
Life's flushest feather—
Who see the scenes slide past,
The daytimes dimming fast,
Let there be truth at last,
Even in despair.

So thoroughly and long
Have you now known me,
So real in faith and strong
Have I now shown me,

That nothing needs disguise
Further in any wise,
Or asks or justifies
A guarded tongue.

Face unto face, then, say,
Eyes mine own meeting,
Is your heart far away,
Or with mine beating ?
When false things are brought low,
And swift things have grown slow,
Feigning like froth shall go,
Faith be for aye.

THE LOVERS

THERE was hardly a touch of earth in Tess's love for Angel Clare. To her sublime trustfulness he was all that goodness could be—knew all that a guide, philosopher, and friend should know. She thought every line in the contour of his person the perfection of masculine beauty, his soul the soul of a saint, his intellect that of a seer. The wisdom of her love for him, as love, sustained her dignity ; she seemed to be wearing a crown. The compassion of his love for her, as she saw it, made her lift up her heart to him in devotion. He would sometimes catch her large, worshipful eyes, that had no bottom to them, looking at him from

their depths, as if she saw something immortal before her.

She dismissed the past—trode upon it and put it out, as one treads on a coal that is smouldering and dangerous.

She had not known that men could be so disinterested, chivalrous, protective, in their love for woman as he. Angel Clare was far from all that she thought him in this respect ; absurdly far, indeed ; but he was, in truth, more spiritual than animal ; he had himself well in hand, and was singularly free from grossness. Though not cold-natured, he was rather bright than hot—less Byronic than Shelleyan ; could love desperately, but his love more especially inclined to the imaginative and ethereal ; it was a fastidious emotion which could jealously guard the loved one against his very self. This amazed and enraptured Tess, whose slight experiences had been so infelicitous till now ; and in her reaction from indignation against the male sex she swerved to excess of honour for Clare.

They unaffectedly sought each other's company ; in her honest faith she did not disguise her desire to be with him. The sum of her instincts on this matter, if clearly stated, would have been that the elusive quality in her sex which attracts men in general might be distasteful to

so perfect a man after an avowal of love, since it must in its very nature carry with it a suspicion of art.

The country custom of unreserved comradeship out of doors during betrothal was the only custom she knew, and to her it had no strangeness; though it seemed oddly anticipative to Clare till he saw how normal a thing she, in common with all the other dairy-folk, regarded it. Thus, during this October month of wonderful afternoons they roved along the meads by creeping paths which followed the brinks of trickling tributary brooks, hopping across by little wooden bridges to the other side and back again. They were never out of the sound of some purling weir, whose buzz accompanied their own murmuring, while the beams of the sun, almost as horizontal as the mead itself, formed a pollen of radiance over the landscape. They saw tiny blue fogs in the shadows of trees and hedges, all the time that there was bright sunshine elsewhere. The sun was so near the ground, and the sward so flat, that the shadows of Clare and Tess would stretch a quarter of a mile ahead of them, like two long fingers pointing afar to where the green alluvial reaches abutted against the sloping sides of the vale.

ANGEL CLARE REFLECTS

ANGEL CLARE thought of Tess as she had appeared on the day of the wedding. How her eyes had lingered upon him ; how she had hung upon his words as if they were a god's ! And during the terrible evening over the hearth, when her simple soul uncovered itself to his, how pitiful her face had looked by the rays of the fire, in her inability to realize that his love and protection could possibly be withdrawn.

Thus from being her critic he grew to be her advocate. Cynical things he had uttered to himself about her ; but no man can be a cynic and live ; and he withdrew them. The mistake of expressing them had arisen from his allowing himself to be influenced by general principles to the disregard of the particular instance.

But the reasoning is somewhat musty ; lovers and husbands have gone over the ground before to-day. Clare had been harsh towards her ; there is no doubt of it. Men are too often harsh with women they love or have loved ; women with men. And yet these harshnesses are tenderness itself when compared with the universal harshness out of which they grow ; the harshness of the position towards the tem-

perament, of the means towards the aims,
of to-day towards yesterday, of hereafter
towards to-day.

UNKNOWING

WHEN, soul in soul reflected,
We breathed an æthered air,
When we neglected
All things elsewhere,
And left the friendly friendless
To keep our love aglow,
We deemed it endless. . . .
—We did not know !

When, by mad passion goaded,
We planned to hie away,
But, unforeboded,
The storm-shafts gray
So heavily down-pattered
That none could forthward go,
Our lives seemed shattered. . . .
—We did not know !

When I found you, helpless lying,
And you waived my deep misprise
And swore me, dying,
In phantom-guise
To wing to me when grieving,
And touch away my woe,
We kissed, believing. . . .
—We did not know !

But though, your powers outreckoning,
You hold you dead and dumb,
Or scorn my beckoning,
And will not come ;
And I say, ' 'Twere mood ungainly
To store her memory so : '
I say it vainly—
I feel and know !

TESS DURBEYFIELD'S OLD HOME

ANGEL CLARE . . . entered on foot the region wherein was the spot of his dear Tess's birth. It was as yet too early in the year for much colour to appear in the gardens and foliage ; the so-called spring was but winter overlaid with a thin coat of greenness, and it was of a parcel with his expectations. The house in which Tess had passed the years of her childhood was now inhabited by another family who had never known her. The new residents were in the garden, taking as much interest in their own doings as if the homestead had never passed its primal time in conjunction with the histories of others, beside which the histories of these were but as a tale that is told. They walked about the garden paths with thoughts of their own concerns entirely uppermost, bringing their actions at every moment into jarring collision with

the dim figures behind them, talking as though the time when Tess lived there were not one whit intenser in story than now. Even the spring birds sang over their heads as if they thought there was nobody missing in particular.

TESS'S LAMENT

I WOULD that folk forgot me quite,
 Forgot me quite !
I would that I could shrink from sight,
 And no more see the sun.
Would it were time to say farewell,
To claim my nook, to need my knell,
Time for them all to stand and tell
 Of my day's work as done.

Ah ! dairy where I lived so long,
 I lived so long ;
Where I would rise up stanch and strong,
 And lie down hopefully.
'Twas there within the chimney-seat
He watched me to the clock's slow beat—
Loved me, and learnt to call me sweet,
 And whispered words to me.

And now he's gone ; and now he's gone ; . . .
 And now he's gone !
The flowers we potted p'rhaps are thrown
 To rot upon the farm.

And where we had our supper-fire
May now grow nettle, dock, and briar,
And all the place be mould and mire
So cozy once and warm.

And it was I who did it all,
Who did it all ;
'Twas I who made the blow to fall
On him who thought no guile.
Well, it is finished—past, and he
Has left me to my misery,
And I must take my Cross on me
For wronging him awhile.

How gay we looked that day we wed,
That day we wed !
' May joy be with ye !' all o'm said
A-standing by the durn.
I wonder what they say o's now,
And if they know my lot ; and how
She feels who milks my favourite cow,
And takes my place at churn !

It wears me out to think of it,
To think of it ;
I cannot bear my fate as writ,
I'd have my life unbe ;
Would turn my memory to a blot,
Make every relic of me rot,
My doings be as they were not,
And what they've brought to me !

WINTONCESTER : TESS'S TRAGICAL END

THE city of Wintoncester, that fine old city, aforetime capital of Wessex, lay amidst its convex and concave downlands in all the brightness and warmth of a July morning. The gabled brick, tile, and freestone houses had almost dried off for the season their integument of lichen, the streams in the meadows were low, and in the sloping High Street, from the West Gateway to the mediæval cross, and from the mediæval cross to the bridge, that leisurely dusting and sweeping was in progress which usually ushers in an old-fashioned market-day.

From the western gate aforesaid the highway, as every Wintoncestrian knows, ascends a long and regular incline of the exact length of a measured mile, leaving the houses gradually behind. Up this road from the precincts of the city two persons were walking rapidly, as if unconscious of the trying ascent—unconscious through preoccupation and not through buoyancy. They had emerged upon this road through a narrow barred wicket in a high wall a little lower down. They seemed anxious to get out of the sight of the houses and of their kind, and this road appeared to offer the quickest

means of doing so. Though they were young they walked with bowed heads, which gait of grief the sun's rays smiled on pitilessly.

One of the pair was Angel Clare, the other a tall budding creature—half girl, half woman—a spiritualized image of Tess, slighter than she, but with the same beautiful eyes—Clare's sister-in-law, 'Liza-Lu. Their pale faces seemed to have shrunk to half their natural size. They moved on hand-in-hand, and never spoke a word, the drooping of their heads being that of Giotto's 'Two Apostles.'

When they had nearly reached the top of the great West Hill the clocks in the town struck eight. Each gave a start at the notes, and, walking onward yet a few steps, they reached the first milestone, standing whitely on the green margin of the grass, and backed by the down, which here was open to the road. They entered upon the turf, and, impelled by a force which seemed to overrule their will, suddenly stood still, turned, and waited in paralyzed suspense beside the stone.

The prospect from this summit was almost unlimited. In the valley beneath lay the city they had just left, its more prominent buildings showing as in an isometric drawing—among them the

broad cathedral tower, with its Norman windows and immense length of aisle and nave, the spires of St. Thomas's, the pinnacled tower of the College, and, more to the right, the tower and gables of the ancient hospice, where to this day the pilgrim may receive his dole of bread and ale. Behind the city swept the rotund upland of St. Catherine's Hill; further off, landscape beyond landscape, till the horizon was lost in the radiance of the sun hanging above it.

Against these far stretches of country rose, in front of the other city edifices, a large red-brick building, with level gray roofs, and rows of short barred windows bespeaking captivity, the whole contrasting greatly by its formalism with the quaint irregularities of the Gothic erections. It was somewhat disguised from the road in passing it by yews and evergreen oaks, but it was visible enough up here. The wicket from which the pair had lately emerged was in the wall of this structure. From the middle of the building an ugly flat-topped octagonal tower ascended against the east horizon, and viewed from this spot, on its shady side and against the light, it seemed the one blot on the city's beauty. Yet it was with this blot, and not with the beauty, that the two gazers were concerned.

Upon the cornice of the tower a tall staff was fixed. Their eyes were riveted on it. A few minutes after the hour had struck something moved slowly up the staff, and extended itself upon the breeze. It was a black flag.

'Justice' was done, and the President of the Immortals (in Æschylean phrase) had ended his sport with Tess. And the D'Urberville knights and dames slept on in their tombs unknowing. The two speechless gazers bent themselves down to the earth, as if in prayer, and remained thus a long time, absolutely motionless: the flag continued to wave silently. As soon as they had strength they arose, joined hands again, and went on.

MICHAEL HENCHARD SELLS HIS WIFE

'FOR my part I don't see why men who have got wives, and don't want 'em, shouldn't get rid of 'em as these gipsy fellows do their old horses,' said the man in the tent. 'Why shouldn't they put 'em up and sell 'em by auction to men who are in want of such articles? Hey? Why, begad, I'd sell mine this minute if anybody would buy her!' . . .

A quarter of an hour later the man, who had gone on lacing his furmity more and

more heavily, though he was either so strong-minded or such an intrepid toper that he still appeared fairly sober, recurred to the old strain, as in a musical fantasy the instrument fetches up the original theme.

‘Here—I am waiting to know about this offer of mine. The woman is no good to me. Who’ll have her?’ . . .

The woman looked on the ground, as if she maintained her position by a supreme effort of will.

‘Five shillings,’ said someone, at which there was a laugh.

‘No insults,’ said the husband. ‘Who’ll say a guinea?’

Nobody answered; and the female dealer in stay-laces interposed.

‘Behave yerself moral, good man, for Heaven’s love! Ah, what a cruelty is the poor soul married to! Bed and board is dear at some figures, ’pon my ’vation ’tis!’

‘Set it higher, auctioneer,’ said the trusser.

‘Two guineas!’ said the auctioneer; and no one replied.

‘If they don’t take her for that, in ten seconds they’ll have to give more,’ said the husband.

‘Very well. Now, auctioneer, add another.’

‘ Three guineas — going for three guineas !’ said the rheumy man.

‘ No bid ?’ said the husband. ‘ Good Lord, why she’s cost me fifty times the money, if a penny. Go on.’

‘ Four guineas !’ cried the auctioneer.

‘ I’ll tell ye what—I won’t sell her for less than five,’ said the husband, bringing down his fist so that the basins danced. ‘ I’ll sell her for five guineas to any man that will pay me the money, and treat her well ; and he shall have her for ever, and never hear aught o’ me. But she shan’t go for less. Now then—five guineas—and she’s yours. Susan, you agree ?’

She bowed her head with absolute indifference.

‘ Five guineas,’ said the auctioneer, ‘ or she’ll be withdrawn. Do anybody give it ? The last time. Yes or no ?’

‘ Yes,’ said a loud voice from the doorway.

All eyes were turned. Standing in the triangular opening which formed the door of the tent was a sailor, who, unobserved by the rest, had arrived there within the last two or three minutes. A dead silence followed his affirmation.

‘ You say you do ?’ asked the husband, staring at him.

‘ I say so,’ replied the sailor.

'Saying is one thing, and paying is another. Where's the money?'

The sailor hesitated a moment, looking anew at the woman, came in, unfolded five crisp pieces of paper, and threw them down upon the table-cloth. They were Bank-of-England notes for five pounds. Upon the face of this he clinked down the shillings severally—one, two, three, four, five. . . .

'Now,' said the woman, breaking the silence, so that her low dry voice sounded quite loud, 'before you go further, Michael, listen to me. If you touch that money, I and this girl go with the man. Mind, it is a joke no longer.'

'A joke? Of course it is not a joke!' shouted her husband, his resentment rising at her suggestion. 'I take the money: the sailor takes you. That's plain enough. It has been done elsewhere—and why not here?'

''Tis quite on the understanding that the young woman is willing,' said the sailor blandly. 'I wouldn't hurt her feelings for the world.'

'Faith, nor I,' said her husband. 'But she is willing, provided she can have the child.' . . .

'That you swear?' said the sailor to her.

'I do,' said she, after glancing at her

husband's face and seeing no repentance there.

· 'Very well, she shall have the child, and the bargain's complete,' said the trusser.

He took the sailor's notes and deliberately folded them, and put them with the shillings in a high remote pocket, with an air of finality.

The sailor looked at the woman and smiled.

'Come along!' he said kindly. 'The little one too—the more the merrier!' She paused for an instant, with a close glance at him. Then dropping her eyes again, and saying nothing, she took up the child and followed him as he made towards the door. On reaching it, she turned, and pulling off her wedding-ring, flung it across the booth in the hay-trusser's face.

'Mike,' she said, 'I've lived with thee a couple of years, and had nothing but temper! Now I'm no more to 'ee; I'll try my luck elsewhere. 'Twill be better for me and the child, both. So good-bye!'

Seizing the sailor's arm with her right hand, and mounting the little girl on her left, she went out of the tent sobbing bitterly.

MICHAEL HENCHARD'S VOW

MICHAEL HENCHARD shouldered his basket and moved on, casting his eyes inquisitively round upon the landscape as he walked, and at the distance of three or four miles perceived the roofs of a village and the tower of a church. . . . He reached the church without observation, and the door being only latched, he entered. The hay-trusser deposited his basket by the font, went up the nave till he reached the altar-rails, and opening the gate, entered the sacrarium, where he seemed to feel a sense of strangeness for a moment ; then he knelt upon the footpace. Dropping his head upon the clamped book which lay on the Communion-table, he said aloud—

‘ I, Michael Henchard, on this morning of the sixteenth of September, do take an oath here in this solemn place that I will avoid all strong liquors for the space of twenty years to come, being a year for every year that I have lived. And this I swear upon the book before me ; and may I be strook dumb, blind, and helpless, if I break this my oath !’

When he had said it and kissed the big book, the hay-trusser arose, and seemed relieved at having made a start in a new direction. . . . Then he started on the search for his wife and child.

THE VOW : TWENTY YEARS AFTER

HENCHARD underwent a moral change. It resulted in his significantly saying every now and then, in tones of recklessness, 'Only a fortnight more!'—'Only a dozen days!' and so forth, lessening his figures day by day.

'Why d'ye say only a dozen days?' asked Solomon Longways as he worked beside Henchard in the granary weighing oats.

'Because in twelve days I shall be released from my oath.'

'What oath?'

'The oath to drink no spirituous liquid. In twelve days it will be twenty years since I swore it, and then I mean to enjoy myself, please God!' . . .

At this date there prevailed in Casterbridge a convivial custom—scarcely recognized as such, yet none the less established. On the afternoon of every Sunday a large contingent of the Casterbridge journeymen—steady church-goers and sedate characters—having attended service, filed from the church doors across the way to the Three Mariners Inn. The rear was usually brought up by the choir, with their bass-viols, fiddles, and flutes under their arms. . . . The conversa-

tion was not the conversation of week-days, but a thing altogether finer in point and higher in tone. They invariably discussed the sermon, dissecting it, weighing it, as above or below the average—the general tendency being to regard it as a scientific feat or performance which had no relation to their own lives, except as between critics and the thing criticized. The bass-viol player and the clerk usually spoke with more authority than the rest on account of their official connection with the preacher.

Now the Three Mariners was the inn chosen by Henchard as the place for closing his long term of dramless years. He had so timed his entry as to be well established in the large room by the time the forty church-goers entered to their customary cups. The flush upon his face proclaimed at once that the vow of twenty years had lapsed, and the era of recklessness begun anew. He was seated on a small table, drawn up to the side of the massive oak board reserved for the churchmen, a few of whom nodded to him as they took their places, and said, 'How be ye, Mr. Henchard? Quite a stranger here.'

Henchard did not take the trouble to reply for a few moments, and his eyes rested on his stretched-out legs and boots.

‘Yes,’ he said at length; ‘that’s true. I’ve been down in spirit for weeks; some of ye know the cause. I am better now; but not quite serene. I want you fellows of the choir to strike up a tune; and what with that and this brew of Stannidge’s, I am in hopes of getting altogether out of my minor key.’

‘With all my heart,’ said the first fiddle. ‘We’ve let back our strings, that’s true; but we can soon pull ’em up again. Sound A, neighbours, and give the man a stave.’

‘I don’t care a curse what the words be,’ said Henchard. ‘Hymns, ballets, or rantipole rubbish; the Rogue’s March or the cherubim’s warble—’tis all the same to me if ’tis good harmony, and well put out.’

‘Well—heh, heh—it may be we can do that, and not a man among us that have sat in the gallery less than twenty year,’ said the leader of the band. ‘As ’tis Sunday, neighbours, suppose we raise the Fourth Psa’am, to Samuel Wakely’s tune, as improved by me?’

‘Hang Samuel Wakely’s tune, as improved by thee!’ said Henchard. ‘Chuck across one of your psalters—old Wiltshire is the only tune worth singing—the psalm-tune that would make my blood ebb and flow like the sea when I was a steady

chap. I'll find some words to fit en.' He took one of the psalters, and began turning over the leaves. . . . 'Now then,' he said, 'Psalm the Hundred-and-Ninth, to the tune of Wiltshire: verses ten to fifteen. I gi'e ye the words:

“ His seed shall orphans be, his wife
A widow plunged in grief;
His vagrant children beg their bread
Where none can give relief. . . .”

'I know the Psa'am—I know the Psa'am!' said the leader hastily; 'but I would as lief not sing it. 'Twasn't made for singing. We chose it once when the gipsy stole the pa'son's mare, thinking to please him, but he was quite upset. Whatever Servant David were thinking about when he made a Psalm that nobody can sing without disgracing himself, I can't fathom! Now then, the Fourth Psalm, to Samuel Wakely's tune, as improved by me.'

'Od seize your sauce—I tell ye to sing the Hundred-and-Ninth, to Wiltshire, and sing it you shall!' roared Henchard. 'Not a single one of all the droning crew of ye goes out of this room till that Psalm is sung!' He slipped off the table, seized the poker, and going to the door placed his back against it. 'Now then, go ahead, if you don't wish to have your oust pates broke!'

‘ Don’t ’ee, don’t ’ee take on so !—As ’tis the Sabbath-day, and ’tis Servant David’s words and not ours, perhaps we don’t mind for once, hey ?’ said one of the terrified choir, looking round upon the rest. So the instruments were tuned and the comminatory verses sung.

‘ Thank ye, thank ye,’ said Henchard in a softened voice, his eyes growing downcast, and his manner that of a man much moved by the strains. ‘ Don’t you blame David,’ he went on in low tones, shaking his head without raising his eyes. ‘ He knew what he was about when he wrote that ! . . . If I could afford it, be hanged if I wouldn’t keep a church choir at my own expense to play and sing to me at these low, dark times of my life. But the bitter thing is, that when I was rich I didn’t need what I could have, and now I be poor I can’t have what I need !’

While they paused, Lucetta and Farfrae passed. . . . ‘ There’s the man we’ve been singing about,’ said Henchard.

The players and singers turned their heads, and saw his meaning. ‘ Heaven forbid !’ said the bass-player.

‘ ’Tis the man,’ repeated Henchard doggedly.

‘ Then if I’d known,’ said the performer on the clarionet solemnly, ‘ that ’twas meant for a living man, nothing should

have drawn out of my wynd-pipe the breath for that Psalm, so help me !'

'Nor from mine,' said the first singer. 'But, thought I, as it was made so long ago, and so far away, perhaps there isn't much in it, so I'll oblige a neighbour ; for there's nothing to be said against the tune.'

'Ah, my boys, you've sung it,' cried Henchard triumphantly. 'As for him, it was partly by his songs that he got over me, and heaved me out. . . . I could double him up like that—and yet I don't.' He laid the poker across his knee, bent it as if it were a twig, flung it down, and came away from the door.

WIVES IN THE SERE

I

NEVER a careworn wife but shows,
If a joy suffuse her,
Something beautiful to those
Patient to peruse her,
Some one charm the world unknowns
Precious to a muser,
Haply what, ere years were foes,
Moved her mate to choose her.

II

But, be it a hint of rose
That an instant hues her,
Or some early light or pose
Wherewith thought renews her—
Seen by him at full, ere woes
Practised to abuse her—
Sparely comes it, swiftly goes,
Time again subdues her.

DONALD FARFRAE AND ELIZABETH-JANE: THE MYSTERIOUS LETTERS

ONE day, when arrangements were in progress for getting home corn from one of the farms, Elizabeth-Jane received a note by hand, asking her to oblige the writer by coming at once to a granary on Durnover Hill. . . . The granary was just within the farmyard, and stood on stone straddles, high enough for persons to walk under. The gates were open, but nobody was within. However, she entered and waited. Presently she saw a figure approaching the gate—that of Donald Farfrae. . . . He, too, was plainly expecting someone; could it be herself? if so, why? In a few minutes he looked at his watch, and then pulled out a note, a duplicate of the one she had herself received.

The situation began to be very awkward, and the longer she waited the more awkward it became. To emerge from a door just above his head and descend the ladder, and show she had been in hiding there, would look so very foolish, that she still waited on. A winnowing machine stood close beside her, and to relieve her suspense she gently moved the handle; whereupon a cloud of wheat-husks flew out into her face, and covered her clothes and bonnet, and stuck into the fur of her victorine. He must have heard the slight movement, for he looked up, and then ascended the steps.

'Ah—it's Miss Newson,' he said as soon as he could see into the granary. 'I didn't know you were there. I have kept the appointment, and am at your service.'

'O Mr. Farfrae,' she faltered; 'so have I. But I didn't know it was you who wished to see me, otherwise I——'

'I wished to see you? Oh no—at least, that is, I am afraid there may be a mistake.'

'Didn't you ask me to come here? Didn't you write this?' Elizabeth held out the note.

'No. Indeed, at no hand would I have thought of it! And for you—didn't you ask me? This is not your writing?' And he held up his.

‘ By no means.’

‘ And is that really so! Then it’s somebody wanting to see us both. Perhaps we would do well to wait a little longer.’

Acting on this consideration they lingered, Elizabeth - Jane’s face being arranged to an expression of preternatural composure, and the young Scot, at every footstep in the street without, looking from under the granary to see if the passer were about to enter and declare himself their summoner. They watched individual drops of rain creeping down the thatch of the opposite rick—straw after straw—till they reached the bottom; but nobody came, and the granary roof began to drip.

‘ The person is not likely to be coming,’ said Farfrae. ‘ It’s a trick perhaps, and if so, it’s a great pity to waste our time like this, and so much to be done.’

‘ ’Tis a great liberty,’ said Elizabeth.

‘ It’s true, Miss Newson. We’ll hear news of this some day, depend on’t, and who it was that did it. I wouldn’t stand for it hindering myself; but you, Miss Newson’——

‘ I don’t mind—much,’ she replied.

‘ Neither do I.’

THE WRITER OF THE LETTERS

MRS. HENCHARD was weakening visibly. She could not go out of doors any more. . . . Elizabeth-Jane sat up with her mother to the utmost of her strength night after night. To learn to take the universe seriously there is no quicker way than to watch—to be a 'waker,' as the country-people call it. Between the hours at which the last toss-pot went by and the first sparrow shook himself, the silence in Casterbridge—barring the rare sound of the watchman—was broken in Elizabeth's ear only by the time-piece in the bedroom ticking frantically against the clock on the stairs; ticking harder and harder till it seemed to clang like a gong; and all this while the subtle-souled girl asking herself why she was born, why sitting in a room, and blinking at the candle; why things around her had taken the shape they wore in preference to every other possible shape. Why they stared at her so helplessly, as if waiting for the touch of some wand that should release them from terrestrial constraint; what that chaos called consciousness, which spun in her at this moment like a top, tended to, and began in. Her eyes fell together; she was awake, yet she was asleep.

A word from her mother roused her. Without preface, and as the continuation of a scene already progressing in her mind, Mrs. Henchard said : ' You remember the note sent to you and Mr. Farfrae—asking you to meet some one in Durnover Barton—and that you thought it was a trick to make fools of you ?'

' Yes.'

' It was not to make fools of you—it was done to bring you together. 'Twas I did it.'

' Why ?' said Elizabeth, with a start.

' I—wanted you to marry Mr. Farfrae.'

' O mother !' Elizabeth - Jane bent down her head so much that she looked quite into her own lap. But as her mother did not go on, she said, ' What reason ?'

' Well, I had a reason. 'Twill out one day. I wish it could have been in my time ! But there—nothing is as you wish it !' . . .

Some little time later on, Farfrae was passing Henchard's house on a Sunday morning, when he observed that the blinds were all down. He rang the bell so softly that it only sounded a single full note and a small one ; and then he was informed that Mrs. Henchard was dead—just dead—that very hour.

At the town-pump there were gathered

when he passed a few old inhabitants, who came there for water whenever they had, as at present, spare time to fetch it, because it was purer from that original fount than from their own wells. Mrs. Cuxsom, who had been standing there for an indefinite time with her pitcher, was describing the incidents of Mrs. Hinchard's death, as she had learnt them from the nurse.

' And she was as white as marble-stone,' said Mrs. Cuxsom. ' And likewise such a thoughtful woman, too—ah, poor soul—that a' minded every little thing that wanted tending. " Yes," says she, " when I'm gone, and my last breath's blowed, look in the top drawer o' the chest in the back room by the window, and you'll find all my coffin clothes; a piece of flannel—that's to put under me, and the little piece is to put under my head; and my new stockings for my feet—they are folded alongside, and all my other things. And there's four ounce pennies, the heaviest I could find, a-tied up in bits of linen for weights—two for my right eye and two for my left," she said. " And when you've used 'em, and my eyes don't open no more, bury the pennies, good souls, and don't ye go spending 'em, for I shouldn't like it. And open the windows as soon as I am carried out, and make it

as cheerful as you can for Elizabeth-Jane.” ’

‘ Ah, poor heart !’

HER DEATH AND AFTER

’T WAS a death-bed summons, and forth
I went
By the way of the Western Wall, so drear
On that winter night, and sought a gate—
The home, by Fate,
Of one I had long held dear.

And there, as I paused by her tenement,
And the trees shed on me their rime and
hoar,
I thought of the man who had left her
lone—
Him who made her his own
When I loved her, long before.

The rooms within had the piteous shine
That home-things wear when there’s
aught amiss ;
From the stairway floated the rise and fall
Of an infant’s call,
Whose birth had brought her to this.

Her life was the price she would pay for
that whine—
For a child by the man she did not love.
‘ But let that rest for ever,’ I said,
And bent my tread
To the chamber up above.

She took my hand in her thin white own,
And smiled her thanks—though nigh too
weak—

And made them a sign to leave us there,
Then faltered, ere
She could bring herself to speak.

‘ ’Twas to see you before I go—he’ll con-
done

Such a natural thing now my time’s not
much—

When Death is so near it hustles hence
All passioned sense

Between woman and man as such !

‘ My husband is absent. As heretofore
The City detains him. But, in truth,
He has not been kind. . . . I will speak
no blame,

But—the child is lame ;

O, I pray she may reach his ruth !

‘ Forgive past days—I can say no more—
Maybe if we’d wedded you’d now repine! . . .
But I treated you ill. I was punished.
Farewell !

—Truth shall I tell ?

Would the child were yours and mine !

‘ As a wife I was true. But, such my
unease

That, could I insert a deed back in Time,
I’d make her yours, to secure your care ;

And the scandal bear,

And the penalty for the crime !’

—When I had left, and the swinging trees
Rang above me, as lauding her candid say,
Another was I. Her words were enough :
 Came smooth, came rough,
I felt I could live my day.

Next night she died ; and her obsequies
In the Field of Tombs, by the Via re-
 nowned,
Had her husband's heed. His tendance
 spent,
 I often went
And pondered by her mound.

All that year and the next year whiled,
And I still went thitherward in the gloam ;
But the Town forgot her and her nook,
 And her husband took
Another Love to his home.

And the rumour flew that the lame lone
 child
Whom she wished for its safety child of
 mine,
Was treated ill when offspring came
 Of the new-made dame,
And marked a more vigorous line.

A smarter grief within me wrought
Than even at loss of her so dear ;
Dead the being whose soul my soul
 suffused,
 Her child ill-used,
I helpless to interfere !

One eve as I stood at my spot of thought
 In the white-stoned Garth, brooding thus
 her wrong,
 Her husband neared ; and to shun his view
 By her hallowed mew
 I went from the tombs among
 To the Cirque of the Gladiators which
 faced—
 That haggard mark of Imperial Rome,
 Whose Pagan echoes mock the chime
 Of our Christian time :
 It was void, and I inward clomb.
 Scarce night the sun's gold touch displaced
 From the vast Rotund and the neigh-
 bouring dead
 When her husband followed ; bowed ;
 half-passed,
 With lip upcast ;
 Then, halting, sullenly said :
 ' It is noised that you visit my first wife's
 tomb.
 Now, I gave her an honoured name to bear
 While living, when dead. So I've claim
 to ask
 By what right you task
 My patience by vigiling there ?
 ' There's decency even in death, I assume ;
 Preserve it, sir, and keep away ;
 For the mother of my first-born you
 Show mind undue !
 —Sir, I've nothing more to say.'

A desperate stroke discerned I then—
God pardon—or pardon not—the lie ;
She had sighed that she wished (lest the
child should pine

Of slights) 'twere mine,
So I said : ' But the father I.

' That you thought it yours is the way of
men ;

But I won her troth long ere your day :
You learnt how, in dying, she summoned
me ?

'Twas in fealty.

—Sir, I've nothing more to say,

' Save that, if you'll hand me my little
maid,

I'll take her, and rear her, and spare you toil.
Think it more than a friendly act none can ;

I'm a lonely man,

While you've a large pot to boil.

' If not, and you'll put it to ball or blade—
To-night, to-morrow night, anywhen—
I'll meet you here. . . . But think of it,
And in season fit

Let me hear from you again.'

—Well, I went away, hoping ; but nought
I heard

Of my stroke for the child, till there
greeted me

A little voice that one day came
To my window-frame
And babbled innocently :

' My father who's not my own, sends word
I'm to stay here, sir, where I belong !'

Next a writing came: ' Since the child was
the fruit

Of your lawless suit,
Pray take her, to right a wrong.'

And I did. And I gave the child my love,
And the child loved me, and estranged us
none.

But compunctions loomed ; for I'd harmed
the dead

By what I'd said
For the good of the living one.

—Yet though, God wot, I am sinner
enough,

And unworthy the woman who drew me
so,

Perhaps this wrong for her darling's good
She forgives, or would,
If only she could know !

THE TRANTER'S

IT was a long low cottage with a hipped
roof of thatch, having dormer win-
dows breaking up into the eaves, a chim-
ney standing in the middle of the ridge
and another at the further end. The
window-shutters were not yet closed, and
the fire- and candle-light within radiated
forth upon the thick bushes of box and

laurestinus growing in clumps outside, and upon the bare boughs of several codlin-trees hanging about in various distorted shapes, the result of early training as espaliers combined with careless climbing into their boughs in later years. The walls of the dwelling were for the most part covered with creepers, though these were rather back from the doorway—a feature which was worn and scratched by much passing in and out, giving it by day the appearance of an old keyhole. Light streamed through the cracks and joints of a wooden shed at the end of the cottage, a sight which nourished a fancy that the purpose of the erection must be rather to veil bright attractions than to shelter unsightly necessities. The noise of a beetle and wedges and the splintering of wood was periodically heard from this direction ; and at some little distance from the house a steady regular munching and the occasional scurr of a rope betokened a stable, and horses feeding within it. . . . Through the open doorway of a small inner room on the left hand, of a character between pantry and cellar, was Dick Dewy's father Reuben, by vocation a ' tranter,' or irregular carrier. He was a stout florid man about forty years of age, who surveyed people up and down, when first making their acquaintance, and

generally smiled at the horizon or other distant object during conversations with friends, walking about with a steady sway, and turning out his toes very considerably. . . . A series of dull thuds, that had been heard through the chimney-back for some time past, now ceased ; and after the light of a lantern had passed the window and made wheeling rays upon the ceiling inside, the eldest of the Dewy family appeared.

THE DANCE AT TRANTER DEWY'S

DURING the afternoon unusual activity was seen to prevail about the precincts of tranter Dewy's house. The flagstone floor was swept of dust, and a sprinkling of the finest yellow sand from the innermost stratum of the adjoining sand-pit lightly scattered thereupon. Then were produced large knives and forks, which had been shrouded in darkness and grease since the last occasion of the kind, and bearing upon their sides, 'Shear-steel, warranted,' in such emphatic letters of assurance, that the warranter's name was not required as further proof, and not given. The key was left in the tap of the cider-barrel, instead of being carried in a pocket. And finally the tranter had to stand up in the

room and let his wife wheel him round like a turnstile, to see if anything discreditable was visible in his appearance. . . .

'Before we begin,' said the tranter, 'my proposal is, that 'twould be a right and proper plan for every martel man in the dance to pull off his jacket, considering the heat.'

'Such low notions as you have, Reuben! Nothing but strip will go down with you when you are a-dancing. Such a hot man as he is!'

'Well, now, look here, my sonnies,' he argued to his wife, whom he often addressed in the plural masculine for convenience of epithet merely; 'I don't see that. You dance and get as hot as fire; therefore you lighten your clothes. Isn't that nater and reason for gentle and simple? If I strip by myself and not necessary,' tis rather pot-housey I own; but if we stout chaps strip one and all, why, 'tis the native manners of the country, which no man can gainsay? Hey—what did you say, my sonnies?'

'Strip we will!' said the three other heavy men who were in the dance; and their coats were accordingly taken off and hung in the passage, whence the four sufferers from heat soon reappeared, marching in close column, with flapping

shirt-sleeves, and having, as common to them all, a general glance of being now a match for any man or dancer in England or Ireland. Dick Dewy, fearing to lose ground in Fancy Day's good opinion, retained his coat like the rest of the thinner men ; and Mr. Shiner did the same from superior knowledge.

And now a further phase of revelry had disclosed itself. It was the time of night when a guest may write his name in the dust upon the tables and chairs, and a bluish mist pervades the atmosphere, becoming a distinct halo round the candles ; when people's nostrils, wrinkles, and crevices in general, seem to be getting gradually plastered up ; when the very fiddlers as well as the dancers get red in the face, the dancers having advanced further still towards incandescence, and entered the cadaverous phase ; the fiddlers no longer sit down, but kick back their chairs and saw mildly at the strings, with legs firmly spread and eyes closed, regardless of the visible world. Again and again did Dick share his Love's hand with another man, and wheel round ; then, more delightfully, promenade in a circle with her all to himself, his arm holding her waist more firmly each time, and his elbow getting further and further behind her back, till the distance reached was

rather noticeable ; and, most blissful, swinging to places shoulder to shoulder, her breath curling round his neck like a summer zephyr that had strayed from its proper date. Threading the couples one by one they reached the bottom, when there arose in Dick's mind a minor misery lest the tune should end before they could work their way to the top again, and have anew the same exciting run down through. Dick's feelings on actually reaching the top in spite of his doubts were supplemented by a mortal fear that the fiddling might even stop at this supreme moment ; which prompted him to convey a stealthy whisper to the far-gone musicians, to the effect that they were not to leave off till he and his partner had reached the bottom of the dance once more, which remark was replied to by the nearest of those convulsed and quivering men by a private nod to the anxious young man between two semiquavers of the tune, and a simultaneous 'All right, ay, ay,' without opening the eyes. Fancy was now held so closely that Dick and she were practically one person. The room became to Dick like a picture in a dream ; all that he could remember of it afterwards being the look of the fiddlers going to sleep, as humming-tops sleep, by increasing their motion and hum, together

with the figures of grandfather James and old Simon Crumpler sitting by the chimney-corner, talking and nodding in dumb-show, and beating the air to their emphatic sentences like people near a threshing-machine.

The dance ended. 'Piph-h-h-h!' said tranter Dewy, blowing out his breath in the very finest stream of vapour that a man's lips could form. 'A regular tightener, that one, sonnies!' He wiped his forehead, and went to the cider-mug on the table.

THE WEDDING OF DICK DEWY AND FANCY DAY

IT is at that point in the development of the seasons when country people go to bed among nearly naked trees, and awake next morning among green ones; when the landscape appears embarrassed with the sudden weight and brilliancy of its leaves; when the night-jar comes and strikes up for the summer his tune of one note; when the apple-trees have bloomed, and the roads and orchards become spotted with fallen petals; when the faces of the delicate flowers are darkened, and their heads weighed down, by the throng of honey-bees, which increase their hum-

ming till humming is too mild a term for the all - pervading sound ; and when cuckoos, blackbirds, and sparrows, that have hitherto been merry and respectful neighbours, become noisy and persistent intimates.

The exterior of Geoffrey Day's house in Yalbury Wood appeared exactly as was usual at that season, but a frantic barking of the dogs at the back told of unwonted movements somewhere within. Inside the door the eyes beheld a gathering, which was a rarity indeed for the dwelling of the solitary keeper. . . .

Fancy was stationary upstairs, receiving her layers of clothes and adornments, and answering by short fragments of laughter which had more fidgetiness than mirth in them, remarks that were made from time to time by Mrs. Dewy and Mrs. Penny, who were assisting her at the toilet, Mrs. Day having pleaded a queerness in her head as a reason for shutting herself up in an inner bedroom for the whole morning. Mrs. Penny appeared with nine corkscrew curls on each side of her temples, and a back comb stuck upon her crown like a castle on a steep.

The conversation just now going on was concerning the banns, the last publication of which had been on the Sunday previous.

'And how did they sound?' Fancy subtly inquired.

'Very beautiful indeed,' said Mrs. Penny. 'I never heard any sound better.'

'But *how*?'

'O, *so* natural and elegant, didn't they, Reuben!' she cried, through the chinks of the unceiled floor, to the tranter downstairs.

'What's that?' said the tranter, looking up inquiringly at the floor above him for an answer.

'Didn't Dick and Fancy sound well when they were called home in church last Sunday?' came downwards again in Mrs. Penny's voice.

'Ay, that they did, my sonnies!—especially the first time. There was a terrible whispering piece of work in the congregation, wasn't there, naighbour Penny?' said the tranter, taking up the thread of conversation on his own account, and, in order to be heard in the room above, speaking very loud to Mr. Penny, who sat at the distance of two feet from him, or rather less.

'I never can mind seeing such a whispering as there was,' said Mr. Penny, also loudly, to the room above. 'And such sorrowful envy on the maidens' faces; really, I never zid such envy as there was!' . . .

'Hark! Who's that?' exclaimed a small pupil-teacher, who also assisted this morning, to her great delight. She ran half-way down the stairs, and peeped round the banister. 'O, you should, you should, you should!' she exclaimed, scrambling up to the room again.

'What?' said Fancy.

'See the bridesmaids! They've just a come! 'Tis wonderful, really! 'tis wonderful how muslin can be brought to it. There, they don't look a bit like themselves, but like some very rich sisters o' theirs that nobody knew they had!'

'Make 'em come up to me, make 'em come up!' cried Fancy ecstatically; and the four damsels appointed, namely, Miss Susan Dewy, Miss Bessie Dewy, Miss Vashti Sniff, and Miss Mercy Onmey, surged upstairs, and floated along the passage.

'I wish Dick would come!' was again the burden of Fancy.

The same instant a small twig and flower from the creeper outside the door flew in at the window, and a masculine voice said, 'Ready, Fancy dearest?'

'There he is, he is!' cried Fancy, tittering spasmodically, and breathing as it were for the first time that morning.

The bridesmaids crowded to the window and turned their heads in the direction

pointed out, at which motion eight earrings all swung as one:—not looking at Dick because they particularly wanted to see him, but with an important sense of their duty as obedient ministers of the will of that apotheosised being—the Bride.

‘He looks very taking!’ said Miss Vashti Sniff, a young lady who blushed cream-colour and wore yellow bonnet-ribbons.

Dick was advancing to the door in a painfully new coat of shining cloth, primrose-coloured waistcoat, hat of the same painful style of newness, and with an extra quantity of whiskers shaved off his face, and his hair cut to an unwonted shortness in honour of the occasion.

‘Now I’ll run down,’ said Fancy, looking at herself over her shoulder in the glass, and fitting off.

‘O Dick!’ she exclaimed, ‘I am so glad you are come! I knew you would, of course, but I thought, “Oh if you shouldn’t!”’

‘Not come, Fancy! Het or wet, blow or snow, here come I to-day! Why, what’s possessing your little soul? You never used to mind such things a bit.’

‘Ah, Mr. Dick, I hadn’t hoisted my colours and committed myself then!’ said Fancy.

' 'Tis a pity I can't marry the whole five of ye !' said Dick, surveying them all round.

' Heh-heh-heh !' laughed the four bridesmaids, and Fancy privately touched Dick and smoothed him down behind his shoulder, as if to assure herself that he was there in flesh and blood as her own property. . . .

They were now all ready for leaving the house, and began to form a procession in the following order : Fancy and her father, Dick and Susan Dewy, Nat Callcome and Vashti Sniff, Ted Waywood and Mercy Onmey, and Jimmy and Bessie Dewy. These formed the executive, and all appeared in strict wedding attire. Then came the tranter and Mrs. Dewy, and last of all Mr. and Mrs. Penny ;—the tranter conspicuous by his enormous gloves, size eleven and three-quarters, which appeared at a distance like boxing-gloves bleached, and sat rather awkwardly upon his brown hands ; this hall-mark of respectability having been set upon himself to-day (by Fancy's special request) for the first time in his life.

' The proper way is for the bridesmaids to walk together,' suggested Fancy.

' What ? 'Twas always young man and young woman, arm in crook, in my time !' said Geoffrey, astounded.

‘ And in mine !’ said the tranter.

‘ And in ours !’ said Mr. and Mrs. Penny.

‘ Never heard o’ such a thing as woman and woman !’ said old William ; who, with grandfather James and Mrs. Day, was to stay at home.

‘ Whichever way you and the company likes, my dear !’ said Dick, who, being on the point of securing his right to Fancy, seemed willing to renounce all other rights in the world with the greatest pleasure. The decision was left to Fancy.

‘ Well, I think I’d rather have it the way mother had it,’ she said, and the couples moved along under the trees, every man to his maid.

‘ Ah !’ said grandfather James to grandfather William as they retired, ‘ I wonder which she thinks most about, Dick or her wedding raiment !’

‘ Well, ’tis their nater,’ said grandfather William. ‘ Remember the words of the prophet Jeremiah : “ Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire ?” ’

Now among the dark perpendicular firs, like the shafted columns of a cathedral ; now through a hazel copse, matted with primroses and wild hyacinths ; now under broad beeches in bright young leaves, they threaded their way into the high road over Yalbury Hill, which dipped at that point directly into the village of

Fancy's parish ; and in the space of a quarter of an hour Fancy found herself to be Mrs. Richard Dewy, though, to her surprise, feeling no other than Fancy Day still.

AT A BRIDAL

WHEN you paced forth, to wait
maternity,

A dream of other offspring held my mind,
Compounded of us twain as Love designed;
Rare forms, that corporate now will never
be !

Should I, too, wed as slave to Mode's
decree,

And each thus found apart, of false desire,
A stolid line, whom no high aims will fire
As had fired ours could ever have mingled
we ;

And, grieved that lives so matched should
miscompose,

Each mourn the double waste ; and ques-
tion dare

To the Great Dame whence incarnation
flows,

Why those high-purposed children never
were :

What will she answer ? That she does
not care

If the race all such sovereign types un-
knows.

THE SEASONS OF HER YEAR

I

WINTER is white on turf and tree,
And birds are fled ;
But summer songsters pipe to me,
And petals spread,
For what I dreamt of secretly
His lips have said !

II

O 'tis a fine May morn, they say,
And blooms have blown ;
But wild and wintry is my day,
My birds make moan ;
For he who vowed leaves me to pay
Alone—alone !

SPRING IN WESSEX

THE morning of the confirmation was come. It was mid-May time, bringing with it weather not, perhaps, quite so blooming as that assumed to be natural to the month by the joyous poets of three hundred years ago ; but a very tolerable, well-wearing May, that the average rustic would willingly have compounded for in lieu of Mays occasionally fairer, but usually more foul.

Among the larger shrubs and flowers which composed the outworks of the Weland gardens, the lilac, the laburnum, and the guelder-rose, hung out their respective colours of purple, yellow, and white; whilst within these, belted round from every disturbing gale, rose the columbine, the peony, the larkspur, and the Solomon's seal. The animate things that moved amid this scene of colour were plodding bees, gadding butterflies, and numerous sauntering young feminine candidates for the impending confirmation, who, having gaily bedecked themselves for the ceremony, were enjoying their own appearance by walking about in twos and threes till it was time to start. . . .

From the north side of the nave smiled a host of girls, gaily uniform in dress, age, and a temporary repression of their natural tendency to 'skip like a hare over the meshes of good counsel.' Their white muslin dresses, their round white caps, from beneath whose borders hair-knots and curls of various shades of brown escaped upon their low shoulders, as if against their will, lighted up the dark pews and grey stone-work to an unwonted warmth and life. On the south side were the young men and boys,—heavy, angular, and massive, as indeed was rather necessary, considering what

they would have to bear at the hands of wind and weather before they returned to that mouldy nave for the last time.

A SPRING SCENE IN HINTOCK WOODS

SPRING weather came on rather suddenly, the unsealing of buds that had long been swollen accomplishing itself in the space of one warm night. The rush of sap in the veins of the trees could almost be heard. The flowers of late April took up a position unseen, and looked as if they had been blooming a long while, though there had been no trace of them the day before yesterday ; birds began not to mind getting wet. Indoor people said they had heard the nightingale, to which out-door people replied contemptuously that they had heard him a fortnight before. . . .

One day, book in hand, Fitzpiers went to a part of the wood where the trees were mainly oaks. It was a calm afternoon, and there was everywhere around that sign of great undertakings on the part of vegetable nature which is apt to fill reflective human beings who are not undertaking much themselves with a sudden uneasiness at the contrast. He heard in the distance a curious sound, something

like the quack of a duck, which, though it was common enough here about this time, was not common to him. Looking through the trees Fitzpiers soon perceived the origin of the noise. The barking season had just commenced, and what he had heard was the tear of the ripping-tool as it ploughed its way along the sticky parting between the trunk and the rind. . . . When he got nearer he recognized among the workmen John Upjohn, the two Timothys, and Robert Creedle, who probably had been 'lent' by Winterborne; Marty South also assisted. A milking-pail of cider stood near, a half-pint cup floating on it, with which they dipped and drank whenever they passed the pail.

Each tree doomed to the flaying process was first attacked by Upjohn. With a small bill-hook he carefully freed the collar of the tree from twigs and patches of moss which encrusted it to a height of a foot or two above the ground, an operation comparable to the 'little toilette' of the executioner's victim. After this it was barked in its erect position to a point as high as a man could reach. If a fine product of vegetable could ever be said to look ridiculous it was the case now, when the oak stood naked-legged, and as if ashamed, till the axe-man came

and cut a ring around it, and the two Timothys finished the work with the cross-cut saw.

As soon as it had fallen the barkers attacked it like locusts, and in a short time not a particle of rind was left on the trunk and larger limbs. Marty South was an adept at peeling the upper parts ; and there she stood encaged amid the mass of twigs and buds like a great bird, running her tool into the smallest branches, beyond the furthest points to which the skill and patience of the men enabled them to proceed—branches which, in their lifetime, had swayed high above the bulk of the wood, and caught the earliest rays of the sun and moon while the lower part of the forest was still in darkness.

ON A FINE MORNING

I

WHENCE comes Solace ?—Not from
seeing
What is doing, suffering, being,
Not from noting Life's conditions,
Nor from heeding Time's monitions ;
But in cleaving to the Dream,
And in gazing at the gleam
Whereby grey things golden seem.

II

Thus do I this heyday, holding
Shadows but as lights unfolding,
As no specious show this moment
With its irisèd embowment ;
 But as nothing other than
 Part of a benignant plan ;
 Proof that earth was made for man.

SUMMER IN WESSEX

THE July sun shone over Egdon and fired its crimson heather to scarlet. It was the one season of the year, and the one weather of the season, in which the heath was gorgeous. This flowering period represented the second or noon-tide division in the cycle of those superficial changes which alone were possible here ; it followed the green or young-fern period, representing the morn, and preceded the brown period, when the heath-bells and ferns would wear the russet tinges of evening ; to be in turn displaced by the dark hue of the winter period, representing night.

AN AUGUST SUNRISE

IT was a hazy sunrise in August. The denser nocturnal vapours, attacked by the warm beams, were dividing and

shrinking into isolated fleeces within hollows and coverts, where they waited till they should be dried away to nothing. The sun, on account of the mist, had a curious sentient, personal look, demanding the masculine pronoun for its adequate expression. His present aspect, coupled with the lack of all human forms in the scene, explained the old-time heliolatries in a moment. One could feel that a saner religion had never prevailed under the sky. The luminary was a golden-haired, beaming, mild-eyed, God-like creature, gazing down in the vigour and intentness of youth upon an earth that was brimming with interest for him. His light, a little later, broke through chinks of cottage shutters, throwing stripes like red-hot pokers upon cupboards, chests of drawers, and other furniture within ; and awaking harvesters who were not already astir.

But of all ruddy things that morning the brightest were two broad arms of painted wood, which rose from the margin of a yellow cornfield hard by Marlott village. They, with two others below, formed the revolving Maltese cross of the reaping-machine, which had been brought to the field on the previous evening to be ready for operations this day. The paint with which they were smeared,

intensified in hue by the sunlight, imparted to them a look of having been dipped in liquid fire.

IN THE HARVEST FIELD

THE reaping-machine left the fallen corn behind it in little heaps, each heap being of the quantity for a sheaf; and upon these the active binders in the rear laid their hands—mainly women, but some of them men. . . . But those of the other sex were the most interesting of this company of binders, by reason of the charm which is acquired by woman when she becomes part and parcel of outdoor nature, and is not merely an object set down therein as at ordinary times. A field-man is a personality afield; a field-woman is a portion of the field; she has somehow lost her own margin, imbibed the essence of her surrounding, and assimilated herself with it.

AN AUGUST MIDNIGHT

I

A SHADED lamp and a waving blind,
And the beat of a clock from a
distant floor :

On this scene enter—winged, horned, and
spined—

A longlegs, a moth, and a dumbledore ;
While 'mid my page there idly stands
A sleepy fly, that rubs its hands. . . .

II

Thus meet we five, in this still place,
At this point of time, at this point in
space.

—My guests parade my new-penned ink,
Or bang at the lamp-glass, whirl, and
sink.

'God's humblest, they!' I muse. Yet
why?

They know Earth-secrets that know not I.

A STAR IDYLL

GABRIEL OAK stood and carefully examined the sky, to ascertain the time of night from the altitudes of the stars. The Dog-star and Aldebaran, pointing to the restless Pleiades, were half way up the Southern sky, and between them hung Orion, which gorgeous constellation never burnt more vividly than now, as it swung itself forth above the rim of the landscape. Castor and Pollux with their quiet shine were almost on the meridian: the barren and gloomy Square of Pegasus was creeping round to the north-west; far away through

the plantation, Vega sparkled like a lamp suspended amid the leafless trees, and Cassiopeia's chair stood daintily poised on the uppermost boughs.

'One o'clock,' said Gabriel.

Being a man not without a frequent consciousness that there was some charm in this life he led, he stood still after looking at the sky as a useful instrument, and regarded it in an appreciative spirit, as a work of art superlatively beautiful. For a moment he seemed impressed with the speaking loneliness of the scene, or rather with the complete abstraction from all its compass of the sights and sounds of man. Human shapes, interferences, troubles, and joys were all as if they were not, and there seemed to be on the shaded hemisphere of the globe no sentient being save himself; he could fancy them all gone round to the sunny side. . . .

To find themselves utterly alone at night where company is desirable and expected makes some people fearful; but a case more trying by far to the nerves is to discover some mysterious companionship when intuition, sensation, memory, analogy, testimony, probability, induction—every kind of evidence in the logician's list—have united to persuade consciousness that it is quite in isolation.

THE STELLAR UNIVERSE

‘THE imaginary picture of the sky as the concavity of a dome whose base extends from horizon to horizon of our earth is grand, simply grand, and I wish I had never got beyond looking at it in that way. But the actual sky is a horror.’

‘A new view of our old friends, the stars,’ said Lady Constantine, smiling up at them.

‘But such an obviously true one!’ said Swithin St. Cleeve. ‘You would hardly think, at first, that horrid monsters lie up there waiting to be discovered by any moderately penetrating mind—monsters to which those of the oceans bear no sort of comparison.’

‘What monsters may they be?’

‘Impersonal monsters, namely, Immensities. Until a person has thought out the stars and their interspaces, he has hardly learnt that there are things much more terrible than monsters of shape, namely, monsters of magnitude without known shape. Such monsters are the voids and waste places of the sky. Look, for instance, at those pieces of darkness in the Milky Way,’ he went on, pointing with his finger to where the galaxy stretched across over their heads with

the luminousness of a frosted web. ' You see that dark opening in it near the Swan ? There is a still more remarkable one south of the equator, called the Coal Sack, as a sort of nickname that has a farcical force from its very inadequacy. In these our sight plunges quite beyond any twinkler we have yet visited. Those are deep wells for the human mind to let itself down into, leave alone the human body ! and think of the side caverns and secondary abysses to right and left as you pass on ! . . . There is a size at which dignity begins,' he exclaimed ; ' further on there is a size at which grandeur begins ; further on there is a size at which solemnity begins ; further on, a size at which awfulness begins ; further on, a size at which ghastliness begins. That size faintly approaches the size of the stellar universe. So am I not right in saying that those minds who exert their imaginative powers to bury themselves in the depths of that universe merely strain their faculties to gain a new horror ? . . . And to add a new weirdness to what the sky possesses in its size and formlessness, there is involved the quality of decay. For all the wonder of these everlasting stars, eternal spheres, and what not, they are not everlasting, they are not eternal ; they burn out like

candles. You see that dying one in the body of the Greater Bear? Two centuries ago it was as bright as the others. The senses may become terrified by plunging among them as they are, but there is a pitifulness even in their glory. Imagine them all extinguished, and your mind feeling its way through a heaven of total darkness, occasionally striking against the black, invisible cinders of those stars. . . . If you are cheerful, and wish to remain so, leave the study of astronomy alone. Of all the sciences, it alone deserves the character of the terrible.'

AUTUMN IN WESSEX

A MORE beautiful October morning than that of the next day never beamed into the Welland valleys. The yearly dissolution of leafage was setting in apace. The foliage of the park trees rapidly resolved itself into the multitude of complexions which mark the subtle grades of decay, reflecting wet lights of such innumerable hues that it was a wonder to think their beauties only a repetition of scenes that had been exhibited there on scores of previous Octobers, and had been allowed to pass away without a single dirge from the imperturbable beings who walked among

them. Far in the shadows semi-opaque screens of blue haze made mysteries of the commonest gravel-pit, dingle, or recess.

THE LAST CHRYSANTHEMUM

WHY should this flower delay so long
To show its tremulous plumes ?
Now is the time of plaintive robin-song,
When flowers are in their tombs.

Through the slow summer, when the sun
Called to each frond and whorl
That all he could for flowers was being
done,
Why did it not uncurl ?

It must have felt that fervid call
Although it took no heed,
Waking but now, when leaves like corpses
fall,
And saps all retrocede.

Too late its beauty, lonely thing,
The season's shine is spent,
Nothing remains for it but shivering
In tempests turbulent.

Had it a reason for delay,
Dreaming in witlessness
That for a bloom so delicately gay
Winter would stay its stress ?

—I talk as if the thing were born
With sense to work its mind ;
Yet it is but one mask of many worn
By the Great Face behind.

WINTER'S INGRESS

ALTHOUGH the time of bare boughs had now set in there were sheltered hollows amid the Hintock plantations and copses in which a more tardy leave-taking than on windy summits was the rule with the foliage. This caused here and there an apparent mixture of the seasons ; so that in some of the dells they passed by holly-berries in full red growing beside oak and hazel whose leaves were as yet not far removed from green, and brambles whose verdure was rich and deep as in the month of August. To Grace Melbury these well-known peculiarities were as an old painting restored.

Now could be beheld that change from the handsome to the curious which the features of a wood undergo at the ingress of the winter months. Angles were taking the place of curves, and reticulations of surfaces—a change constituting a sudden lapse from the ornate to the primitive on Nature's canvas, and comparable to a retrogressive step from the art of an

advanced school of painting to that of the Pacific Islander.

Grace Melbury and Giles Winterborne went noiselessly over mats of starry moss, rustled through interspersed tracts of leaves, skirted trunks with spreading roots whose mossed rinds made them like hands wearing green gloves ; elbowed old elms and ashes with great forks, in which stood pools of water that overflowed on rainy days, and ran down their stems in green cascades. On older trees still than these huge lobes of fungi grew like lungs. Here, as everywhere, the Unfulfilled Intention, which makes life what it is, was as obvious as it could be among the depraved crowds of a city slum. The leaf was deformed, the curve was crippled, the taper was interrupted ; the lichen ate the vigour of the stalk, and the ivy slowly strangled to death the promising sapling.

POSTPONEMENT

SNOW-BOUND in woodland, a mourn-
ful word,
Dropt now and then from the bill of a
bird,
Reached me on wind-wafts ; and thus I
heard,
Wearily waiting :—

' I planned her a nest in a leafless tree,
But the passers eyed and twitted me,
And said : " How reckless a bird is he,
Cheerily mating !"

' Fear-filled, I stayed me till summer-tide,
In lewth of leaves to throne her bride ;
But alas ! her love for me waned and died,
Wearily waiting.

' Ah, had I been like some I see,
Born to an evergreen nesting-tree,
None had eyed and twitted me,
Cheerily mating !'

THE DARKLING THRUSH

I LEANT upon a coppice gate
When Frost was spectre-gray,
And Winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of day.
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
Like strings from broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted nigh
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be
The Century's corpse outleant,
His crypt the cloudy canopy,
The wind his death-lament.
The ancient pulse of germ and birth
Was shrunken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon earth
Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice outburst among
The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy illimited ;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.
So little cause for carollings
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware.

A WESSEX WINTER SCENE

FOR dreariness nothing could surpass a prospect in the outskirts of a certain town and military station, many miles north of Weatherbury, . . . if that may be called a prospect of which the chief constituent was darkness. It was a night when sorrow may come to the brightest without causing any great sense of incongruity : when, with impressible persons, love becomes solicitousness, hope sinks to misgiving, and faith to hope : when the exercise of memory does not stir feelings of regret at opportunities for

ambition that have been passed by, and anticipation does not prompt to enterprise.

The scene was a public path, bordered on the left hand by a river, behind which rose a high wall. On the right was a tract of land, partly meadow and partly moor, reaching, at its remote verge, to a wide undulating upland.

The changes of the seasons are less obtrusive on spots of this kind than amid woodland scenery. Still, to a close observer, they are just as perceptible ; the difference is that their media of manifestation are less trite and familiar than such well-known ones as the bursting of the buds or the fall of the leaf. Many are not so stealthy and gradual as we may be apt to imagine in considering the general torpidity of a moor or waste. Winter, in coming to the country hereabout, advanced in well-marked stages, wherein might have been successively observed the retreat of the snakes, the transformation of the ferns, the filling of the pools, a rising of fogs, the embrowning by frost, the collapse of the fungi, and an obliteration by snow.

This climax of the series had been reached to-night on the aforesaid moor, and for the first time in the season its irregularities were forms without features ;

suggestive of anything, proclaiming nothing, and without more character than that of being the limit of something else—the lowest layer of a firmament of snow. From this chaotic skyful of crowding flakes the mead and moor momentarily received additional clothing, only to appear momentarily more naked thereby. The vast dome of cloud above was strangely low, and formed as it were the roof of a large dark cavern, gradually sinking in upon its floor ; for the instinctive thought was that the snow lining the heavens and that encrusting the earth would soon unite into one mass without any intervening stratum of air at all.

We turn our attention to the left-hand characteristics ; which were flatness in respect of the river, verticality in respect of the wall behind it, and darkness as to both. These features made up the mass. If anything could be darker than the sky, it was the wall, and if anything could be gloomier than the wall it was the river beneath. The indistinct summit of the façade was notched and pronged by chimneys here and there, and upon its face were faintly signified the oblong shapes of windows, though only in the upper part. Below, down to the water's edge, the flat was unbroken by hole or projection. . . . The river would have

been seen by day to be of that deep smooth sort which races middle and sides with the same gliding precision, any irregularities of speed being immediately corrected by a small whirlpool.

NEUTRAL TONES

WE stood by a pond that winter day,
And the sun was white, as though
chidden of God,
And a few leaves lay on the starving sod.
—They had fallen from an ash, and were
gray.

Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove
Over tedious riddles solved years ago ;
And some words played between us to
and fro—
On which lost the more by our love.

The smile on your mouth was the deadest
thing
Alive enough to have strength to die ;
And a grin of bitterness swept thereby
Like an ominous bird a-wing. . . .

Since then, keen lessons that love deceives,
And wrings with wrong, have shaped
to me
Your face, and the God-curst sun, and
a tree,
And a pond edged with grayish leaves.

MARCH NIGHTFALL IN WESSEX

IT was now the season for planting and sowing; many gardens and allotments of the villagers had already received their spring tillage; but the garden and the allotment of the Durbeyfields were behindhand. Tess found, to her dismay, that this was owing to their having eaten all the seed potatoes,—the last lapse of the improvident. At the earliest moment she obtained what others she could procure, and in a few days her father was well enough to see to the garden, under Tess's persuasive efforts: while she herself undertook the allotment-plot. . . . The plot of ground was in a high, dry, open enclosure, where there were forty or fifty such pieces, and where labour was at its briskest when the hired labour of the day had ended. Digging began usually at six o'clock, and extended indefinitely into the dusk or moonlight. Just now heaps of dead weeds and refuse were burning on many of the plots, the dry weather favouring their combustion.

One fine day Tess and 'Liza-Lu worked on here with their neighbours till the last rays of the sun smote flat upon the white pegs that divided the plots. As soon as twilight succeeded to sunset the flare of the couch-grass and cabbage-stalk fires

began to light up the allotments fitfully, their outlines appearing and disappearing under the dense smoke as wafted by the wind. When a fire glowed, banks of smoke, blown level along the ground, would themselves become illuminated to an opaque lustre, screening the work-people from one another ; and the meaning of the ' pillar of a cloud,' which was a wall by day and a light by night, could be understood.

As evening thickened some of the gardening men and women gave over for the night, but the greater number remained to get their planting done, Tess being among them, though she sent her sister home. It was on one of the couch-burning plots that she laboured with her fork, its four shining prongs resounding against the stones and dry clods in little clicks. Sometimes she was completely involved in the smoke of her fire ; then it would leave her figure free, irradiated by the brassy glare from the heap. She was oddly dressed to-night, and presented a somewhat staring aspect, her attire being a gown bleached by many washings, with a short black jacket over it, the effect of the whole being that of a wedding and funeral guest in one. The women further back wore white aprons, which, with their pale faces, were all that could

be seen of them in the gloom, except when at moments they caught a flash from the flames.

Westward, the wiry boughs of the bare thorn hedge which formed the boundary of the field rose against the pale opalescence of the lower sky. Above, Jupiter hung like a full-blown jonquil, so bright as almost to throw a shade. A few small nondescript stars were appearing elsewhere. In the distance a dog barked, and wheels occasionally rattled along the dry road.

Still the prongs continued to click assiduously, for it was not late ; and though the air was fresh and keen there was a whisper of spring in it that cheered the workers on. Something in the place, the hour, the crackling fires, the fantastic mysteries of light and shade, made others as well as Tess enjoy being there. Night-fall, which in the frost of winter comes as a fiend and in the warmth of summer as a lover, came as a tranquillizer on this March day.

SONG OF HOPE

○ SWEET To-morrow !—
After to-day
There will away
This sense of sorrow.
Then let us borrow

Hope, for a gleaming
Soon will be streaming,
 Dimmed by no gray—
 No gray !

While the winds wing us
 Sighs from The Gone,
 Nearer to dawn
Minute-beats bring us ;
When there will sing us
Larks of a glory
Waiting our story
 Further anon—
 Anon !

Doff the black token,
 Don the red shoon,
 Right and retune
Viol-strings broken ;
Null the words spoken
In speeches of rueing,
The night cloud is hueing,
 To-morrow shines soon—
 Shines soon !

THE SHEEP-WASHING

THE sheep-washing pool was a perfectly circular basin of brickwork in the meadows, full of the clearest water. To birds on the wing its glassy surface, reflecting the light sky, must have been visible for miles around as a glistening Cyclops' eye in a green face. The grass

about the margin at this season was a sight to remember long—in a minor sort of way. Its activity in sucking the moisture from the rich damp sod was almost a process observable by the eye. The outskirts of this level water-meadow were diversified by rounded and hollow pastures, where just now every flower that was not a buttercup was a daisy. The river slid along noiselessly as a shade, the swelling reeds and sedge forming a flexible palisade along its moist brink. To the north of the mead were trees, the leaves of which were new, soft, and moist, not yet having stiffened and darkened under summer sun and drought, their colour being yellow beside a green—green beside a yellow. From the recesses of this knot of foliage the loud notes of three cuckoos were resounding through the still air. . . .

A tributary of the main stream flowed through the basin of the pool by an inlet and outlet at opposite points of its diameter. Shepherd Oak, Jan Coggan, Moon, Poorgrass, Cain Bull, and several others were assembled here, all dripping wet to the very roots of their hair, and Bathsheba Everdene was standing by. . . . Flagon of cider were rolling about upon the green. The meek sheep were pushed into the pool by Coggan and Matthew Moon, who stood by the lower hatch, im-

mersed to their waists ; then Gabriel Oak, who stood on the brink, thrust them under as they swam along, with an instrument like a crutch, formed for the purpose, and also for assisting the exhausted animals when the wool became saturated and they began to sink. They were let out against the stream, and through the upper opening, all impurities flowing away below. Cainy Bull and Joseph, who performed this latter operation, were if possible wetter than the rest ; they resembled dolphins under a fountain, every protuberance and angle of their clothes dribbling forth a small rill.

THE SHEEP-SHEARERS

IT was the first day of June, and the sheep-shearing season culminated, the landscape, even to the leanest pasture, being all health and colour. Every green was young, every pore was open, and every stalk was swollen with racing currents of juice. God was palpably present in the country, and the devil had gone with the world to town. Flossy catkins of the later kinds, fern-sprouts like bishops' crooks, the square-headed moschatel, the odd cuckoo-pint,—like an apoplectic saint in a niche of malachite,—clear white ladies'-smocks, the toothwort,

approximating to human flesh, the enchanter's nightshade, and the black-petaled doleful-bells, were among the quainter objects of the vegetable world in and about Weatherbury at this teeming time ; and of the animal, the metamorphosed figures of Mr. Jan Coggan, the master-shearer ; the second and third shearers, who travelled in the exercise of their calling, and do not require definition by name ; Henery Fray the fourth shearer, Susan Tall's husband the fifth, Joseph Poorgrass the sixth, young Cain Bull as assistant-shearer, and Gabriel Oak as general supervisor. . . .

They sheared in the great barn, called for the nonce the Shearing-barn. . . . To-day the large side doors were thrown open towards the sun to admit a bountiful light to the immediate spot of the shearers' operations, which was the wood threshing-floor in the centre, formed of thick oak, black with age and polished by the beating of flails for many generations, till it had grown as slippery and as rich in hue as the state-room floors of an Elizabethan mansion. Here the shearers knelt, the sun slanting in upon their bleached shirts, tanned arms, and the polished shears they flourished, causing them to bristle with a thousand rays strong enough to blind a weak-eyed man. Beneath them a cap-

tive sheep lay panting, quickening its pants as misgiving merged in terror, till it quivered like the hot landscape outside.

This picture of to-day in its frame of four hundred years ago did not produce that marked contrast between ancient and modern which is implied by the contrast of date. . . . So the barn was natural to the shearers, and the shearers were in harmony with the barn.

The spacious ends of the building, answering ecclesiastically to nave and chancel extremities, were fenced off with hurdles, the sheep being all collected in a crowd within these two enclosures; and in one angle a catching-pen was formed, in which three or four sheep were continuously kept ready for the shearers to seize without loss of time. In the background, mellowed by tawny shade, were the three women, Maryann Money, and Temperance and Soberness Miller, gathering up the fleeces and twisting ropes of wool with a winble for tying them round. They were indifferently well assisted by the old maltster, who, when the malting season from October to April had passed, made himself useful upon any of the bordering farmsteads. . . .

'Well done, and done quickly!' said Bathsheba Everdeen, looking at her watch as the last snip resounded.

‘ How long, miss ? ’ said Gabriel, wiping his brow.

‘ Three-and-twenty minutes and a half since you took the first lock from its forehead. It is the first time that I have ever seen one done in less than half an hour.’

The clean, sleek creature arose from its fleece—how perfectly like Aphrodite rising from the foam should have been seen to be realized—looking startled and shy at the loss of its garments, which lay on the floor in one soft cloud, united throughout, the portion visible being the inner surface only, which, never before exposed, was white as snow, and without flaw or blemish of the minutest kind.

‘ Cain Bull ! ’

‘ Yes, Mister Oak ; here I be ! ’

Cainy now runs forward with the tarpot. ‘ B. E. ’ is newly stamped upon the shorn skin, and away the simple dam leaps, panting, over the board into the shirtless flock outside. Then up comes Maryann ; throws the loose locks into the middle of the fleece, rolls it up, and carries it into the background as three-and-a-half pounds of unadulterated warmth for the winter enjoyment of persons unknown and far away, who will, however, never experience the superlative comfort derivable from the wool as it here exists,

new and pure—before the unctuousness of its nature whilst in a living state has dried, stiffened, and been washed out—rendering it just now as superior to anything *woollen* as cream is superior to milk-and-water.

THE SHEARING-BARN

THE great barn . . . on the ground-plan resembled a church with transepts. It not only emulated the form of the neighbouring church of the parish, but vied with it in antiquity. Whether the barn had ever formed one of a group of conventual buildings nobody seemed to be aware; no trace of such surroundings remained. The vast porches at the sides, lofty enough to admit a waggon laden to its highest with corn in the sheaf, were spanned by heavy-pointed arches of stone, broadly and boldly cut, whose very simplicity was the origin of a grandeur not apparent in erections where more ornament has been attempted. The dusky, filmed, chestnut roof, braced and tied in by huge collars, curves, and diagonals, was far nobler in design, because more wealthy in material, than nine-tenths of those in our modern churches. Along each side wall was a range of striding buttresses, throwing deep shadows on the

spaces between them, which were perforated by lancet openings, combining in their proportions the precise requirements both of beauty and ventilation.

One could say about this barn, what could hardly be said of either the church or the castle, akin to it in age and style, that the purpose which had dictated its original erection was the same with that to which it was still applied. Unlike and superior to either of those two typical remnants of mediævalism, the old barn embodied practices which had suffered no mutilation at the hands of time. Here at least the spirit of the ancient builders was at one with the spirit of the modern beholder. Standing before this abraded pile, the eye regarded its present usage, the mind dwelt upon its past history, with a satisfied sense of functional continuity throughout—a feeling almost of gratitude, and quite of pride, at the permanence of the idea which had heaped it up. The fact that four centuries had neither proved it to be founded on a mistake, inspired any hatred of its purpose, nor given rise to any reaction that had battered it down, invested this simple gray effort of old minds with a repose, if not a grandeur, which a too curious reflection was apt to disturb in its ecclesiastical and military compeers. For once

mediævalism and modernism had a common standpoint. The lanceolate windows, the time-eaten arch-stones and chamfers, the orientation of the axis, the misty chestnut work of the rafters, referred to no exploded fortifying art or worn-out religious creed. The defence and salvation of the body by daily bread is still a study, a religion, and a desire.

THE SHEARING-SUPPER

SUPPER being ended, Coggan began on his own private account, without any reference to listeners :—

I've lost my love, and I care not,
I've lost my love, and I care not,
I shall soon have another
That's better than t'other ;
I've lost my love, and I care not.

This lyric, when concluded, was received with a silently appreciative gaze at the table, implying that the performance, like a work by those established authors who are independent of notices in papers, was a well-known delight which required no applause.

'Now, Master Poorgrass, your song !' said Coggan.

'I be all but in liquor, and the gift is wanting in me,' said Joseph, diminishing himself.

‘ Nonsense ; wou’st never be so ungrateful, Joseph—never !’ said Coggan, expressing hurt feelings by an inflection of voice. ‘ And mistress is looking hard at ye, as much as to say, “ Sing at once, Joseph Poorgrass.” ’

‘ Faith, so she is ; well, I must suffer it ! . . . Just eye my features, and see if the tell-tale blood overheats me much, neighbours ?’

‘ No, yer blushes be quite reasonable,’ said Coggan.

‘ I always tries to keep my colours from rising when a beauty’s eyes get fixed on me,’ said Joseph, diffidently ; ‘ but if so be ’tis willed they do, they must.’

‘ Now, Joseph, your song, please,’ said Bathsheba, from the window.

‘ Well, really, ma’am,’ he replied, in a yielding tone, ‘ I don’t know what to say. It would be a poor plain ballet of my own composure.’

‘ Hear, hear !’ said the supper-party.

Poorgrass, thus assured, trilled forth a flickering yet commendable piece of sentiment, the tune of which consisted of the key-note and another, the latter being the sound chiefly dwelt upon. This was so successful that he rashly plunged into a second in the same breath, after a few false starts :—

I sow'-ed th'-e
I sow'-ed
I sow'-ed the'-e seeds' of' love',
I-it was' all' i'-in the'-e spring',
I-in A'-pril', Ma'-ay, a'-nd sun'-ny' June',
When sma'-all bi'-irds they' do' sing.

' Well put out of hand,' said Coggan, at the end of the verse. ' " They do sing " was a very taking paragraph.'

' Ay ; and there was a pretty place at " seeds of love," and 'twas well heaved out. Though " love " is a nasty high corner when a man's voice is getting crazed. Next verse, Master Poorgrass.'

But during this rendering young Bob Coggan exhibited one of those anomalies which will afflict little people when other persons are particularly serious : in trying to check his laughter, he pushed down his throat as much of the tablecloth as he could get hold of, when, after continuing hermetically sealed for a short time, his mirth burst out through his nose. Joseph perceived it, and with hectic cheeks of indignation instantly ceased singing. Coggan boxed Bob's ears immediately.

' Go on, Joseph—go on, and never mind the young scamp,' said Coggan. ' 'Tis a very catching ballet. Now then again—the next bar ; I'll help ye to flourish up the shrill notes where yer wind is rather wheezy :—

Oh the wi'-il-lo'-ow tree' will' twist',
And the wil'-low' tre'-ee wi'-ll twine'.

But the singer could not be set going again. Bob Coggan was sent home for his ill manners, and tranquillity was restored by Jacob Smallbury, who volunteered a ballad as inclusive and interminable as that with which the worthy toper old Silenus amused on a similar occasion the swains Chromis and Mnasy-lus, and other jolly dogs of his day.

A WOODLANDER'S HOME

THERE was now a distinct manifestation of morning in the air, and presently the bleared white visage of a sunless winter day emerged like a dead-born child. The woodlanders everywhere had already bestirred themselves, rising this month of the year at the far less dreary time of absolute darkness. It had been above an hour earlier, before a single bird had untucked his head, that twenty lights were struck in as many bedrooms, twenty pairs of shutters opened, and twenty pairs of eyes stretched to the sky to forecast the weather for the day.

Owls that had been catching mice in the outhouses, rabbits that had been eating the winter-greens in the gardens, and stoats that had been sucking the blood

of the rabbits, discerning that their human neighbours were on the move, discreetly withdrew from publicity, and were seen and heard no more till nightfall.

The daylight revealed the whole of Mr. Melbury's homestead, of which the waggon-sheds had been an outlying erection. It formed three sides of an open quadrangle, and consisted of all sorts of buildings, the largest and central one being the dwelling itself. The fourth side of the quadrangle was the public road.

It was a dwelling-house of respectable, roomy, almost dignified aspect; which, taken with the fact that there were the remains of other such buildings hereabout, indicated that Little Hintock had at some time or other been of greater importance than now. The house was of no marked antiquity, yet of a well-advanced age; older than a state novelty, but no canonized antique; faded, not hoary; looking at you from the still distinct middle-distance of the early Georgian time, and awakening on that account the instincts of reminiscence more decidedly than the remoter, and far grander, memorials which have to speak from the misty reaches of mediævalism. The faces, dress, passions, gratitudes, and revenges of the great-great-grandfathers and grandmothers who had been the first to gaze from those rect-

angular windows, and had stood under that keystone doorway, could be divined and measured by homely standards of to-day. It was a house in whose reverberations queer old personal tales were yet audible if properly listened for ; and not, as with those of the castle and cloister, silent beyond the possibility of echo.

The garden-front remained much as it had always been, and there was a porch and entrance that way. But the principal house-door opened on the square yard or quadrangle towards the road, formerly a regular carriage entrance, though the middle of the area was now made use of for stacking timber, faggots, hurdles, and other products of the wood. It was divided from the lane by a lichen-coated wall, in which hung a pair of gates, flanked by piers out of the perpendicular, with a round white ball on the top of each.

The building on the left of the inclosure was a long-backed erection, now used for spar-making, sawing, crib-framing, and copse-ware manufacture in general. . . . Firewood was the one thing abundant in Little Hintock ; and a blaze of gad-ends made the outhouse gay with its light, which vied with that of the day as yet. In the hollow shades of the roof could be seen pale dangling arms of ivy which had crept through the joints of the tiles

and were groping in vain for some support, their leaves being dwarfed and sickly for want of sunlight; others were pushing in with such force at the eaves as to lift from their supports the shelves that were fixed there.

Besides the itinerant journey-workers there were also present John Upjohn, Melbury's regular man; a neighbour engaged in the hollow-turnery trade; old Timothy Tangs, and young Timothy Tangs, top and bottom sawyers at work in Mr. Melbury's pit outside; Farmer Cawtree, who kept the cider-house, and Robert Creedle, an old man who worked for Winterborne, and stood warming his hands.

IN A WOOD

PALE beech and pine-tree blue,
Set in one clay,
Bough to bough cannot you
Bide out your day?
When the rains skim and skip,
Why mar sweet comradeship,
Blighting with poison-drip
Neighbourly spray?
Heart-halt and spirit-lame,
City-opprest,
Unto this wood I came
As to a nest;

Dreaming that sylvan peace
Offered the harrowed ease—
Nature a soft release
 From men's unrest.

But, having entered in,
 Great growths and small
Show them to men akin—
 Combatants all !
Sycamore shoulders oak,
Bines the slim sapling yoke,
Ivy-spun halters choke
 Elms stout and tall.

Touches from ash, O wych,
 Sting you like scorn !
You, too, brave hollies, twitch
 Sidelong from thorn.
Even the rank poplars bear
Illy a rival's air,
Cankering in black despair
 If overborne.

Since, then, no grace I find
 Taught me of trees,
Turn I back to my kind,
 Worthy as these.
There at least smiles abound,
There discourse trills around,
There, now and then, are found
 Life-loyalties.

TO dwellers in a wood almost every species of tree has its voice as well as its feature. At the passing of the breeze the fir-trees sob and moan no less distinctly than they rock; the holly whistles as it battles with itself; the ash hisses amid its quiverings; the beech rustles while its flat boughs rise and fall. And winter, which modifies the note of such trees as shed their leaves, does not destroy its individuality.

THE IVY-WIFE

I LONGED to love a full-boughed beech
And be as high as he :
I stretched an arm within his reach,
And signalled unity.
But with his drip he forced a breach,
And tried to poison me.
I gave the grasp of partnership
To one of other race—
A plane : he barked him strip by strip
From upper bough to base ;
And me therewith ; for gone my grip,
My arms could not enlace.
In new affection next I strove
To coll an ash I saw,
And he in trust received my love ;
Till with my soft green claw
I cramped and bound him as I wove . . .
Such was my love : ha-ha !

By this I gained his strength and height
Without his rivalry.
But in my triumph I lost sight
Of afterhaps. Soon he,
Being bark-bound, flagged, snapped, fell
outright,
And in his fall felled me !

THE THRESHING-FLOOR

IT is the threshing of the last wheat-rick at Flintcomb-Ash Farm. The dawn of the March morning is singularly inexpressive, and there is nothing to show where the eastern horizon lies. Against the twilight rises the trapezoidal top of the stack, which has stood forlornly here through the washing and bleaching of the wintry weather.

When Izz Huett and Tess arrived at the scene of operations only a rustling denoted that others had preceded them ; to which, as the light increased, there were presently added the silhouettes of two men on the summit. They were busily ' unhaling ' the rick, that is, stripping off the thatch before beginning to throw down the sheaves ; and while this was in progress Izz and Tess, with the other women-workers, in their whitey-brown pinner, stood waiting and shivering, Farmer Groby having insisted upon

their being on the spot thus early to get the job over if possible by the end of the day. Close under the eaves of the stack, and as yet barely visible, was the red tyrant that the women had come to serve—a timber-framed construction, with straps and wheels appertaining—the threshing-machine which, whilst it was going, kept up a despotic demand upon the endurance of their muscles and nerves.

A little way off there was another indistinct figure; this one black, with a sustained hiss that spoke of strength very much in reserve. The long chimney running up beside an ash-tree, and the warmth which radiated from the spot, explained, without the necessity of much daylight, that here was the engine which was to act as the *primum mobile* of this little world. By the engine stood a dark motionless being, a sooty and grimy embodiment of tallness, in a sort of trance, with a heap of coals by his side: it was the engineman. The isolation of his manner and colour lent him the appearance of a creature from Tophet, who had strayed into the pellucid smokelessness of this region of yellow grain and pale soil, with which he had nothing in common, to amaze and to discompose its aborigines.

What he looked he felt. He was in the

agricultural world, but not of it. He served fire and smoke ; these denizens of the fields served vegetation, weather, frost, and sun. He travelled with his engine from farm to farm, from county to county, for as yet the steam threshing-machine was itinerant in this part of Wessex. He spoke in a strange northern accent ; his thoughts being turned inwards upon himself, his eye on his iron charge, hardly perceiving the scenes around him, and caring for them not at all : holding only strictly necessary intercourse with the natives, as if some ancient doom compelled him to wander here against his will in the service of his Plutonic master. The long strap which ran from the driving-wheel of his engine to the red thresher under the rick was the sole tie-line between agriculture and him. While they uncovered the sheaves he stood apathetic beside his portable repository of force, round whose hot blackness the morning air quivered. He had nothing to do with preparatory labour. His fire was waiting incandescent, his steam was at high pressure, in a few seconds he could make the long strap move at an invisible velocity. Beyond its extent the environment might be corn, straw, or chaos ; it was all the same to him. If any of the autochthonous idlers asked him what he

called himself, he replied shortly, 'an engineer.'

The rick was unhaled by full daylight ; the men then took their places, the women mounted, and the work began. Farmer Groby—or, as they called him, 'he'—had arrived ere this, and by his orders Tess was placed on the platform of the machine, close to the man who fed it, her business being to untie every sheaf of corn handed on to her by Izz Huett, who stood next, but on the rick ; so that the feeder could seize it and spread it over the revolving drum, which whisked out every grain in one moment. They were soon in full progress, after a preparatory hitch or two, which rejoiced the hearts of those who hated machinery. The work sped on till breakfast-time, when the thresher was stopped for half an hour ; and on starting again after the meal the whole supplementary strength of the farm was thrown into the labour of constructing the straw-rick, which began to grow beside the stack of corn.

THE CIDER-PRESS

GARDENS and orchards were bossed, nay encrusted, with scarlet and gold fruit, stretching to infinite distance under

a luminous lavender mist. The time was early autumn,

'When the fair apples, red as evening sky,
Do bend the tree unto the fruitful ground,
When juicy pears, and berries of black dye
Do dance in air, and call the eyes around.'

The landscape confronting the window might indeed have been part of the identical stretch of country which the youthful Chatterton had in his mind when he penned those lines. . . . In the yard between Grace and the orchards there progressed a scene natural to the locality at this time of the year. An apple-mill and press had been erected on the spot, to which some men were bringing fruit from divers points in mawn-baskets, while others were grinding them, and others wringing down the pomace, whose sweet juice gushed forth into tubs and pails. The superintendent of these proceedings, to whom the others spoke as master, was a young yeoman of prepossessing manner and aspect, whose form she recognized in a moment. He hung his coat to a nail of the outhouse wall, and wore his shirt-sleeves rolled up beyond his elbows, to keep them unstained while he rammed the pomace into the bags of horsehair. Fragments of apple-rind had alighted upon the brim of his hat—probably from the bursting of a bag—while brown pips

of the same fruit were sticking among the down upon his fine round arms, and in his beard.

Grace realized in a moment how he had come there. Down in the heart of the apple-country nearly every farmer kept a cider-making apparatus and wring-house for his own use, building up the pomace in great straw 'cheeses,' as they were called; and here, on the margin of Pomona's plain, was a debatable land, neither orchard nor sylvan exclusively, where the apple-produce was hardly sufficient to warrant each proprietor in keeping a mill of his own. This was the field of the travelling cider-maker. His press and mill were fixed to wheels, instead of being set up in a cider-house; and with a couple of horses, buckets, tubs, strainers, and an assistant or two, he wandered from place to place, deriving very satisfactory returns for his trouble in such a prolific season as the present.

The back parts of the town were just now abounding with apple-gatherings. They stood in the yards in carts, baskets, and loose heaps; and the blue stagnant air of autumn which hung over everything was heavy with a sweet cidery smell. Cakes of pomace lay against the walls in the yellow sun, where they were drying to be used as fuel. Yet it was not the

great make of the year as yet ; before the standard crop came in there accumulated, in abundant times like this, a large superfluity of early apples, and windfalls from the trees of later harvest, which would not keep long. Thus, in the baskets, and quivering in the hopper of the mill, she saw specimens of mixed dates, including the mellow countenances of streaked-jacks, codlins, costards, stubbards, ratheripes, and other well-known friends of her ravenous youth.

THE THREE TRANTERS INN : CIDER-MAKING

THE cottages along Carriford village street were not so close but that on one side or other of the road was always a hedge of hawthorn or privet, over or through which could be seen gardens or orchards rich with produce. It was about the middle of the early apple-harvest, and the laden trees were shaken at intervals by the gatherers, the soft pattering of the falling crop upon the grassy ground being diversified by the loud rattle of vagrant ones upon a rail, hen-coop, basket, or lean-to roof, or upon the rounded and stooping backs of the collectors—mostly children, who would have cried bitterly at receiving such a smart blow from any other quarter,

but smilingly assumed it to be but fun in apples.

The Three Tranters Inn, a many-gabled, mediæval building, constructed almost entirely of timber, plaster, and thatch, stood close to the line of the roadside almost opposite the churchyard, and was connected with a row of cottages on the left by thatched outbuildings. It was an uncommonly characteristic and handsome specimen of the genuine roadside inn of bygone times, and, standing on one of the great highways in this part of England, had in its time been the scene of as much of what is now looked upon as the romantic and genial experience of stage-coach travelling as any halting-place in the country. The railway had absorbed the whole stream of traffic which formerly flowed through the village and along by the ancient door of the inn, reducing the empty-handed landlord, who used only to farm a few fields at the back of the house, to the necessity of eking out his attenuated income by increasing the extent of his agricultural business if he would still maintain his social standing. Next to the general stillness pervading the spot, the long line of outbuildings adjoining the house was the most striking and saddening witness to the passed-away fortunes of the Three

Transters Inn. It was the bulk of the original stabling, and where once the hoofs of two-score horses had daily rattled over the stony yard, to and from the stalls within, thick grass now grew, whilst the line of roofs—once so straight—over the decayed stalls had sunk into vast hollows till they seemed like the cheeks of toothless age.

On a green plot at the other end of the building grew two or three large, wide-spreading elm-trees, from which the sign was suspended, representing the three men, called transters (irregular carriers), standing side by side, and exactly alike to a hair's-breadth, the grain of the wood and joints of the boards being visible through the thin paint depicting their forms, which were still further disfigured by red stains running downwards from the rusty nails above.

Under the trees now stood a cider-mill and press, and upon the spot, sheltered by the boughs, were gathered Mr. Springrove himself, his men, the parish clerk, two or three other men, grinders and supernumeraries, a woman with an infant in her arms, a flock of pigeons, and some little boys with straws in their mouths, endeavouring, whenever the men's backs were turned, to get a sip of the sweet juice issuing from the vat.

Edward Springrove the elder, the landlord, now more particularly a farmer, and for two months in the year a cider-maker, was an employer of labour of the old school, who worked himself among his men. He was now engaged in packing the pomace into horsehair bags with a rammer, and Gad Weedy, his man, was occupied in shovelling up more from a tub at his side. The shovel shone like silver from the action of the juice, and ever and anon, in its motion to and fro, caught the rays of the declining sun, and reflected them in bristling stars of light.

Mr. Springrove had been too young a man when the pristine days of the Three Tranters had departed for ever to have much of the host left in him now. He was a poet with a rough skin: one whose sturdiness was more the result of external circumstances than of intrinsic nature. Too kindly constituted to be very provident, he was yet not imprudent. He had a quiet humorousness of disposition, not out of keeping with a frequent melancholy, the general expression of his countenance being one of abstraction. Like Walt Whitman, he felt as his years increased—

‘I foresee too much; it means more than I thought.’

On the present occasion he wore gaiters

and a leathern apron, and worked with his shirt-sleeves rolled up beyond his elbows, disclosing solid and fleshy rather than muscular arms. They were stained by the cider, and two or three brown apple-pips from the pomace he was handling were to be seen sticking on them here and there.

WILLIAM DEWY'S FIDDLE

‘O YES ; there’s nothing like a fiddle,’ said the dairyman, ‘though I do think that bulls are more moved by a tune than cows—at least, that’s my experience. Once there was an old aged man over at Mellstock—William Dewy by name—one of the family that used to do a good deal of business as tranterers over there, Jonathan, do ye mind ?—I knowed the man by sight as well as I know my own brother, in a manner of speaking. Well, this man was a-coming home along from a wedding where he had been playing his fiddle, one fine moonlight night, and for shortness’ sake he took a cut across Forty-acres, a field lying that way, where a bull was out to grass. The bull seed William, and took after him, horns aground, begad ; and though William runned his best, and hadn’t much drink in him (considering ’twas a wedding, and

the folks well off), he found he'd never reach the fence and get over in time to save himself. Well, as a last thought, he pulled out his fiddle as he runned, and struck up a jig, turning to the bull, and backing towards the corner. The bull softened down, and stood still, looking hard at William Dewy, who fiddled on and on, till a sort of smile stole over the bull's face. But no sooner did William stop his playing and turn to get over the hedge than the bull would stop his smiling, and lower his horns to the seat of William's breeches. Well, William had to turn about and play on, willy-nilly ; and 'twas only three o'clock in the world, and 'a knowed that nobody would come that way for hours, and he so leery and tired that 'a didn't know what to do. When he had scraped till about four o'clock he felt that he verily would have to give over soon, and he said to himself, " There's only this last tune between me and eternal welfare ! Heaven save me, or I'm a done man." Well, then he called to mind how he'd seen the cattle kneel o' Christmas Eves in the dead o' night. It was not Christmas Eve then, but it came into his head to play a trick upon the bull. So he broke into the 'Tivity Hymn, just as at Christmas carol-singing, when, lo and behold ! down went the bull on his

bended knees, in his ignorance, just as if 'twere the true 'Tivity night and hour. As soon as his horned friend were down, William turned, clinked off like a long-dog, and jumped safe over hedge, before the praying bull had got on his feet again to take after him. William used to say that he'd seen a man look a fool a good many times, but never such a fool as that bull looked when he found his pious feelings had been played upon, and 'twas not Christmas Eve. . . . Yes, William Dewy, that was the man's name ; and I can tell you to a foot where he's a-lying in Mellstock churchyard at this very moment—just between the second yew-tree and the north aisle.'

'It's a curious story ; it carries us back to mediæval times, when faith was a living thing !'

THE MODESTY OF JOSEPH POORGRASS

'WHY, Joseph Poorgrass, ye han't had a drop !' said Mr. Coggan to a self-conscious man in the background, thrusting the cup towards him.

'Such a modest man as he is !' said Jacob Smallbury. 'Why, ye've hardly had strength of eye enough to look in our young mis'ess's face, so I hear, Joseph?'

All looked at Joseph Poorgrass with pitying reproach.

'No—I've hardly looked at her at all,' simpered Joseph, reducing his body smaller whilst talking, apparently from a meek sense of undue prominence. 'And when I seed her, 'twas nothing but blushes with me!'

'Poor feller,' said Mr. Clark.

' 'Tis a curious nature for a man,' said Jan Coggan.

'Yes,' continued Joseph Poorgrass—his shyness, which was so painful as a defect, filling him with a mild complacency now that it was regarded as an interesting study. ' 'Twere blush, blush, blush with me every minute of the time, when she was speaking to me.'

'I believe ye, Joseph Poorgrass, for we all know ye to be a very bashful man.'

' 'Tis a' awkward gift for a man, poor soul,' said the maltster. 'And how long have ye suffered from it, Joseph?'

'Oh, ever since I was a boy. Yes—mother was concerned to her heart about it—yes. But 'twas all nought'

' 'Tis—'tis,' said Gabriel Oak, recovering from a meditation. 'Yes, very awkward for the man.'

'Ay, and he's very timid, too,' observed Jan Coggan. 'Once he had been working late at Yalbury Bottom, and had had a

drap of drink, and lost his way as he was coming home-along through Yalbury Wood, didn't ye, Master Poorgrass ?'

' No, no, no ; not that story !' expostulated the modest man, forcing a laugh to bury his concern.

' — And so 'a lost himself quite,' continued Mr. Coggan, with an impassive face, implying that a true narrative, like tide and time, must run its course and would respect no man. ' And he was coming along in the middle of the night, much afear'd, and not able to find his way out of the trees nohow, 'a cried out, " Man-a-lost ! man-a-lost !" A owl in a tree happened to be crying " Whoo-who-who !" as owls do, you know, shepherd ' (Gabriel nodded), ' and Joseph, all in a tremble, said, " Joseph Poorgrass, of Weatherbury, sir !" '

' No, no, now—that's too much !' said the timid man, becoming a man of brazen courage all of a sudden. ' I didn't say *sir*. I'll take my oath I didn't say " Joseph Poorgrass, o' Weatherbury, sir." No, no ; what's right is right, and I never said sir to the bird, knowing very well that no man of a gentleman's rank would be hollering there at that time o' night. " Joseph Poorgrass, of Weatherbury," — that's every word I said, and I shouldn't ha' said that if 't hadn't been

for Keeper Day's metheglin. . . . There, 'twas a merciful thing it ended as it did.'

The question of which was right being tacitly waived by the company, Jan went on meditatively :—

' And he's the fearfulest man, bain't ye, Joseph ? Ay, another time ye were lost by Lambing-Down Gate, weren't ye, Joseph ?'

' I was,' replied Poorgrass, as if there were some conditions too serious even for modesty to remember itself under, this being one.

' Yes ; that were the middle of the night, too. The gate would not open, try how he would, and knowing there was the Devil's hand in it, he kneeled down.'

' Ay,' said Joseph, acquiring confidence from the warmth of the fire, the cider, and a perception of the narrative capabilities of the experience alluded to. ' My heart died within me, that time ; but I kneeled down and said the Lord's Prayer, and then the Belief right through, and then the Ten Commandments, in earnest prayer. But no, the gate wouldn't open ; and then I went on with Dearly Beloved Brethren, and, thinks I, this makes four, and 'tis all I know out of book, and if this don't do it nothing will, and I'm a lost man. Well, when I got to Saying

After Me, I rose from my knees and found the gate would open—yes, neighbours, the gate opened the same as ever.'

THE WISDOM OF WILLIAM WORM

'LOOK there, Smith,' said Mr. Swancourt. 'What do think of my roofing?' He pointed with his walking-stick at the chancel roof.

'Did you do that, sir?'

'Yes, I worked in shirt-sleeves all the time that was going on. I pulled down the old rafters, fixed the new ones, put on the battens, slated the roof, all with my own hands, Worm being my assistant. We worked like slaves, didn't we, Worm?'

'Ay, sure, we did; harder than some here and there—hee, hee!' said William Worm, cropping up from somewhere. 'Like slaves, a' b'lieve—hee, hee! And weren't ye foaming mad, sir, when the nails wouldn't go straight? Mighty I! There, 't isn't so bad to cuss and keep it in as to cuss and let it out, is it, sir?'

'Well—why?'

'Because you, sir, when ye were a-putting on the roof, only used to cuss in your mind, which is, I suppose, no harm at all.'

'I don't think you know what goes on in my mind, Worm.'

' Oh, doan't I, sir—hee, hee! Maybe I'm but a poor wambling thing, sir, and can't read much; but I can spell as well as some here and there. Doan't ye mind, sir, that blustrous night when ye asked me to hold the candle to ye in yer workshop, when you were making a new chair for the chancel?'

' Yes; what of that?'

' I stood with the candle, and you said you liked company, if 'twas only a dog or cat—maning me; and the chair wouldn't do nohow.'

' Ah, I remember.'

' No; the chair wouldn't do nohow. 'A was very well to look at; but, Lord!——'

' Worm, how often have I corrected you for irreverent speaking?'

' —— 'A was very well to look at, but you couldn't sit in the chair nohow. 'Twas all a-twist wi' the chair, like the letter Z, directly you sat down upon the chair. "Get up, Worm," says you, when you seed the chair go all a-sway wi' me. Up you took the chair, and flung en like fire and brimstone to t'other end of your shop—all in a passion. "Damn the chair!" says I. "Just what I was thinking," says you, sir. "I could see it in your face, sir," says I, "and I hope you and God will forgi'e me for

saying what you wouldn't." To save your life you couldn't help laughing, sir, at a poor wambler reading your thoughts so plain. Ay, I'm as wise as one here and there.'

MRS. SMITH'S GARDEN

'WHAT beautiful tiger-lilies!' said Mrs. Worm.

'Yes, they be very well, but such a trouble to me on account of the children that come here. They will go eating the berries on the stem, and call 'em currants. Taste wi' junivals is quite fancy, really.'

'And your snapdragons look as fierce as ever.'

'Well, really,' answered Mrs. Smith, entering didactically into the subject, 'they are more like Christians than flowers. But they make up well enough wi' the rest, and don't require much tending. And the same can be said o' these miller's wheels 'Tis a flower I like very much, though so simple. John says he never cares about the flowers o' 'em, but men have no eye for anything neat. He says his favourite flower is a cauliflower. And I assure you I tremble in the springtime, for 'tis perfect murder.'

'You don't say so, Mrs. Smith!'

'John digs round the roots, you know.'

In goes his blundering spade, through roots, bulbs, everything that hasn't got a good show above ground, turning 'em up cut all to slices. Only the very last fall I went to move some tulips, when I found every bulb upside down, and the stems crooked round. He had turned 'em over in the spring, and the cunning creatures had soon found that heaven was not where it used to be.'

'What's that's long-favoured flower under the hedge?'

'They? O Lord, they are the horrid Jacob's ladders! Instead of praising 'em, I be mad wi' 'em, for being so ready to bide where they are not wanted. They be very well in their way, but I do not care for things that neglect won't kill. Do what I will, dig, drag, scrape, pull, I get too many of 'em. I chop the roots: up they'll come, treble strong. Throw 'em over the hedge; there they'll grow, staring me in the face like a hungry dog driven away, and creep back again in a week or two the same as before. 'Tis Jacob's ladder here, Jacob's ladder there, and plant 'em where nothing in the world will grow, you get crowds of 'em in a month or two. John made a new manure mixen last summer, and he said, "Maria, now if you've got any flowers or such like, that you don't want, you may plant 'em

round my mixen so as to hide it a bit, though 'tis not likely anything of much value will grow there." I thought, "There's them Jacob's ladders; I'll put them there, since they can't do harm in such a place;" and I planted the Jacob's ladders sure enough. They growed, and they growed, in the mixen and out of the mixen, all over the litter, covering it quite up. When John wanted to use it about the garden, 'a said, "Nation seize them Jacob's ladders of yours, Maria! They've eat the goodness out of every morsel of my manure, so that 'tis no better than sand itself!" Sure enough the hungry mortals had. 'Tis my belief that in the secret souls o' 'em, Jacob's ladders be weeds, and not flowers at all, if the truth was known.'

ABSENT-MINDEDNESS IN A PARISH CHOIR

' IT happened on Sunday after Christmas—the last Sunday ever they played in Longpuddle church gallery, as it turned out, though they didn't know it then. As you may know, sir, the players formed a very good band—almost as good as the Mellstock parish players that were led by the Dewys; and that's saying a great deal. There was Nicholas

Puddingcome, the leader, with the first fiddle ; there was Timothy Thomas, the bass-viol man ; John Biles, the tenor fiddler ; Dan'l Hornhead, with the serpent ; Robert Dowdle, with the clarionet ; and Mr. Nicks, with the oboe—all sound and powerful musicians, and strong-winded men—they that blowed. For that reason they were very much in demand Christmas week for little reels and dancing parties ; for they could turn a jig or a hornpipe out of hand as well as ever they could turn out a psalm, and perhaps better, not to speak irreverent. In short, one half-hour they could be playing a Christmas carol in the squire's hall to the ladies and gentlemen, and drinking tay and coffee with 'em as modest as saints ; and the next, at The Tinker's Arms, blazing away like wild horses with the " Dashing White Sergeant " to nine couples of dancers and more, and swallowing rum-and-cider hot as flame.

' Well, this Christmas they'd been out to one rattling randy after another every night, and had got next to no sleep at all. Then came the Sunday after Christmas, their fatal day. 'Twas so mortal cold that year that they could hardly sit in the gallery ; for though the congregation down in the body of the church had a

stove to keep off the frost, the players in the gallery had nothing at all. So Nicholas said at morning service, when 'twas freezing an inch an hour, "Please the Lord I won't stand this numbing weather no longer: this afternoon we'll have something in our insides to make us warm, if it costs a king's ransom."

'So he brought a gallon of hot brandy and beer, ready mixed, to church with him in the afternoon, and by keeping the jar well wrapped up in Timothy Thomas's bass-viol bag it kept drinkably warm till they wanted it, which was just a thimbleful in the Absolution, and another after the Creed, and the remainder at the beginning o' the sermon. When they'd had the last pull they felt quite comfortable and warm, and as the sermon went on—most unfortunately for 'em it was a long one that afternoon—they fell asleep, every man jack of 'em; and there they slept on as sound as rocks.

''Twas a very dark afternoon, and by the end of the sermon all you could see of the inside of the church were the pa'son's two candles alongside of him in the pulpit, and his spaking face behind 'em. The sermon being ended at last, the pa'son gie'd out the Evening Hymn. But no choir set about sounding up the tune, and the people began to turn their

heads to learn the reason why, and then Levi Limpet, a boy who sat in the gallery, nudged Timothy and Nicholas, and said, "Begin ! begin !"

"Hey ? what ?" says Nicholas, starting up ; and the church being so dark and his head so muddled he thought he was at the party they had played at all the night before, and away he went, bow and fiddle, at "The Devil among the Tailors," the favourite jig of our neighbourhood at that time. The rest of the band, being in the same state of mind and nothing doubting, followed their leader with all their strength, according to custom. They poured out that there tune till the lower bass notes of "The Devil among the Tailors" made the cobwebs in the roof shiver like ghosts ; then Nicholas, seeing nobody moved, shouted out as he scraped (in his usual commanding way at dances when the folk didn't know the figures), "Top couples cross hands ! And when I make the fiddle squeak at the end, every man kiss his pardner under the mistletoe !"

'The boy Levi was so frightened that he bolted down the gallery stairs and out homeward like lightning. The pa'son's hair fairly stood on end when he heard the evil tune raging through the church, and thinking the choir had gone crazy

he held up his hand and said: "Stop, stop, stop! Stop, stop! What's this?" But they didn't hear'n for the noise of their own playing, and the more he called the louder they played.

' Then the folks came out of their pews, wondering down to the ground, and saying: "What do they mean by such wickedness! We shall be consumed like Sodom and Gomorrah!"

' Then the squire came out of his pew lined wi' green baize, where lots of lords and ladies visiting at the house were worshipping along with him, and went and stood in front of the gallery, and shook his fist in the musicians' faces, saying, "What! In this reverent edifice! What!"

' And at last they heard'n through their playing, and stopped.

' "Never such an insulting, disgraceful thing—never!"

' "Never!" says the pa'son, who had come down and stood beside him.

' "Not if the Angels of Heaven," says the squire (he was a wickedish man, the squire was, though now for once he happened to be on the Lord's side)—"not if the Angels of Heaven came down," he says, "shall one of you villanous players ever sound a note in this church again; for the insult to me, and my

family, and my visitors, and God Almighty, that you've a-perpetrated this afternoon !”

‘ Then the unfortunate church band came to their senses, and remembered where they were ; and ’twas a sight to see Nicholas Puddingcome and Timothy Thomas and John Biles creep down the gallery stairs with their fiddles under their arms, and poor Dan’l Hornhead with his serpent, and Robert Dowdle with his clarionet, all looking as little as ninepins ; and out they went. The pa’son might have forgi’ed ’em when he learned the truth o’t, but the squire would not. That very week he sent for a barrel-organ that would play two-and-twenty new psalm-tunes, so exact and particular that, however sinful inclined you was, you could play nothing but psalm-tunes whatsoever. He had a really respectable man to turn the winch, and the old players played no more.’

FRIENDS BEYOND

WILLIAM DEWY, Tranter Reuben,
Farmer Ledlow late at plough,
Robert’s kin, and John’s, and Ned’s,
And the Squire, and Lady Susan, lie in
Mellstock churchyard now !

'Gone,' I call them, gone for good, that
group of local hearts and heads ;
Yet at mothy curfew-tide,
And at midnight when the noon-heat
breathes it back from walls and leads,
They've a way of whispering to me—
fellow-wight who yet abide—
In the muted, measured note
Of a ripple under archways, or a lone
cave's stillicide :

'We have triumphed : this achievement
turns the bane to antidote,
Unsuccesses to success,
Many thought-worn eyes and morrows to
a morrow free of thought.

'No more need we corn and clothing, feel
of old terrestrial stress ;
Chill detraction stirs no sigh ;
Fear of death has even bygone us : death
gave all that we possess.'

W. D.—'Ye mid burn the wold bass-viol
that I set such vallie by.'

Squire.—'You may hold the manse in fee,
You may wed my spouse, my children's
memory of me may decry.'

Lady.—'You may have my rich brocades,
my laces ; take each household key ;
Ransack coffer, desk, bureau ;
Quiz the few poor treasures hid there, con
the letters kept by me.'

Far.—‘ Ye mid zell my favourite heifer, ye
mid let the charlock grow,

Foul the grinterns, give up thrift.’

Wife.—‘ If ye break my best blue china,
children, I shan’t care or ho.’

All.—‘ We’ve no wish to hear the tidings,
how the people’s fortunes shift ;

What your daily doings are ;

Who are wedded, born, divided ; if your
lives beat slow or swift.

‘ Curious not the least are we if our
intents you make or mar,

If you quire to our old tune,

If the City stage still passes, if the weirs
still roar afar.’

—Thus, with very gods’ composure, freed
those crosses late and soon

Which, in life, the Trine allow

(Why, none witteth), and ignoring all that
haps beneath the moon,

William Dewy, Tranter Reuben, Farmer
Ledlow late at plough,

Robert’s kin, and John’s, and Ned’s,

And the Squire, and Lady Susan, murmur
mildly to me now.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
A half knowledge	<i>The Hand of Ethelberta</i> 22
Although the time of bare boughs	<i>The Woodlanders</i> 248
A man should be only	<i>The Return of the Native</i> 9
Amid the oozing fatness	<i>Tess of the D'Urber-villes</i> 180
A more beautiful October	<i>Two on a Tower</i> 246
Angel Clare and Tess crept along	<i>Tess of the D'Urber-villes</i> 181
Angel Clare entered on foot	<i>Tess of the D'Urber-villes</i> 191
Angel Clare thought of Tess	<i>Tess of the D'Urber-villes</i> 189
Anne, who really had not	<i>The Trumpet-Major</i> 132
Anybody's life may be	<i>A Pair of Blue Eyes</i> 10
Any woman who has ever tried	<i>The Trumpet-Major</i> 21
A person who differed	<i>The Well-Beloved</i> 90
'Are you afraid, Tess?'	<i>Tess of the D'Urber-villes</i> 6
A Saturday afternoon in November	<i>The Return of the Native</i> 40
A sensation of being	<i>A Pair of Blue Eyes</i> 11
A shaded lamp	<i>Poems of the Past and the Present</i> 241
As newer comers crowd the fore	<i>Poems of the Past and the Present</i> 4

	PAGE
Assuming the value . . .	<i>The Woodlanders</i> . . . 7
A well-proportioned mind	<i>The Return of the Native</i> . . . 8
Beneath a knap . . .	<i>Wessex Poems</i> . . . 85
Between us now . . .	<i>Poems of the Past and the Present</i> - 185
But out of tune . . .	<i>The Dynasts</i> . . . 30
But what is Wisdom really? . . .	<i>Desperate Remedies</i> 17
But where is father? . . .	<i>Tess of the D'Urbervilles</i> . . . 147
Casterbridge, as has been hinted . . .	<i>The Mayor of Casterbridge</i> . . . 58
Change and chancefulness	<i>Wessex Poems</i> . . . 26
Change of scene . . .	<i>Desperate Remedies</i> . 16
Dear, delightful Wessex . . .	<i>A Group of Noble Dames</i> . . . 89
During the afternoon . . .	<i>Under the Greenwood Tree</i> . . . 222
Emotions will attach . . .	<i>Desperate Remedies</i> . 19
Eustacia Vye . . .	<i>The Return of the Native</i> . . . 108
Every woman who makes	<i>A Pair of Blue Eyes</i> . 24
Farmer Boldwood was tenant . . .	<i>Far From the Madding Crowd</i> . . . 96
Fickleness means getting weary . . .	<i>The Well-Beloved</i> . 23
For dreariness nothing could surpass . . .	<i>Far from the Madding Crowd</i> . . . 251
For in spite of a fashion . . .	<i>Desperate Remedies</i> . 23
For my part I don't see'	<i>The Mayor of Casterbridge</i> . . . 197
From his window Jude could perceive . . .	<i>Jude the Obscure</i> . 122

	PAGE
Gabriel Oak stood	<i>Far from the Mad- ding Crowd</i> 242
Gardens and orchards were bossed	<i>The Woodlanders</i> 278
Graye was handsome	<i>Desperate Remedies</i> 14
• Henchard underwent a moral change	<i>The Mayor of Caster- bridge</i> 203
He was a youth who might	<i>Two on a Tower</i> 105
How blissful it all is	<i>Desperate Remedies</i> 23
Human beings, in their generous endeavour	<i>The Return of the Native</i> 7
If but some vengeful god	<i>Wessex Poems</i> 11
I leant upon a coppice gate	<i>Poems of the Past and the Present</i> 250
I longed to love	<i>Wessex Poems</i> 274
I look into my glass	<i>Wessex Poems</i> 2
In comparison with cities	<i>Far from the Mad- ding Crowd</i> 62
In justice to desponding men	<i>Desperate Remedies</i> 14
In respect of character	<i>The Return of the Native</i> 22
In the days of high- waisted and muslin- gowned	<i>The Trumpet-Major</i> 127
In the down train that was timed	<i>Jude the Obscure</i> 125
In the ill-judged execu- tion	<i>Tess of the D'Urber- villes</i> 4
In the interests of re- nown	<i>The Return of the Native</i> 9
In the wild October night-time	<i>The Dynasts</i> 95
In years defaced	<i>Poems of the Past and the Present</i> 57
Is it worth while	<i>Poems of the Past and the Present</i> 131

	PAGE
It appears that ordinary men	<i>Far from the Madding Crowd</i> 27
It depends entirely	<i>Desperate Remedies</i> 14
'It happened on Sunday'	<i>A Few Crusted Characters (Life's Little Ironies)</i> 295
It is a melancholy truth	<i>Desperate Remedies</i> 24
It is at that point	<i>Under the Greenwood Tree</i> 226
It is both painful	<i>Desperate Remedies</i> 17
It is the threshing of the last wheat-rick	<i>Tess of the D'Urbervilles</i> 275
It is with cliffs and mountains	<i>A Pair of Blue Eyes</i> 1
It was a hazy sunrise	<i>Tess of the D'Urbervilles</i> 239
It was a long low cottage	<i>Under the Greenwood Tree</i> 220
It was as old-fashioned	<i>Jude the Obscure</i> 66
It was now the season	<i>Tess of the D'Urbervilles</i> 255
It was the first day of June	<i>Far from the Madding Crowd</i> 260
It would have been difficult	<i>The Woodlanders</i> 119
I would that folk forgot	<i>Poems of the Past and the Present</i> 192
Jude was walking towards Christminster city	<i>Jude the Obscure</i> 76
Jude went out	<i>Jude the Obscure</i> 68
Jude's dreams were as gigantic	<i>Jude the Obscure</i> 73
Knollsea was a seaside village	<i>The Hand of Ethelberta</i> 91
Little towns are like	<i>Desperate Remedies</i> 1
'Look there, Smith'	<i>A Pair of Blue Eyes</i> 291
Love frequently dies of time	<i>A Pair of Blue Eyes</i> 25

	PAGE
Melchester was a quiet and soothing place . . .	<i>Jude the Obscure</i> . . . 87
Men thin away . . .	<i>Far from the Madding Crowd</i> . . . 10
Michael Henchard shouldered his basket . . .	<i>The Mayor of Casterbridge</i> . . . 202
Miller Loveday was the representative . . .	<i>The Trumpet-Major</i> 134
Mrs. Henchard was weakening	<i>The Mayor of Casterbridge</i> . . . 212
Never a careworn wife . . .	<i>Poems of the Past and the Present</i> . 208
New love is brightest . . .	<i>The Hand of Ethelberta</i> 21
Norcombe Hill . . .	<i>Far from the Madding Crowd</i> . . . 46
Now it is a noticeable fact	<i>Desperate Remedies</i> . 16
O life with the sad seared face	<i>Poems of the Past and the Present</i> . 68
On an evening in the latter part	<i>Tess of the D'Urbervilles</i> 140
One day, when arrangements	<i>The Mayor of Casterbridge</i> 209
One solitary newspaper occasionally found . . .	<i>The Trumpet-Major</i> 137
On these lonely hills . . .	<i>Tess of the D'Urbervilles</i> 163
O sweet to-morrow . . .	<i>Poems of the Past and the Present</i> . 257
Our evil actions . . .	<i>For Conscience' Sake (Life's Little Ironies)</i> 3
'O yes; there's nothing like a fiddle' . . .	<i>Tess of the D'Urbervilles</i> 285
Pale beech and pine-tree blue	<i>Wessex Poems</i> . . . 272
People living insulated . . .	<i>The Woodlanders</i> . . . 8

	PAGE
Perhaps the moral compensation	<i>Desperate Remedies</i> 19
Perhaps there is nothing more hardening	<i>A Pair of Blue Eyes</i> 25
Persons with any weight	<i>The Return of the Native</i> 22
Reddlemen of the old school	<i>The Return of the Native</i> 117
Rolliver's inn, the single alehouse	<i>Tess of the D'Urbervilles</i> 151
Shall we conceal the case?	<i>Poems of the Past and the Present</i> 21
Shaston, the ancient British Palladour	<i>Jude the Obscure</i> 81
Smith was not at all the man	<i>A Pair of Blue Eyes</i> 20
Snow-bound in woodland	<i>Wessex Poems</i> 249
Some women kindle emotion	<i>Desperate Remedies</i> 19
Springrove had long since	<i>Desperate Remedies</i> 19
Spring weather came on	<i>The Woodlanders</i> 236
Stephen Smith . . . was at this time	<i>A Pair of Blue Eyes</i> 104
Supper being ended	<i>Far from the Madding Crowd</i> 266
Tess Durbeyfield at this time	<i>Tess of the D'Urbervilles</i> 158
Tess had never before	<i>Tess of the D'Urbervilles</i> 37
'Tess,' he said	<i>Tess of the D'Urbervilles</i> 155
Tess plunged into the chilly	<i>Tess of the D'Urbervilles</i> 34
Tess revived sufficiently	<i>Tess of the D'Urbervilles</i> 161
Tess's hopes mingled	<i>Tess of the D'Urbervilles</i> 165

	PAGE
Tess walked to the hill-town	<i>Tess of the D'Urber- villes</i> 159
The 'appetite for joy'	<i>Tess of the D'Urber- villes</i> 5
The city of Wintoncester	<i>Tess of the D'Urber- villes</i> 194
The cottages along Carri- ford village	<i>Desperate Remedies</i> 281
The determination to love	<i>The Woodlanders</i> 22
The forests have departed	<i>Tess of the D'Urber- villes</i> 144
The front doors of the private houses	<i>The Mayor of Caster- bridge</i> 52
The great barn	<i>Far from the Mad- ding Crowd</i> 264
The gray half-tones	<i>Tess of the D'Urber- villes</i> 2
The household went to bed	<i>Tess of the D'Urber- villes</i> 166
'The imaginary picture'	<i>Two on a Tower</i> 244
The July sun shone	<i>The Return of the Native</i> 239
The monotony of life	<i>A Pair of Blue Eyes</i> 12
The morning of the con- firmation	<i>Two on a Tower</i> 234
The only superiority	<i>Far from the Mad- ding Crowd</i> 29
The rambler who, for old association's sake	<i>The Woodlanders</i> 35
The reaping-machine left	<i>Tess of the D'Urber- villes</i> 241
There are disappoint- ments	<i>A Pair of Blue Eyes</i> 3
There are instances of persons	<i>The Return of the Native</i> 12
There is a house	<i>Poems of the Past and the Present</i> 51
There is always an inertia	<i>Far from the Mad- ding Crowd</i> 9

	PAGE
There is an outer chamber	<i>The Mayor of Caster- bridge</i> 10
There is in Upper Wessex	<i>Jude the Obscure</i> 88
There is in us an un- quenchable	<i>Desperate Remedies</i> 15
There is no regular path .	<i>Far from the Mad- ding Crowd</i> 29
There was hardly a touch	<i>Tess of the D'Urber- villes</i> 186
There was now a distinct	<i>The Woodlanders</i> 269
The Ring at Casterbridge	<i>The Mayor of Caster- bridge</i> 55
The season developed and matured	<i>Tess of the D'Urber- villes</i> 171
The sheep-washing pool .	<i>Far from the Mad- ding Crowd</i> 258
The shore and country .	<i>A Pair of Blue Eyes</i> 93
The tower of Weatherbury Church	<i>Far from the Mad- ding Crowd</i> 63
The village of Marlott lay amid	<i>Tess of the D'Urber- villes</i> 32
The wondrous power of flattery	<i>Far from the Mad- ding Crowd</i> 27
They came downstairs yawning	<i>Tess of the D'Urber- villes</i> 176
The years have gathered .	<i>Wessex Poems</i> 65
This good-fellowship .	<i>Far from the Mad- ding Crowd</i> 28
Those who have the power	<i>Far from the Mad- ding Crowd</i> 2
Though I waste watches .	<i>Wessex Poems</i> 15
To dwellers in a wood .	<i>Under the Greenwood Tree</i> 274
To Elizabeth-Jane the time	<i>The Mayor of Caster- bridge</i> 101
To have lost the godlike .	<i>The Return of the Native</i> 13
To one of middle age .	<i>The Return of the Native</i> 113
To see persons looking .	<i>Desperate Remedies</i> 1

	PAGE
To those musing	<i>A Pair of Blue Eyes</i> 29
'Twas a death-bed summons	<i>Wessex Poems</i> 215
Two bridges stood near	<i>The Mayor of Caster-bridge</i> 59
Under a daisied bank	<i>Poems of the Past and the Present</i> 178
Unexpectedly grand fruits	<i>Two on a Tower</i> 22
We stood by a pond	<i>Wessex Poems</i> 254
We learn that it is not	<i>Far from the Madding Crowd</i> 3
We passed where flag and flower	<i>Wessex Poems</i> 18
'What an old-fashioned place'	<i>The Mayor of Caster-bridge</i> 48
'What beautiful tiger-lilies!'	<i>A Pair of Blue Eyes</i> 293
What woman, indeed	<i>Tess of the D'Urbervilles</i> 6
Whence comes Solace?	<i>Poems of the Past and the Present</i> 238
When Farmer Oak smiled	<i>Far from the Madding Crowd</i> 98
When I look forth	<i>Wessex Poems</i> 44
When, soul in soul reflected	<i>Wessex Poems</i> 190
When we as strangers sought	<i>Wessex Poems</i> 154
When you paced forth	<i>Wessex Poems</i> 233
Where the eyes of a multitude	<i>The Woodlanders</i> 6
'Why, Jcseph Poorgrass'	<i>Far from the Madding Crowd</i> 287
Why should this flower delay?	<i>Poems of the Past and the Present</i> 247
William Dewy	<i>Under the Greenwood Tree</i> 121

	PAGE
William Dewy, Tranter	
Reuben	<i>Wessex Poems</i> . 300
Winter is white on turf	<i>Poems of the Past and the Present</i> . 234
With all, the beautiful things	<i>Desperate Remedies</i> - 22
You did not come	<i>Poems of the Past and the Present</i> . 107

