

Classic Poetry Series

Thomas Hardy
- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Thomas Hardy(2 June 1840 – 11 January 1928)

Thomas Hardy was born June 2, 1840, in the village of Upper Bockhampton, located in Southwestern England. His father was a stone mason and a violinist. His mother enjoyed reading and relating all the folk songs and legends of the region. Between his parents, Hardy gained all the interests that would appear in his novels and his own life: his love for architecture and music, his interest in the lifestyles of the country folk, and his passion for all sorts of literature.

At the age of eight, Hardy began to attend Julia Martin's school in Bockhampton. However, most of his education came from the books he found in Dorchester, the nearby town. He learned French, German, and Latin by teaching himself through these books. At sixteen, Hardy's father apprenticed his son to a local architect, John Hicks. Under Hicks' tutelage, Hardy learned much about architectural drawing and restoring old houses and churches. Hardy loved the apprenticeship because it allowed him to learn the histories of the houses and the families that lived there. Despite his work, Hardy did not forget his academics: in the evenings, Hardy would study with the Greek scholar Horace Moule.

In 1862, Hardy was sent to London to work with the architect Arthur Blomfield. During his five years in London, Hardy immersed himself in the cultural scene by visiting the museums and theaters and studying classic literature. He even began to write his own poetry. Although he did not stay in London, choosing to return to Dorchester as a church restorer, he took his newfound talent for writing to Dorchester as well.

From 1867, Hardy wrote poetry and novels, though the first part of his career was devoted to the novel. At first he published anonymously, but when people became interested in his works, he began to use his own name. Like Dickens, Hardy's novels were published in serial forms in magazines that were popular in both England and America. His first popular novel was *Under the Greenwood Tree*, published in 1872. The next great novel, *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874) was so popular that with the profits, Hardy was able to give up architecture and marry Emma Gifford. Other popular novels followed in quick succession: *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), and *Jude the Obscure* (1895). In addition to these larger works, Hardy published three collections of short stories and five smaller novels, all moderately successful. However, despite the praise Hardy's fiction received, many critics also found his works to be too shocking, especially *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*. The outcry against *Jude* was so great that Hardy decided to stop writing novels and return to

his first great love, poetry.

Over the years, Hardy had divided his time between his home, Max Gate, in Dorchester and his lodgings in London. In his later years, he remained in Dorchester to focus completely on his poetry. In 1898, he saw his dream of becoming a poet realized with the publication of *Wessex Poems*. He then turned his attentions to an epic drama in verse, *The Dynasts*; it was finally completed in 1908. Before his death, he had written over 800 poems, many of them published while he was in his eighties.

By the last two decades of Hardy's life, he had achieved fame as great as Dickens' fame. In 1910, he was awarded the Order of Merit. New readers had also discovered his novels by the publication of the *Wessex Editions*, the definitive versions of all Hardy's early works. As a result, Max Gate became a literary shrine.

Hardy also found happiness in his personal life. His first wife, Emma, died in 1912. Although their marriage had not been happy, Hardy grieved at her sudden death. In 1914, he married Florence Dugale, and she was extremely devoted to him. After his death, Florence published Hardy's autobiography in two parts under her own name.

After a long and highly successful life, Thomas Hardy died on January 11, 1928, at the age of 87. His ashes were buried in Poets' Corner at Westminster Abbey.

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 lovingkindness' 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.

Thomas Hardy

A Christmas Ghost Story.

South of the Line, inland from far Durban,
A mouldering soldier lies--your countryman.
Awry and doubled up are his gray bones,
And on the breeze his puzzled phantom moans
Nightly to clear Canopus: "I would know
By whom and when the All-Earth-gladdening Law
Of Peace, brought in by that Man Crucified,
Was ruled to be inept, and set aside?

And what of logic or of truth appears
In tacking 'Anno Domini' to the years?
Near twenty-hundred livened thus have hied,
But tarries yet the Cause for which He died."

Thomas Hardy

A Circular

As 'legal representative'
I read a missive not my own,
On new designs the senders give
For clothes, in tints as shown.

Here figure blouses, gowns for tea,
And presentation-trains of state,
Charming ball-dresses, millinery,
Warranted up to date.

And this gay-pictured, spring-time shout
Of Fashion, hails what lady proud?
Her who before last year was out
Was costumed in a shroud.

Thomas Hardy

A Confession To A Friend In Trouble

YOUR troubles shrink not, though I feel them less
Here, far away, than when I tarried near;
I even smile old smiles--with listlessness--
Yet smiles they are, not ghastly mockeries mere.

A thought too strange to house within my brain
Haunting its outer precincts I discern:
--That I will not show zeal again to learn
Your griefs, and, sharing them, renew my pain....

It goes, like murky bird or buccaneer
That shapes its lawless figure on the main,
And each new impulse tends to make outflee
The unseemly instinct that had lodgment here;
Yet, comrade old, can bitterer knowledge be
Than that, though banned, such instinct was in me!

Thomas Hardy

A Death-Day Recalled

Beeny did not quiver,
Juliot grew not gray,
Thin Valency's river
Held its wonted way.
Bos seemed not to utter
Dimmest note of dirge,
Targan mouth a mutter
To its creamy surge.

Yet though these, unheeding,
Listless, passed the hour
Of her spirit's speeding,
She had, in her flower,
Sought and loved the places -
Much and often pined
For their lonely faces
When in towns confined.

Why did not Valency
In his purl deplore
One whose haunts were whence he
Drew his limpid store?
Why did Bos not thunder
Targan apprehend
Body and breath were sunder
Of their former friend?

Thomas Hardy

A Dream Or No

Why go to Saint-Juliot? What's Juliot to me?
I've been but made fancy
By some necromancy
That much of my life claims the spot as its key.

Yes. I have had dreams of that place in the West,
And a maiden abiding
Thereat as in hiding;
Fair-eyed and white-shouldered, broad-browed and brown-tressed.

And of how, coastward bound on a night long ago,
There lonely I found her,
The sea-birds around her,
And other than nigh things uncaring to know.

So sweet her life there (in my thought has it seemed)
That quickly she drew me
To take her unto me,
And lodge her long years with me. Such have I dreamed.

But nought of that maid from Saint-Juliot I see;
Can she ever have been here,
And shed her life's sheen here,
The woman I thought a long housemate with me?

Does there even a place like Saint-Juliot exist?
Or a Vallency Valley
With stream and leafed alley,
Or Beeny, or Bos with its flounce flinging mist?

Thomas Hardy

A Jog-Trot Pair

Who were the twain that trod this track
So many times together
Hither and back,
In spells of certain and uncertain weather?

Commonplace in conduct they
Who wandered to and fro here
Day by day:
Two that few dwellers troubled themselves to know here.

The very gravel-path was prim
That daily they would follow:
Borders trim:
Never a wayward sprout, or hump, or hollow.

Trite usages in tamest style
Had tended to their plighting.
'It's just worth while,
Perhaps,' they had said. 'And saves much sad good-nighting.'

And petty seemed the happenings
That ministered to their joyance:
Simple things,
Onerous to satiate souls, increased their buoyance.

Who could those common people be,
Of days the plainest, barest?
They were we;
Yes; happier than the cleverest, smartest, rarest.

Thomas Hardy

A King's Soliloquy [on The Night Of His Funeral]

From the slow march and muffled drum,
And crowds distrest,
And book and bell, at length I have come
To my full rest.

A ten years' rule beneath the sun
Is wound up here,
And what I have done, what left undone,
Figures out clear.

Yet in the estimate of such
It grieves me more
That I by some was loved so much
Than that I bore,

From others, judgment of that hue
Which over-hope
Breeds from a theoretic view
Of regal scope.

For kingly opportunities
Right many have sighed;
How best to bear its devilries
Those learn who have tried!

I have eaten the fat and drunk the sweet,
Lived the life out
From the first greeting glad drum-beat
To the last shout.

What pleasure earth affords to kings
I have enjoyed
Through its long vivid pulse-stirrings

Even till it cloyed.

What days of strain, what nights of stress
Can cark a throne,
Even one maintained in peacefulness,
I too have known.

And so, I think, could I step back
To life again,
I should prefer the average track
Of average men,

Since, as with them, what kingship would
It cannot do,
Nor to first thoughts however good
Hold itself true.

Something binds hard the royal hand,
As all that be,
And it is That has shaped, has planned
My acts and me.

Thomas Hardy

A Meeting With Despair

AS evening shaped I found me on a moor
Which sight could scarce sustain:
The black lean land, of featureless contour,
Was like a tract in pain.

"This scene, like my own life," I said, "is one
Where many glooms abide;
Toned by its fortune to a deadly dun--
Lightless on every side.

I glanced aloft and halted, pleasure-caught
To see the contrast there:
The ray-lit clouds gleamed glory; and I thought,
"There's solace everywhere!"

Then bitter self-reproaches as I stood
I dealt me silently
As one perverse--misrepresenting Good
In graceless mutiny.

Against the horizon's dim-descernèd wheel
A form rose, strange of mould:
That he was hideous, hopeless, I could feel
Rather than could behold.

"'Tis a dead spot, where even the light lies spent
To darkness!" croaked the Thing.
"Not if you look aloft!" said I, intent
On my new reasoning.

"Yea--but await awhile!" he cried. "Ho-ho!--
Look now aloft and see!"
I looked. There, too, sat night: Heaven's radiant show
Had gone. Then chuckled he.

Thomas Hardy

A Poet

Attentive eyes, fantastic heed,
Assessing minds, he does not need,
Nor urgent writs to sup or dine,
Nor pledges in the roseate wine.

For loud acclaim he does not care
By the august or rich or fair,
Nor for smart pilgrims from afar,
Curious on where his hauntings are.

But soon or later, when you hear
That he has doffed this wrinkled gear,
Some evening, at the first star-ray,
Come to his graveside, pause and say:

'Whatever his message his to tell
Two thoughtful women loved him well.'
Stand and say that amid the dim:
It will be praise enough for him.

Thomas Hardy

A Sign-Seeker

I MARK the months in liveries dank and dry,
The day-tides many-shaped and hued;
I see the nightfall shades subtrude,
And hear the monotonous hours clang negligently by.

I view the evening bonfires of the sun
On hills where morning rains have hissed;
The eyeless countenance of the mist
Pallidly rising when the summer droughts are done.

I have seen the lightning-blade, the leaping star,
The caldrons of the sea in storm,
Have felt the earthquake's lifting arm,
And trodden where abysmal fires and snowcones are.

I learn to prophesy the hid eclipse,
The coming of eccentric orbs;
To mete the dust the sky absorbs,
To weigh the sun, and fix the hour each planet dips.

I witness fellow earth-men surge and strive;
Assemblies meet, and throb, and part;
Death's soothing finger, sorrow's smart;
--All the vast various moils that mean a world alive.

But that I fain would wot of shuns my sense--
Those sights of which old prophets tell,
Those signs the general word so well,
Vouchsafed to their unheed, denied my watchings tense.

In graveyard green, behind his monument
To glimpse a phantom parent, friend,
Wearing his smile, and "Not the end!"
Outbreathing softly: that were blest enlightenment;

Or, if a dead Love's lips, whom dreams reveal
When midnight imps of King Decay
Delve sly to solve me back to clay,
Should leave some print to prove her spirit-kisses real;

Or, when Earth's Frail lie bleeding of her Strong,
If some Recorder, as in Writ,
Near to the weary scene should flit
And drop one plume as pledge that Heaven inscrolls the wrong.

--There are who, rapt to heights of tranced trust,
These tokens claim to feel and see,
Read radiant hints of times to be--
Of heart to heart returning after dust to dust.

Such scope is granted not my powers indign...
I have lain in dead men's beds, have walked
The tombs of those with whom I'd talked,
Called many a gone and goodly one to shape a sign,

And panted for response. But none replies;
No warnings loom, nor whisperings
To open out my limitings,
And Nescience mutely muses: When a man falls he lies.

Thomas Hardy

A Thunderstorm In Town

She wore a 'terra-cotta' dress,
And we stayed, because of the pelting storm,
Within the hansom's dry recess,
Though the horse had stopped; yea, motionless
We sat on, snug and warm.

Then the downpour ceased, to my sharp sad pain,
And the glass that had screened our forms before
Flew up, and out she sprang to her door:
I should have kissed her if the rain
Had lasted a minute more.

Thomas Hardy

Thomas Hardy

A Week

On Monday night I closed my door,
And thought you were not as heretofore,
And little cared if we met no more.

I seemed on Tuesday night to trace
Something beyond mere commonplace
In your ideas, and heart, and face.

On Wednesday I did not opine
Your life would ever be one with mine,
Though if it were we should well combine.

On Thursday noon I liked you well,
And fondly felt that we must dwell
Not far apart, whatever befell.

On Friday it was with a thrill
In gazing towards your distant vill
I owned you were my dear one still.

I saw you wholly to my mind
On Saturday - even one who shrined
All that was best of womankind.

As wing-clipt sea-gull for the sea
On Sunday night I longed for thee,
Without whom life were waste to me!

Thomas Hardy

A Woman's Fancy

'Ah Madam; you've indeed come back here?
'Twas sad-your husband's so swift death,
And you away! You shouldn't have left him:
It hastened his last breath.'

'Dame, I am not the lady you think me;
I know not her, nor know her name;
I've come to lodge here-a friendless woman;
My health my only aim.'

She came; she lodged. Wherever she rambled
They held her as no other than
The lady named; and told how her husband
Had died a forsaken man.

So often did they call her thuswise
Mistakenly, by that man's name,
So much did they declare about him,
That his past form and fame

Grew on her, till she pitied his sorrow
As if she truly had been the cause-
Yea, his deserter; and came to wonder
What mould of man he was.

'Tell me my history!' would exclaim she;
'OUR history,' she said mournfully.
'But YOU know, surely, Ma'am?' they would answer,
Much in perplexity.

Curious, she crept to his grave one evening,
And a second time in the dusk of the morrow;
Then a third time, with crescent emotion
Like a bereaved wife's sorrow.

No gravestone rose by the rounded hillock;
-'I marvel why this is?' she said.
- 'He had no kindred, Ma'am, but you near.'
-She set a stone at his head.

She learnt to dream of him, and told them:
'In slumber often uprises he,
And says: 'I am joyed that, after all, Dear,
You've not deserted me!'

At length died too this kinless woman,
As he had died she had grown to crave;
And at her dying she besought them
To bury her in his grave.

Such said, she had paused; until she added:
'Call me by his name on the stone,
As I were, first to last, his dearest,
Not she who left him lone!'

And this they did. And so it became there
That, by the strength of a tender whim,
The stranger was she who bore his name there,
Not she who wedded him.

Thomas Hardy

According To The Mighty Working

I

When moiling seems at cease
In the vague void of night-time,
And heaven's wide roomage stormless
Between the dusk and light-time,
And fear at last is formless,
We call the allurement Peace.

II

Peace, this hid riot, Change,
This revel of quick-cued mumming,
This never truly being,
This evermore becoming,
This spinner's wheel onfleeing
Outside perception's range.

Thomas Hardy

After A Journey

I come to interview a Voiceless ghost;
Whither, O whither will its whim now draw me?
Up the cliff, down, till I'm lonely, lost,
And the unseen waters' soliloquies awe me.
Where you will next be there's no knowing,
Facing round about me everywhere,
With your nut-coloured hair,
And gray eyes, and rose-flush coming and going.

Yes: I have re-entered your olden haunts at last;
Through the years, through the dead scenes I have tracked you;
What have you now found to say of our past -
Viewed across the dark space wherein I have lacked you?
Summer gave us sweets, but autumn wrought division?
Things were not lastly as firstly well
With us twain, you tell?
But all's closed now, despite Time's derision.

I see what you are doing: you are leading me on
To the spots we knew when we haunted here together,
The waterfall, above which the mist-bow shone
At the then fair hour in the then fair weather,
And the cave just under, with a voice still so hollow
That it seems to call out to me from forty years ago,
When you were all aglow,
And not the thin ghost that I now frailly follow!

Ignorant of what there is flitting here to see,
The waked birds preen and the seals flop lazily,
Soon you will have, Dear, to vanish from me,
For the stars close their shutters and the dawn whitens hazily.
Trust me, I mind not, though Life lours,
The bringing of me here; nay, bring me here again!
I am just the same as when
Our days were a joy, and our paths through flowers.

After The Visit

Come again to the place
Where your presence was as a leaf that skims
Down a drouthy way whose ascent bedims
The bloom on the farer's face.
Come again, with the feet
That were light on the green as a thistledown ball,
And those mute ministrations to one and to all
Beyond a man's saying sweet.
Until then the faint scent
Of the bordering flowers swam unheeded away,
And I marked not the charm in the changes of day
As the cloud-colours came and went.
Through the dark corridors
Your walk was so soundless I did not know
Your form from a phantom's of long ago
Said to pass on the ancient floors,
Till you drew from the shad
And I saw the large luminous living eyes
Regard me in fixed inquiring-wise
As those of a soul that weighed,
Scarce consciously,
The eternal question of what Life was,
And why we were there, and by whose strange laws
That which mattered most could not be.

Thomas Hardy

Afterwards

When the Present has latched its postern behind my tremulous stay,
And the May month flaps its glad green leaves like wings,
Delicate-filmed as new-spun silk, will the neighbours say,
'He was a man who used to notice such things'?

If it be in the dusk when, like an eyelid's soundless blink,
The dewfall-hawk comes crossing the shades to alight
Upon the wind-warped upland thorn, a gazer may think,
'To him this must have been a familiar sight.'

If I pass during some nocturnal blackness, mothy and warm,
When the hedgehog travels furtively over the lawn,
One may say, 'He strove that such innocent creatures should come to no harm,
But he could do little for them; and now he is gone.'

If, when hearing that I have been stilled at last, they stand at the door,
Watching the full-starred heavens that winter sees
Will this thought rise on those who will meet my face no more,
'He was one who had an eye for such mysteries'?

And will any say when my bell of quittance is heard in the gloom
And a crossing breeze cuts a pause in its outrollings,
Till they rise again, as they were a new bell's boom,
'He hears it not now, but used to notice such things'?

Thomas Hardy

Ah, Are You Digging On My Grave?

"Ah, are you digging on my grave,
My loved one? -- planting rue?"

-- "No: yesterday he went to wed
One of the brightest wealth has bred.
'It cannot hurt her now,' he said,
'That I should not be true.'"

"Then who is digging on my grave,
My nearest dearest kin?"

-- "Ah, no: they sit and think, 'What use!
What good will planting flowers produce?
No tendance of her mound can loose
Her spirit from Death's gin.'"

"But someone digs upon my grave?
My enemy? -- prodding sly?"

-- "Nay: when she heard you had passed the Gate
That shuts on all flesh soon or late,
She thought you no more worth her hate,
And cares not where you lie.

"Then, who is digging on my grave?
Say -- since I have not guessed!"

-- "O it is I, my mistress dear,
Your little dog , who still lives near,
And much I hope my movements here
Have not disturbed your rest?"

"Ah yes! You dig upon my grave...
Why flashed it not to me
That one true heart was left behind!
What feeling do we ever find
To equal among human kind
A dog's fidelity!"

"Mistress, I dug upon your grave
To bury a bone, in case
I should be hungry near this spot
When passing on my daily trot.

I am sorry, but I quite forgot
It was your resting place."

Thomas Hardy

Amabel

I MARKED her ruined hues,
Her custom-straitened views,
And asked, "Can there indwell
My Amabel?"

I looked upon her gown,
Once rose, now earthen brown;
The change was like the knell
Of Amabel.

Her step's mechanic ways
Had lost the life of May's;
Her laugh, once sweet in swell,
Spoilt Amabel.

I mused: "Who sings the strain
I sang ere warmth did wane?
Who thinks its numbers spell
His Amabel?"--

Knowing that, though Love cease,
Love's race shows undecrease;
All find in dorp or dell
An Amabel.

--I felt that I could creep
To some housetop, and weep,
That Time the tyrant fell
Ruled Amabel!

I said (the while I sighed
That love like ours had died),
"Fond things I'll no more tell
To Amabel,

"But leave her to her fate,
And fling across the gate,
'Till the Last Trump, farewell,
O Amabel!"

Thomas Hardy

An Ancient To Ancients

Where once we danced, where once we sang,
Gentlemen,
The floors are sunken, cobwebs hang,
And cracks creep; worms have fed upon
The doors. Yea, sprightlier times were then
Than now, with harps and tabrets gone,
Gentlemen!

Where once we rowed, where once we sailed,
Gentlemen,
And damsels took the tiller, veiled
Against too strong a stare (God wot
Their fancy, then or anywhen!)
Upon that shore we are clean forgot,
Gentlemen!

We have lost somewhat of that, afar and near,
Gentlemen,
The thinning of our ranks each year
Affords a hint we are nigh undone,
That shall not be ever again
The marked of many, loved of one,
Gentlemen.

In dance the polka hit our wish,
Gentlemen,
The paced quadrille, the spry schottische,
"Sir Roger."--And in opera spheres
The "Girl" (the famed "Bohemian"),
And "Trovatore" held the ears,
Gentlemen.

This season's paintings do not please,
Gentlemen
Like Etty, Mulready, Maclise;
Throbbing romance had waned and wanned;
No wizard wields the witching pen
Of Bulwer, Scott, Dumas, and Sand,
Gentlemen.

The bower we shrined to Tennyson,
Gentlemen,
Is roof-wrecked; damp there drip upon
Sagged seats, the creeper-nails are rust,
The spider is sole denizen;
Even she who voiced those rhymes is dust,
Gentlemen!

We who met sunrise sanguine-souled,
Gentlemen,
Are wearing weary. We are old;
These younger press; we feel our rout
Is imminent to Aïdes' den,--
That evening shades are stretching out,
Gentlemen!

And yet, though ours be failing frames,
Gentlemen,
So were some others' history names,
Who trode their track light-limbed and fast
As these youth, and not alien
From enterprise, to their long last,
Gentlemen.

Sophocles, Plato, Socrates,
Gentlemen,
Pythagoras, Thucydides,
Herodotus, and Homer,--yea,
Clement, Augustin, Origen,
Burnt brightlier towards their setting-day,
Gentlemen.

And ye, red-lipped and smooth-browed; list,
Gentlemen;
Much is there waits you we have missed;
Much lore we leave you worth the knowing,
Much, much has lain outside our ken;
Nay, rush not: time serves: we are going,
Gentlemen.

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.

Thomas Hardy

An Autumn Rain-Scene

There trudges one to a merry-making
With sturdy swing,
On whom the rain comes down.

To fetch the saving medicament
Is another bent,
On whom the rain comes down.

One slowly drives his herd to the stall
Ere ill befall,
On whom the rain comes down.

This bears his missives of life and death
With quickening breath,
On whom the rain comes down.

One watches for signals of wreck or war
From the hill afar,
On whom the rain comes down.

No care if he gain a shelter or none,
Unhired moves on,
On whom the rain comes down.

And another knows nought of its chilling fall
Upon him aat all,
On whom the rain comes down.

October 1904

Thomas Hardy

Aquae Sulis

The chimes called midnight, just at interlune,
And the daytime talk on the Roman investigations
Was checked by silence, save for the husky tune
The bubbling waters played near the excavations.

And a warm air came up from underground,
And a flutter, as of a filmy shape unsepulchred,
That collected itself, and waited, and looked around:
Nothing was seen, but utterances could be heard:

Those of the goddess whose shrine was beneath the pile
Of the God with the baldachined altar overhead:
'And what did you get by raising this nave and aisle
Close on the site of the temple I tenanted?

'The notes of your organ have thrilled down out of view
To the earth-clogged wrecks of my edifice many a year,
Though stately and shining once - ay, long ere you
Had set up crucifix and candle here.

'Your priests have trampled the dust of mine without rueing,
Despising the joys of man whom I so much loved,
Though my springs boil on by your Gothic arcades and pewing,
And sculptures crude.... Would Jove they could be removed!'

' - Repress, O lady proud, your traditional ires;
You know not by what a frail thread we equally hang;
It is said we are images both - twitched by peoples desires;
And that I, as you, fail as a song that men time ago sang!'

And the olden dark hid the cavities late laid bare,
And all was suspended and soundless as before,
Except for a gossamery noise fading off in the air,
And the boiling voice of the waters' medicinal pour.

Thomas Hardy

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 dote on gold.

II

In a 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.'

Thomas Hardy

At Day-Close In November

The ten hours' light is abating,
And a late bird flies across,
Where the pines, like waltzers waiting,
Give their black heads a toss.

Beech leaves, that yellow the noon-time,
Float past like specks in the eye;
I set every tree in my June time,
And now they obscure the sky.

And the children who ramble through here
Conceive that there never has been
A time when no tall trees grew here,
A time when none will be seen.

Thomas Hardy

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 question 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 unknowns.

Thomas Hardy

At A Hasty Wedding

If hours be years the twain are blest,
For now they solace swift desire
By bonds of every bond the best,
If hours be years. The twain are blest
Do eastern stars slope never west,
Nor pallid ashes follow fire:
If hours be years the twain are blest,
For now they solace swift desire.

Thomas Hardy

At A House In Hampstead Sometime The Dwelling Of John Keats

O poet, come you haunting here
Where streets have stolen up all around,
And never a nightingale pours one
Full-throated sound?

Drawn from your drowse by the Seven famed Hills,
Thought you to find all just the same
Here shining, as in hours of old,
If you but came?

What will you do in your surprise
At seeing that changes wrought in Rome
Are wrought yet more on the misty slope
One time your home?

Will you wake wind-wafts on these stairs?
Swing the doors open noisily?
Show as an umbraged ghost beside
Your ancient tree?

Or will you, softening, the while
You further and yet further look,
Learn that a laggard few would fain
Preserve your nook? . . .

-Where the Piazza steps incline,
And catch late light at eventide,
I once stood, in that Rome, and thought,
"Twas here he died.'

I drew to a violet-sprinkled spot,
Where day and night a pyramid keeps
Uplifted its white hand, and said,
"Tis there he sleeps.'

Pleasanter now it is to hold
That here, where sang he, more of him

Remains than where he, tuneless, cold,
Passed to the dim.

July 1920

Thomas Hardy

At A Lunar Eclipse

Thy shadow, Earth, from Pole to Central Sea,
Now steals along upon the Moon's meek shine
In even monochrome and curving line
Of imperturbable serenity.

How shall I link such sun-cast symmetry
With the torn troubled form I know as thine,
That profile, placid as a brow divine,
With continents of moil and misery?

And can immense Mortality but throw
So small a shade, and Heaven's high human scheme
Be hemmed within the coasts yon arc implies?

Is such the stellar gauge of earthly show,
Nation at war with nation, brains that teem,
Heroes, and women fairer than the skies?

Thomas Hardy

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!

Thomas Hardy

At Castle Boterel

As I drive to the junction of lane and highway,
And the drizzle bedrenches the waggonette,
I look behind at the fading byway,
And see on its slope, now glistening wet,
Distinctly yet

Myself and a girlish form benighted
In dry March weather. We climb the road
Beside a chaise. We had just alighted
To ease the sturdy pony's load
When he sighed and slowed.

What we did as we climbed, and what we talked of
Matters not much, nor to what it led, -
Something that life will not be balked of
Without rude reason till hope is dead,
And feeling fled.

It filled but a minute. But was there ever
A time of such quality, since or before,
In that hill's story? To one mind never,
Though it has been climbed, foot-swift, foot-sore,
By thousands more.

Primaeval rocks form the road's steep border,
And much have they faced there, first and last,
Of the transitory in Earth's long order;
But what they record in colour and cast
Is - that we two passed.

And to me, though Time's unflinching rigour,
In mindless rote, has ruled from sight
The substance now, one phantom figure
Remains on the slope, as when that night
Saw us alight.

I look and see it there, shrinking, shrinking,
Look back at it amid the rain
For the very last time; for my sand is sinking,

And I shall traverse old love's domain
Never again.

Thomas Hardy

At Lulworth Cove A Century Back

Had I but lived a hundred years ago
I might have gone, as I have gone this year,
By Warmwell Cross on to a Cove I know,
And Time have placed his finger on me there:

"You see that man?" -- I might have looked, and said,
"O yes: I see him. One that boat has brought
Which dropped down Channel round Saint Alban's Head.
So commonplace a youth calls not my thought."

"You see that man?" -- "Why yes; I told you; yes:
Of an idling town-sort; thin; hair brown in hue;
And as the evening light scants less and less
He looks up at a star, as many do."

"You see that man?" -- "Nay, leave me!" then I plead,
"I have fifteen miles to vamp across the lea,
And it grows dark, and I am weary-kneed:
I have said the third time; yes, that man I see!"

"Good. That man goes to Rome -- to death, despair;
And no one notes him now but you and I:
A hundred years, and the world will follow him there,
And bend with reverence where his ashes lie."

Thomas Hardy

At Moonrise And Onwards

I thought you a fire
On Heron-Plantation Hill,
Dealing out mischief the most dire
To the chattels of men of hire
There in their vill.

But by and by
You turned a yellow-green,
Like a large glow-worm in the sky;
And then I could descry
Your mood and mien.

How well I know
Your furtive feminine shape!
As if reluctantly you show
You nude of cloud, and but by favour throw
Aside its drape . . .

-How many a year
Have you kept pace with me,
Wan Woman of the waste up there,
Behind a hedge, or the bare
Bough of a tree!

No novelty are you,
O Lady of all my time,
Veering unbid into my view
Whether I near Death's mew,
Or Life's top cyme!

Thomas Hardy

At the Entering of the New Year

I

(OLD STYLE)

Our songs went up and out the chimney,
And roused the home-gone husbandmen;
Our allemands, our heys, poussettings,
Our hands-across and back again,
Sent rhythmic throbbings through the casements
 On to the white highway,
Where nighted farers paused and muttered,
 "Keep it up well, do they!"

The contrabasso's measured booming
Sped at each bar to the parish bounds,
To shepherds at their midnight lambings,
To stealthy poachers on their rounds;
And everybody caught full dully
 The notes of our delight,
As Time unrobed the Youth of Promise
 Hailed by our sanguine sight.

II

(NEW STYLE)

We stand in the dusk of a pine-tree limb,
As if to give ear to the muffled peal,
Brought or withheld at the breeze's whim;
But our truest heed is to words that steal
From the mantled ghost that looms in the gray,
And seems, so far as our sense can see,
To feature bereaved Humanity,
As it sighs to the imminent year its say:—

"O stay without, O stay without,
Calm comely Youth, untasked, untired;
Though stars irradiate thee about
Thy entrance here is undesired.
Open the gate not, mystic one;
 Must we avow what we would close confine?"

With thee, good friend, we would have converse none,
Albeit the fault may not be thine."

December 31. During the War.

Thomas Hardy

At The Railway Station, Upways

'There is not much that I can do,
For I've no money that's quite my own!
Spoke up the pitying child--
A little boy with a violin
At the station before the train came in,--
'But I can play my fiddle to you,
And a nice one 'tis, and good in tone!'

The man in the handcuffs smiled;
The constable looked, and he smiled too,
As the fiddle began to twang;
And the man in the handcuffs suddenly sang
With grimful glee:
'This life so free
Is the thing for me!
And the constable smiled, and said no word,
As if unconscious of what he heard;
And so they went on till the train came in--
The convict, and boy with the violin.

Thomas Hardy

At The War Office, London.

I

Last year I called this world of gain-givings
The darkest thinkable, and questioned sadly
If my own land could heave its pulse less gladly,
So charged it seemed with circumstance whence springs
The tragedy of things.

II

Yet at that censured time no heart was rent
Or feature blanched of parent, wife, or daughter
By hourly blazoned sheets of listed slaughter;
Death waited Nature's wont; Peace smiled unshent
From Ind to Occident.

Thomas Hardy

Barthelemon At Vauxhall

Francois Hippolite Barthelemon, first-fiddler at Vauxhall Gardens, composed what was probably the most popular morning hymn-tune ever written. It was formerly sung, full-voiced, every Sunday in most churches, to Bishop Ken's words, but is now seldom heard.

He said: 'Awake my soul, and with the sun,' . . .
And paused upon the bridge, his eyes due east,
Where was emerging like a full-robed priest
The irradiate globe that vouched the dark as done.

It lit his face-the weary face of one
Who in the adjacent gardens charged his string,
Nightly, with many a tuneful tender thing,
Till stars were weak, and dancing hours outrun.

And then were threads of matin music spun
In trial tones as he pursued his way:
'This is a morn,' he murmured, 'well begun:
This strain to Ken will count when I am clay!'

And count it did; till, caught by echoing lyres,
It spread to galleried naves and mighty quires.

Thomas Hardy

Beeny Cliff

I

O the opal and the sapphire of that wandering western sea,
And the woman riding high above with bright hair flapping free-
The woman whom I loved so, and who loyally loved me.

I I

The pale mews plained below us, and the waves seemed far away
In a nether sky, engrossed in saying their ceaseless babbling say,
As we laughed light-heartedly aloft on that clear-sunned March day.

III

A little cloud then cloaked us, and there flew an irised rain,
And the Atlantic dyed its levels with a dull misfeatured stain,
And then the sun burst out again, and purples prinked the main.

IV

-Still in all its chasmal beauty bulks old Beeny to the sky,
And shall she and I not go there once again now March is nigh,
And the sweet things said in that March say anew there by and by?

V

What if still in chasmal beauty looms that wild weird western shore,
The woman now is-elsewhere-whom the ambling pony bore,
And nor knows nor cares for Beeny, and will laugh there nevermore.

Thomas Hardy

Before And After Summer

I

Looking forward to the spring
One puts up with anything.
On this February day,
Though the winds leap down the street,
Wintry scourgings seem but play,
And these later shafts of sleet
- Sharper pointed than the first -
And these later snows - the worst -
Are as a half-transparent blind
Riddled by rays from sun behind.

II

Shadows of the October pine
Reach into this room of mine:
On the pine there stands a bird;
He is shadowed with the tree.
Mutely perched he bills no word;
Blank as I am even is he.
For those happy suns are past,
Fore-discerned in winter last.
When went by their pleasure, then?
I, alas, perceived not when.

Thomas Hardy

Before Marching and After

Orion swung southward aslant

Where the starved Egdon pine-trees had thinned,

The Pleiads aloft seemed to pant

With the heather that twitched in the wind;

But he looked on indifferent to sights such as these,

Unswayed by love, friendship, home joy or home sorrow,

And wondered to what he would march on the morrow.

The crazed household-clock with its whirr

Rang midnight within as he stood,

He heard the low sighing of her

Who had striven from his birth for his good;

But he still only asked the spring starlight, the breeze,

What great thing or small thing his history would borrow

From that Game with Death he would play on the morrow.

When the heath wore the robe of late summer,

And the fuchsia-bells, hot in the sun,

Hung red by the door, a quick comer

Brought tidings that marching was done

For him who had joined in that game overseas

Where Death stood to win, though his name was to borrow

A brightness therefrom not to fade on the morrow.

Thomas Hardy

Bereft, She Thinks She Dreams

I dream that the dearest I ever knew
Has died and been entombed.
I am sure it's a dream that cannot be true,
But I am so overgloomed
By its persistence, that I would gladly
Have quick death take me,
Rather than longer think thus sadly;
So wake me, wake me!

It has lasted days, but minute and hour
I expect to get aroused
And find him as usual in the bower
Where we so happily housed.
Yet stays this nightmare too appalling,
And like a web shakes me,
And piteously I keep on calling,
And no one wakes me!

Thomas Hardy

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 if 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 my 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.

Thomas Hardy

Birds At Winter Nightfall (Triolet)

Around the house the flakes fly faster,
And all the berries now are gone
From holly and cotoneaster
Around the house. The flakes fly!--faster
Shutting indoors that crumb-outcaster
We used to see upon the lawn
Around the house. The flakes fly faster,
And all the berries now are gone!

Thomas Hardy

Cardinal Bembo's Epitaph On Raphael

Here's one in whom Nature feared--faint at such vying -
Eclipse while he lived, and decease at his dying.

Thomas Hardy

Catullus: Xxxi

(After passing Sirmione, April 1887.)

Sirmio, thou dearest dear of strands
That Neptune strokes in lake and sea,
With what high joy from stranger lands
Doth thy old friend set foot on thee!
Yea, barely seems it true to me
That no Bithynia holds me now,
But calmly and assuringly
Around me stretchest homely Thou.

Is there a scene more sweet than when
Our clinging cares are undercast,
And, worn by alien moils and men,
The long untrodden sill repassed,
We press the pined for couch at last,
And find a full repayment there?
Then hail, sweet Sirmio; thou that wast,
And art, mine own unrivalled Fair!

Thomas Hardy

Channel Firing

That night your great guns, unawares,
Shook all our coffins as we lay,
And broke the chancel window-squares,
We thought it was the judgement day

And sat upright. While drearisome
Arose the howl of wakened hounds:
The mouse let fall the altar-crumb,
The worms drew back into the mounds,

The glebe cow drooled. Till God called, "No;
It's gunnery practice out at sea
Just as before you went below;
The world is as it used to be:

"All nations striving strong to make
Red war yet redder. Mad as hatters
They do more for Christ's sake
Than you who are helpless in such matters.

"That this is not the judgment hour
For some of them's a blessed thing,
For if it were they'd have to scour
Hells floor for so much threatening...

"Ha, ha. It will be warmer when
I blow the trumpet (if indeed
I ever do; for you are men,
And rest eternal sorely need)."

So down we lay again. "I wonder,
Will the world ever saner be,"
Said one, "than when He sent us under
In our indifferent century!"

And many a skeleton shook his head.
"Instead of preaching forty year,"
My neighbor Oarson Thirdly said,
"I wish I had stuck to pipes and beer."

Again the guns disturbed the hour,
Roaring their readiness to avenge,
As far inland as Stourton Tower,
And Camelot, and starlit Stonehenge.

Thomas Hardy

Convergence Of The Twain

I

In a solitude of the sea
Deep from human vanity,
And the Pride of Life that planned her, stilly couches she.

II

Steel chambers, late the pyres
Of her salamandrine fires,
Cold currents thrid, and turn to rhythmic tidal lyres.

III

Over the mirrors meant
To glass the opulent
The sea-worm crawls -- grotesque, slimed, dumb, indifferent.

IV

Jewels in joy designed
To ravish the sensuous mind
Lie lightless, all their sparkles bleared and black and blind.

V

Dim moon-eyed fishes near
Gaze at the gilded gear
And query: 'What does this vaingloriousness down here?'. . .

VI

Well: while was fashioning
This creature of cleaving wing,
The Immanent Will that stirs and urges everything

VII

Prepared a sinister mate

For her -- so gaily great --
A Shape of Ice, for the time fat and dissociate.

VIII

And as the smart ship grew
In stature, grace, and hue
In shadowy silent distance grew the Iceberg too.

IX

Alien they seemed to be:
No mortal eye could see
The intimate welding of their later history.

X

Or sign that they were bent
By paths coincident
On being anon twin halves of one August event,

XI

Till the Spinner of the Years
Said 'Now!' And each one hears,
And consummation comes, and jars two hemispheres.

Thomas Hardy

De Profundis

I

"Percussus sum sicut foenum, et aruit cor meum."

- Ps. ci

 Wintertime nighs;
But my bereavement-pain
It cannot bring again:
 Twice no one dies.

 Flower-petals flee;
But, since it once hath been,
No more that severing scene
 Can harrow me.

 Birds faint in dread:
I shall not lose old strength
In the lone frost's black length:
 Strength long since fled!

 Leaves freeze to dun;
But friends can not turn cold
This season as of old
 For him with none.

 Tempests may scath;
But love can not make smart
Again this year his heart
 Who no heart hath.

 Black is night's cope;
But death will not appal
One who, past doubtings all,
 Waits in unhope.
De Profundis

II

"Considerabam ad dexteram, et videbam; et non erat qui cognosceret me

When the clouds' swoln bosoms echo back the shouts of the many and strong
That things are all as they best may be, save a few to be right ere long,
And my eyes have not the vision in them to discern what to these is so clear,
The blot seems straightway in me alone; one better he were not here.

The stout upstanders say, All's well with us: ruers have nought to rue!
And what the potent say so oft, can it fail to be somewhat true?
Breezily go they, breezily come; their dust smokes around their career,
Till I think I am one horn out of due time, who has no calling here.

Their dawns bring lusty joys, it seems; their eves exultance sweet;
Our times are blessed times, they cry: Life shapes it as is most meet,
And nothing is much the matter; there are many smiles to a tear;
Then what is the matter is I, I say. Why should such an one be here?

Let him to whose ears the low-voiced Best seems stilled by the clash of the First,
Who holds that if way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst,
Who feels that delight is a delicate growth cramped by crookedness, custom, and fear,
Get him up and be gone as one shaped awry; he disturbs the order here.
De Profundis

III

"Heu mihi, quia incolatus meus prolongatus est! Habitavi cum habitantibus Cedar; multum incola fuit aninia mea."--Ps. cxix.

There have been times when I well might have passed and the ending have come -
Points in my path when the dark might have stolen on me, artless, unrueing -
Ere I had learnt that the world was a welter of futile doing:

Such had been times when I well might have passed, and the ending
have come!

Say, on the noon when the half-sunny hours told that April was nigh,
And I upgathered and cast forth the snow from the crocus-border,
Fashioned and furbished the soil into a summer-seeming order,
Glowing in gladsome faith that I quickened the year thereby.

Or on that loneliest of eves when afar and benighted we stood,
She who upheld me and I, in the midmost of Egdon together,
Confident I in her watching and ward through the blackening heather,
Deeming her matchless in might and with measureless scope endued.

Or on that winter-wild night when, reclined by the chimney-nook
quoin,
Slowly a drowse overgat me, the smallest and feeblest of folk there,
Weak from my baptism of pain; when at times and anon I awoke there -
Heard of a world wheeling on, with no listing or longing to join.

Even then! while unweeting that vision could vex or that knowledge
could numb,
That sweets to the mouth in the belly are bitter, and tart, and
untoward,
Then, on some dim-coloured scene should my briefly raised curtain
have lowered,
Then might the Voice that is law have said "Cease!" and the ending
have come.

Thomas Hardy

Departure (Southampton Docks: October, 1899)

While the far farewell music thins and fails,
And the broad bottoms rip the bearing brine -
All smalling slowly to the gray sea line -
And each significant red smoke-shaft pales,

Keen sense of severance everywhere prevails,
Which shapes the late long tramp of mounting men
To seeming words that ask and ask again:
"How long, O striving Teutons, Slavs, and Gaels

Must your wroth reasonings trade on lives like these,
That are as puppets in a playing hand? -
When shall the saner softer polities
Whereof we dream, have play in each proud land,
And patriotism, grown Godlike, scorn to stand
Bondslave to realms, but circle earth and seas?"

Thomas Hardy

Departure.

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Thomas Hardy

Ditty

(E. L. G.)

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 neighbors,
Fellow wights in lot and labors,
Who descry the times as I,
No such lucid legend tells
Where she dwells.

Should I lapse to what I was
In days by--
(Such cannot be, but because
Some loves die
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--
Otherwhere, 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!

Thomas Hardy

Domicilium

It faces west, and round the back and sides
High beeches, bending, hang a veil of boughs,
And sweep against the roof. Wild honeysucks
Climb on the walls, and seem to sprout a wish
(If we may fancy wish of trees and plants)
To overtop the apple trees hard-by.

Red roses, lilacs, variegated box
Are there in plenty, and such hardy flowers
As flourish best untrained. Adjoining these
Are herbs and esculents; and farther still
A field; then cottages with trees, and last
The distant hills and sky.

Behind, the scene is wilder. Heath and furze
Are everything that seems to grow and thrive
Upon the uneven ground. A stunted thorn
Stands here and there, indeed; and from a pit
An oak uprises, Springing from a seed
Dropped by some bird a hundred years ago.

In days bygone--
Long gone--my father's mother, who is now
Blest with the blest, would take me out to walk.
At such a time I once inquired of her
How looked the spot when first she settled here.
The answer I remember. 'Fifty years
Have passed since then, my child, and change has marked
The face of all things. Yonder garden-plots
And orchards were uncultivated slopes
O'ergrown with bramble bushes, furze and thorn:
That road a narrow path shut in by ferns,
Which, almost trees, obscured the passers-by.

Our house stood quite alone, and those tall firs
And beeches were not planted. Snakes and efts
Swarmed in the summer days, and nightly bats
Would fly about our bedrooms. Heathcroppers
Lived on the hills, and were our only friends;

So wild it was when we first settled here.'

Thomas Hardy

Drummer Hodge

They throw in Drummer Hodge, to rest
Uncoffined -- just as found:
His landmark is a kopje-crest
That breaks the veldt around:
And foreign constellations west
Each night above his mound.

Young Hodge the drummer never knew --
Fresh from his Wessex home --
The meaning of the broad Karoo,
The Bush, the dusty loam,
And why uprose to nightly view
Strange stars amid the gloam.

Yet portion of that unknown plain
Will Hodge for ever be;
His homely Northern breast and brain
Grow to some Southern tree,
And strange-eyed constellations reign
His stars eternally.

Thomas Hardy

During Wind And Rain

THEY sing their dearest songs--
He, she, all of them--yea,
Treble and tenor and bass.
 And one to play;
With the candles mooning each face....
 Ah, no; the years O!
How the sick leaves reel down in throngs!

They clear the creeping moss--
Elders and juniors--aye,
Making the pathways neat
 And the garden gay;
And they build a shady seat....
 Ah, no; the years, the years;
See, the white storm-birds wing across!

They are blithely breakfasting all--
Men and maidens--yea,
Under the summer tree,
 With a glimpse of the bay,
While pet fowl come to the knee....
 Ah, no; the years O!
And the rotten rose is ripped from the wall.

They change to a high new house,
He, she, all of them--aye,
Clocks and carpets and chairs
 On the lawn all day,
And brightest things that are theirs....
 Ah, no; the years, the years;
Down their carved names the raindrop plows.

Thomas Hardy

Embarcation

Southampton Docks: October 1899

Here, where Vespasian's legions struck the sands,
And Cendric with the Saxons entered in,
And Henry's army lept afloat to win
Convincing triumphs over neighboring lands,

Vaster battalions press for further strands,
To argue in the selfsame bloody mode
Which this late age of thought, and pact, and code,
Still fails to mend.--Now deckward tramp the bands,

Yellow as autumn leaves, alive as spring;
And as each host draws out upon the sea
Beyond which lies the tragical To-be,
None dubious of the cause, none murmuring,

Wives, sisters, parents, wave white hands and smile,
As if they knew not that they weep the while.

Thomas Hardy

Embarcation (Southampton Docks: October, 1899)

Here, where Vespasian's legions struck the sands,
And Cerdic with his Saxons entered in,
And Henry's army leapt afloat to win
Convincing triumphs over neighbour lands,

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Wives, sisters, parents, wave white hands and smile,
As if they knew not that they weep the while.

Thomas Hardy

Epeisodia

I

Past the hills that peep
Where the leaze is smiling,
On and on beguiling
Crisply-cropping sheep;
Under boughs of brushwood
Linking tree and tree
In a shade of lushwood,
There caressed we!

II

Hemmed by city walls
That outshut the sunlight,
In a foggy dun light,
Where the footstep falls
With a pit-pat wearisome
In its cadency
On the flagstones drearisome
There pressed we!

III

Where in wild-winged crowds
Blown birds show their whiteness
Up against the lightness
Of the clammy clouds;
By the random river
Pushing to the sea,
Under bents that quiver
There rest we.

Thomas Hardy

Epitaph On A Pessimist

I'm Smith of Stoke aged sixty odd
I've lived without a dame all my life
And wish to God
My dad had done the same.

Thomas Hardy

Exeunt Omnes

I

Everybody else, then, going,
And I still left where the fair was?...
Much have I seen of neighbour loungers
Making a lusty showing,
Each now past all knowing.

II

There is an air of blankness
In the street and the littered spaces;
Thoroughfare, steeple, bridge and highway
Wizen themselves to lankness;
Kennels dribble dankness.

III

Folk all fade. And whither,
As I wait alone where the fair was?
Into the clammy and numbing night-fog
Whence they entered hither.
Soon one more goes thither!

Thomas Hardy

Faintheart In A Railway Train

At nine in the morning there passed a church,
At ten there passed me by the sea,
At twelve a town of smoke and smirch,
At two a forest of oak and birch,
And then, on a platform, she:

A radiant stranger, who saw not me.
I queried, 'Get out to her do I dare?'
But I kept my seat in my search for a plea,
And the wheels moved on. O could it but be
That I had alighted there!

Thomas Hardy

Fragment

At last I entered a long dark gallery,
Catacomb-lined; and ranged at the side
Were the bodies of men from far and wide
Who, motion past, were nevertheless not dead.

"The sense of waiting here strikes strong;
Everyone's waiting, waiting, it seems to me;
What are you waiting for so long? --
What is to happen?" I said.

"O we are waiting for one called God," said they,
"(Though by some the Will, or Force, or Laws;
And, vaguely, by some, the Ultimate Cause;)
Waiting for him to see us before we are clay.
Yes; waiting, waiting, for God to know it." ...

"To know what?" questioned I.
"To know how things have been going on earth and below it:
It is clear he must know some day."
I thereon asked them why.
"Since he made us humble pioneers
Of himself in consciousness of Life's tears,
It needs no mighty prophecy
To tell that what he could mindlessly show
His creatures, he himself will know.

"By some still close-cowled mystery
We have reached feeling faster than he,
But he will overtake us anon,
If the world goes on."

Thomas Hardy

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 eves 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 favorite heifer, ye mid let the charlock grow,
Foul the grinterns, give up thrift."
Wife.--"If ye break my best blue china, children, I sha'n'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.

Thomas Hardy

From: Men Who March Away

In our heart of hearts believing
Victory crown the just,
And that braggarts must
Surely bite the dust,
Press we to the field ungrieving,
In our heart of hearts believing
Victory crowns the just.

Hence the faith and fire within us
Men who march away
Ere the barn-cocks say
Night is growing gray,
Leaving all that here can win us;
Hence the faith and fire within us
Men who march away!

Is it a purblind prank, O think you,
Friend with the musing eye
Who watch us stepping by,
With doubt and dolorous sigh?
Can much pondering so hoodwink you?
Is it a purblind prank, O think you,
Friend with the musing eye?

Nay. We see well what we are doing,
Though some may not see -
Dalliers as they be -
England's need are we;
Her distress would leave us rueing:
Nay. We well see what we are doing,
Though some may not see!

Thomas Hardy

Genoa And The Mediterranean.

O epic-famed, god-haunted Central Sea,
Heave careless of the deep wrong done to thee
When from Torino's track I saw thy face first flash on me.

And multimarbled Genova the Proud,
Gleam all unconscious how, wide-lipped, up-browed,
I first beheld thee clad--not as the Beauty but the Dowd.

Out from a deep-delved way my vision lit
On housebacks pink, green, ochreous--where a slit
Shoreward 'twixt row and row revealed the classic blue through it.

And thereacross waved fishwives' high-hung smocks,
Chrome kerchiefs, scarlet hose, darned underfrocks;
Since when too oft my dreams of thee, O Queen, that frippery mocks:

Whereat I grieve, Superba! . . . Afterhours
Within Palazzo Doria's orange bowers
Went far to mend these marrings of thy soul-subliming powers.

But, Queen, such squalid undress none should see,
Those dream-endangering eyewounds no more be
Where lovers first behold thy form in pilgrimage to thee.

Thomas Hardy

George Meredith

Forty years back, when much had place
That since has perished out of mind,
I heard that voice and saw that face.

He spoke as one afoot will wind
A morning horn ere men awake;
His note was trenchant, turning kind.

He was one of those whose wit can shake
And riddle to the very core
The counterfiets that Time will break....

Of late, when we two met once more,
The luminous countenance and rare
Shone just as forty years before.

So that, when now all tongues declare
His shape unseen by his green hill,
I scarce believe he sits not there.

No matter. Further and further still
Through the world's vaprous vitiate air
His words wing on--as live words will.

Thomas Hardy

God's Funeral

I

I saw a slowly-stepping train --
Lined on the brows, scoop-eyed and bent and hoar --
Following in files across a twilit plain
A strange and mystic form the foremost bore.

II

And by contagious throbs of thought
Or latent knowledge that within me lay
And had already stirred me, I was wrought
To consciousness of sorrow even as they.

III

The fore-borne shape, to my blurred eyes,
At first seemed man-like, and anon to change
To an amorphous cloud of marvellous size,
At times endowed with wings of glorious range.

IV

And this phantasmal variousness
Ever possessed it as they drew along:
Yet throughout all it symbolled none the less
Potency vast and loving-kindness strong.

V

Almost before I knew I bent
Towards the moving columns without a word;
They, growing in bulk and numbers as they went,
Struck out sick thoughts that could be overheard: --

VI

'O man-projected Figure, of late
Imaged as we, thy knell who shall survive?
Whence came it we were tempted to create
One whom we can no longer keep alive?

VII

'Framing him jealous, fierce, at first,
We gave him justice as the ages rolled,

Will to bless those by circumstance accurst,
And longsuffering, and mercies manifold.

VIII

'And, tricked by our own early dream
And need of solace, we grew self-deceived,
Our making soon our maker did we deem,
And what we had imagined we believed,

IX

'Till, in Time's stayless stealthy swing,
Uncompromising rude reality
Mangled the Monarch of our fashioning,
Who quavered, sank; and now has ceased to be.

X

'So, toward our myth's oblivion,
Darkling, and languid-lipped, we creep and grope
Sadlier than those who wept in Babylon,
Whose Zion was a still abiding hope.

XI

'How sweet it was in years far hied
To start the wheels of day with trustful prayer,
To lie down liegely at the eventide
And feel a blest assurance he was there!

XII

'And who or what shall fill his place?
Whither will wanderers turn distracted eyes
For some fixed star to stimulate their pace
Towards the goal of their enterprise?'...

XIII

Some in the background then I saw,
Sweet women, youths, men, all incredulous,
Who chimed as one: 'This is figure is of straw,
This requiem mockery! Still he lives to us!'

XIV

I could not prop their faith: and yet
Many I had known: with all I sympathized;

And though struck speechless, I did not forget
That what was mourned for, I, too, once had prized.

XV

Still, how to bear such loss I deemed
The insistent question for each animate mind,
And gazing, to my growing sight there seemed
A pale yet positive gleam low down behind,

XVI

Whereof, to lift the general night,
A certain few who stood aloof had said,
'See you upon the horizon that small light --
Swelling somewhat?' Each mourner shook his head.

XVII

And they composed a crowd of whom
Some were right good, and many nigh the best....
Thus dazed and puzzled 'twixt the gleam and gloom
Mechanically I followed with the rest.

Thomas Hardy

Going And Staying

I

The moving sun-shapes on the spray,
The sparkles where the brook was flowing,
Pink faces, plightings, moonlit May,
These were the things we wished would stay;
But they were going.

II

Seasons of blankness as of snow,
The silent bleed of a world decaying,
The moan of multitudes in woe,
These were the things we wished would go;
But they were staying.

III

Then we looked closelier at Time,
And saw his ghostly arms revolving
To sweep off woeful things with prime,
Things sinister with things sublime
Alike dissolving.

Thomas Hardy

Had You Wept

Had you wept; had you but neared me with a frail uncertain ray,
Dewy as the face of the dawn, in your large and luminous eye,
Then would have come back all the joys the tidings had slain that day,
And a new beginning, a fresh fair heaven, have smoothed the things awry.
But you were less feebly human, and no passionate need for clinging
Possessed your soul to overthrow reserve when I came near;
Ay, though you suffer as much as I from storms the hours are bringing
Upon your heart and mine, I never see you shed a tear.

The deep strong woman is weakest, the weak one is the strong;
The weapon of all weapons best for winning, you have not used;
Have you never been able, or would you not, through the evil times and long?
Has not the gift been given you, or such gift have you refused?
When I bade me not absolve you on that evening or the morrow,
Why did you not make war on me with those who weep like rain?
You felt too much, so gained no balm for all your torrid sorrow,
And hence our deep division, and our dark undying pain.

Thomas Hardy

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 profiting!"

Then would I bear, and clench myself, and die,
Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited;
Half-eased, too, 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.

Thomas Hardy

He Never Expected Much

Well, World, you have kept faith with me,
Kept faith with me;
Upon the whole you have proved to be
Much as you said you were.
Since as a child I used to lie
Upon the leaze and watch the sky,
Never, I own, expected I
That life would all be fair.

'Twas then you said, and since have said,
Times since have said,
In that mysterious voice you shed
From clouds and hills around:
"Many have loved me desperately,
Many with smooth serenity,
While some have shown contempt of me
Till they dropped underground.

"I do not promise overmuch,
Child; overmuch;
Just neutral-tinted haps and such,"
You said to minds like mine.
Wise warning for your credit's sake!
Which I for one failed not to take,
And hence could stem such strain and ache
As each year might assign.

Thomas Hardy

Heiress And Architect

For A. W. B.

SHE sought the Studios, beckoning to her side
An arch-designer, for she planned to build.
He was of wise contrivance, deeply skilled
In every intervolve of high and wide--
Well fit to be her guide.

"Whatever it be,"
Responded he,
With cold, clear voice, and cold, clear view,
"In true accord with prudent fashionings
For such vicissitudes as living brings,
And thwarting not the law of stable things,
That will I do."

"Shape me," she said, "high walls with tracery
And open ogive-work, that scent and hue
Of buds, and travelling bees, may come in through,
The note of birds, and singings of the sea,
For these are much to me."

"An idle whim!"
Broke forth from him
Whom nought could warm to gallantries:
"Cede all these buds and birds, the zephyr's call,
And scents, and hues, and things that falter all,
And choose as best the close and surly wall,
For winter's freeze."

"Then frame," she cried, "wide fronts of crystal glass,
That I may show my laughter and my light--
Light like the sun's by day, the stars' by night--
Till rival heart-queens, envying, wail, 'Alas,
Her glory!' as they pass."

"O maid misled!"
He sternly said,
Whose facile foresight pierced her dire;

"Where shall abide the soul when, sick of glee,
It shrinks, and hides, and prays no eye may see?
Those house them best who house for secrecy,
For you will tire."

"A little chamber, then, with swan and dove
Ranged thickly, and engrailed with rare device
Of reds and purples, for a Paradise
Wherein my Love may greet me, I my Love,
When he shall know thereof?"

"This, too, is ill,"
He answered still,
The man who swayed her like a shade.
"An hour will come when sight of such sweet nook
Would bring a bitterness too sharp to brook,
When brighter eyes have won away his look;
For you will fade."

Then said she faintly: "O, contrive some way--
Some narrow winding turret, quite mine own,
To reach a loft where I may grieve alone!
It is a slight thing; hence do not, I pray,
This last dear fancy slay!"

"Such winding ways
Fit not your days,"
Said he, the man of measuring eye;
"I must even fashion as my rule declares,
To wit: Give space (since life ends unawares)
To hale a confined corpse adown the stairs;
For you will die."

Thomas Hardy

Her Death And After

'Twas 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
The home-things wear which the housewife miss;
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 forever," 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 condone
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 renowned,
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 rumor 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 had night the sun's gold touch displaced
From the vast Rotund and the neighboring 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 honored 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 passions brute,
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!

Thomas Hardy

Her Dilemma

THE two were silent in a sunless church,
Whose mildewed walls, uneven paving-stones,
And wasted carvings passed antique research;
And nothing broke the clock's dull monotones.

Leaning against a wormy poppy-head,
So wan and worn that he could scarcely stand,
--For he was soon to die,--he softly said,
"Tell me you love me!"--holding hard her hand.

She would have given a world to breathe "yes" truly,
So much his life seemed hanging on her mind,
And hence she lied, her heart persuaded throughly,
'Twas worth her soul to be a moment kind.

But the sad need thereof, his nearing death,
So mocked humanity that she shamed to prize
A world conditioned thus, or care for breath
Where Nature such dilemmas could devise.

Thomas Hardy

Her Immortality

UPON a noon I pilgrimed through
A pasture, mile by mile,
Unto the place where I last saw
My dead Love's living smile.

And sorrowing I lay me down
Upon the heated sod:
It seemed as if my body pressed
The very ground she trod.

I lay, and thought; and in a trance
She came and stood me by--
The same, even to the marvellous ray
That used to light her eye.

"You draw me, and I come to you,
My faithful one," she said,
In voice that had the moving tone
It bore in maidenhead.

She said: "'Tis seven years since I died:
Few now remember me;
My husband clasps another bride;
My children mothers she.

My brethren, sisters, and my friends
Care not to meet my sprite:
Who prized me most I did not know
Till I passed down from sight."

I said: "My days are lonely here;
I need thy smile alway:
I'll use this night my ball or blade,
And join thee ere the day."

A tremor stirred her tender lips,
Which parted to dissuade:
"That cannot be, O friend," she cried;
"Think, I am but a Shade!

"A Shade but in its mindful ones
Has immortality;
By living, me you keep alive,
By dying you slay me.

"In you resides my single power
Of sweet continuance here;
On your fidelity I count
Through many a coming year."

--I started through me at her plight,
So suddenly confessed:
Dismissing late distaste for life,
I craved its bleak unrest.

"I will not die, my One of all!--
To lengthen out thy days
I'll guard me from minutest harms
That may invest my ways!"

She smiled and went. Since then she comes
Oft when her birth-moon climbs,
Or at the seasons' ingresses
Or anniversary times;

But grows my grief. When I surcease,
Through whom alone lives she,
Ceases my Love, her words, her ways,
Never again to be!

Thomas Hardy

Her Initials

UPON a poet's page I wrote
Of old two letters of her name;
Part seemed she of the effulgent thought
Whence that high singer's rapture came.
--When now I turn the leaf the same
Immortal light illumines the lay
But from the letters of her name
The radiance has died away.

Thomas Hardy

Her Initials

Upon a poet's page I wrote
Of old two letters of her name;
Part seemed she of the effulgent thought
Whence that high singer's rapture came.
—When now I turn the leaf the same
Immortal light illumes the lay
But from the letters of her name
The radiance has died away.

Thomas Hardy

Her Reproach

Con the dead page as 'twere live love: press on!
Cold wisdom's words will ease thy track for thee;
Aye, go; cast off sweet ways, and leave me wan
To biting blasts that are intent on me.

But if thy object Fame's far summits be,
Whose inclines many a skeleton o'erlies
That missed both dream and substance, stop and see
How absence wears these cheeks and dims these eyes!

It surely is far sweeter and more wise
To water love, than toil to leave anon
A name whose glory-gleam will but advise
Invidious minds to quench it with their own,

And over which the kindest will but stay
A moment, musing, "He, too, had his day!"

Thomas Hardy

Her Secret

That love's dull smart distressed my heart
He shrewdly learnt to see,
But that I was in love with a dead man
Never suspected he.

He searched for the trace of a pictured face,
He watched each missive come,
And a note that seemed like a love-line
Made him look frozen and glum.

He dogged my feet to the city street,
He followed me to the sea,
But not to the neighbouring churchyard
Did he dream of following me.

Thomas Hardy

Her Song

I sang that song on Sunday,
To witch an idle while,
I sang that song on Monday,
As fittest to beguile;
I sang it as the year outwore,
And the new slid in;
I thought not what might shape before
Another would begin.

I sang that song in summer,
All unforeknowingly,
To him as a new-comer
From regions strange to me:
I sang it when in afteryears
The shades stretched out,
And paths were faint; and flocking fears
Brought cup-eyed care and doubt.

Sings he that song on Sundays
In some dim land afar,
On Saturdays, or Mondays,
As when the evening star
Glimpsed in upon his bending face
And my hanging hair,
And time untouched me with a trace
Of soul-smart or despair?

Thomas Hardy

Heredity

I am the family face;
Flesh perishes, I live on,
Projecting trait and trace
Through time to times anon,
And leaping from place to place
Over oblivion.

The years-heired feature that can
In curve and voice and eye
Despise the human span
Of durance -- that is I;
The eternal thing in man,
That heeds no call to die

Thomas Hardy

His Visitor

I come across from Mellstock while the moon wastes weaker
To behold where I lived with you for twenty years and more:
I shall go in the gray, at the passing of the mail-train,
And need no setting open of the long familiar door
As before.

The change I notice in my once own quarters!
A brilliant budded border where the daisies used to be,
The rooms new painted, and the pictures altered,
And other cups and saucers, and no cosy nook for tea
As with me.

I discern the dim faces of the sleep-wrapt servants;
They are not those who tended me through feeble hours and strong,
But strangers quite, who never knew my rule here,
Who never saw me painting, never heard my softling song
Float along.

So I don't want to linger in this re-decked dwelling,
I feel too uneasy at the contrasts I behold,
And I make again for Mellstock to return here never,
And rejoin the roomy silence, and the mute and manifold
Souls of old.

Thomas Hardy

How She Went To Ireland

Dora's gone to Ireland
Through the sleet and snow;
Promptly she has gone there
In a ship, although
Why she's gone to Ireland
Dora does not know.

That was where, yea, Ireland,
Dora wished to be:
When she felt, in lone times,
Shoots of misery,
Often there, in Ireland,
Dora wished to be.

Hence she's gone to Ireland,
Since she meant to go,
Through the drift and darkness
Onward labouring, though
That she's gone to Ireland
Dora does not know.

Thomas Hardy

I Found Her Out There

I found her out there
On a slope few see,
That falls westwardly
To the sharp-edged air,
Where the ocean breaks
On the purple strand,
And the hurricane shakes
The solid land.

I brought her here,
And have laid her to rest
In a noiseless nest
No sea beats near.
She will never be stirred
In her loamy cell
By the waves long heard
And loved so well.

So she does not sleep
By those haunted heights
The Atlantic smites
And the blind gales sweep,
Whence she often would gaze
At Dundagel's far head,
While the dipping blaze
Dyed her face fire-red;

And would sigh at the tale
Of sunk Lyonesse,
While a wind-tugged tress
Flapped her cheek like a flail;
Or listen at whiles
With a thought-bound brow
To the murmuring miles
She is far from now.

Yet her shade, maybe,
Will glide underground
Till it catch the sound
Of that western sea
As it swells and sobs
Where she once domiciled,
And joy in its throbs
With the heart of a child.

Thomas Hardy

I Have Lived With Shades

I

I have lived with Shades so long,
So long have talked to them,
I sped to street and throng,
That sometimes they
In their dim style
Will pause awhile
To hear my say;

II

And take me by the hand,
And lead me through their rooms
In the To-Be, where Dooms
Half-wove and shapeless stand:
And show from there
The dwindled dust
And rot and rust
Of things that were.

III

"Now turn," they said to me
One day: "Look whence we came,
And signify his name
Who gazes thence at thee" --
-- "Nor name nor race
Know I, or can,"
I said, "Of man
So commonplace."

IV

"He moves me not at all:
I note no ray or jot
Of rareness in his lot,
Or star exceptional.
Into the dim

Dead throngs around
He'll sink, nor sound
Be left of him."

V

"Yet," said they, "his frail speech,
Hath accents pitched like thine --
Thy mould and his define
A likeness each to each --
But go! Deep pain
Alas, would be
His name to thee,
And told in vain!"

Thomas Hardy

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.

Thomas Hardy

I Need Not Go

I need not go
Through sleet and snow
To where I know
She waits for me;
She will wait me there
Till I find it fair,
And have time to spare
From company.

When I've overgot
The world somewhat,
When things cost not
Such stress and strain,
Is soon enough
By cypress sough
To tell my Love
I am come again.

And if some day,
When none cries nay,
I still delay
To seek her side,
(Though ample measure
Of fitting leisure
Await my pleasure)
She will not chide.

What--not upbraid me
That I delayed me,
Nor ask what stayed me
So long? Ah, no! -
New cares may claim me,
New loves inflame me,
She will not blame me,
But suffer it so.

Thomas Hardy

I Rose Up As My Custom Is

I rose up as my custom is
On the eve of All-Souls' day,
And left my grave for an hour or so
To call on those I used to know
Before I passed away.

I visited my former Love
As she lay by her husband's side;
I asked her if life pleased her, now
She was rid of a poet wrung in brow,
And crazed with the ills he eyed;

Who used to drag her here and there
Wherever his fancies led,
And point out pale phantasmal things,
And talk of vain vague purposings
That she discredited.

She was quite civil, and replied,
'Old comrade, is that you?
Well, on the whole, I like my life. -
I know I swore I'd be no wife,
But what was I to do?

'You see, of all men for my sex
A poet is the worst;
Women are practical, and they
Crave the wherewith to pay their way,
And slake their social thirst.

'You were a poet - quite the ideal
That we all love awhile:
But look at this man snoring here -
He's no romantic chanticleer,
Yet keeps me in good style.

'He makes no quest into my thoughts,
But a poet wants to know
What one has felt from earliest days,

Why one thought not in other ways,
And one's Loves of long ago.'

Her words benumbed my fond frail ghost;
The nightmares neighed from their stalls,
The vampires screeched, the harpies flew,
And under the dim dawn I withdrew
To Death's inviolate halls.

Thomas Hardy

I Said To Love

I said to Love,
"It is not now as in old days
When men adored thee and thy ways
All else above;
Named thee the Boy, the Bright, the One
Who spread a heaven beneath the sun,"
I said to Love.

I said to him,
"We now know more of thee than then;
We were but weak in judgment when,
With hearts abrim,
We clamoured thee that thou would'st please
Inflict on us thine agonies,"
I said to him.

I said to Love,
"Thou art not young, thou art not fair,
No elfin darts, no cherub air,
Nor swan, nor dove
Are thine; but features pitiless,
And iron daggers of distress,"
I said to Love.

"Depart then, Love!
Man's race shall perish, threatenest thou,
Without thy kindling coupling-vow?
The age to come the man of now
Know nothing of?
We fear not such a threat from thee;
We are too old in apathy!
Mankind shall cease.. -
So let it be,"
I said to Love.

Thomas Hardy

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No faery darts, no cherub air,
 Nor swan, nor dove
Are thine; but features pitiless,
And iron daggers of distress,"
 I said to Love.

"Depart then, Love! . . .
- Man's race shall end, dost threaten thou?
The age to come the man of now
 Know nothing of? -
We fear not such a threat from thee;
We are too old in apathy!
Mankind shall cease.--So let it be,"
 I said to Love.

Thomas Hardy

I Sometimes Think

For F. E. H.

I sometimes think as here I sit
Of things I have done,
Which seemed in doing not unfit
To face the sun:
Yet never a soul has paused a whit
On such-not one.

There was that eager strenuous press
To sow good seed;
There was that saving from distress
In the nick of need;
There were those words in the wilderness:
Who cared to heed?

Yet can this be full true, or no?
For one did care,
And, spiriting into my house, to, fro,
Like wind on the stair,
Cares still, heeds all, and will, even though
I may despair.

Thomas Hardy

I Was Not He

I was not he-the man
Who used to pilgrim to your gate,
At whose smart step you grew elate,
And rosed, as maidens can,
For a brief span.

It was not I who sang
Beside the keys you touched so true
With note-bent eyes, as if with you
It counted not whence sprang
The voice that rang . . .

Yet though my destiny
It was to miss your early sweet,
You still, when turned to you my feet,
Had sweet enough to be
A prize for me!

Thomas Hardy

In A Eweleaze Near Weatherbury

THE years have gathered grayly
 Since I danced upon this leaze
With one who kindled gayly
 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 ever-napping Time,
Defacing ghaſt and grizzel
 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 endeavor,
 She would not balm the breeze
By murmuring, "Thine for ever!"
 As ſhe did upon this leaze.

Thomas Hardy

In A Museum

I

Here's the mould of a musical bird long passed from light,
Which over the earth before man came was winging;
There's a contralto voice I heard last night,
That lodges with me still in its sweet singing.

II

Such a dream is Time that the coo of this ancient bird
Has perished not, but is blent, or will be blending
Mid visionless wilds of space with the voice that I heard,
In the full-fuged song of the universe unending.

Thomas Hardy

In A Wood

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
Neighborly 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.

Thomas Hardy

In A Wook

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
Neighborly spray?

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Thomas Hardy

In Front Of The Landscape

Plunging and labouring on in a tide of visions,
Dolorous and dear,
Forward I pushed my way as amid waste waters
Stretching around,
Through whose eddies there glimmered the customed landscape
Yonder and near,
Blotted to feeble mist. And the coomb and the upland
Foliage-crowned,
Ancient chalk-pit, milestone, rills in the grass-flat
Stroked by the light,
Seemed but a ghost-like gauze, and no substantial
Meadow or mound.
What were the infinite spectacles bulking foremost
Under my sight,
Hindering me to discern my paced advancement
Lengthening to miles;
What were the re-creations killing the daytime
As by the night?
O they were speechful faces, gazing insistent,
Some as with smiles,
Some as with slow-born tears that brinily trundled
Over the wrecked
Cheeks that were fair in their flush-time, ash now with anguish,
Harrowed by wiles.
Yes, I could see them, feel them, hear them, address them -
Halo-bedecked -
And, alas, onwards, shaken by fierce unreason,
Rigid in hate,
Smitten by years-long wryness born of misprision,
Dreaded, suspect.
Then there would breast me shining sights, sweet seasons
Further in date;
Instruments of strings with the tenderest passion
Vibrant, beside
Lamps long extinguished, robes, cheeks, eyes with the earth's crust
Now corporate.
Also there rose a headland of hoary aspect
Gnawed by the tide,
Frilled by the nimb of the morning as two friends stood there

Guilelessly glad -
Wherefore they knew not - touched by the fringe of an ecstasy
Scantly descried.
Later images too did the day unfurl me,
Shadowed and sad,
Clay cadavers of those who had shared in the dramas,
Laid now at ease,
Passions all spent, chiefest the one of the broad brow
Sepulture-clad.
So did beset me scenes miscalled of the bygone,
Over the leaze,
Past the clump, and down to where lay the beheld ones;
- Yea, as the rhyme
Sung by the sea-swell, so in their pleading dumbness
Captured me these.
For, their lost revisiting manifestations
In their own time
Much had I slighted, caring not for their purport,
Seeing behind
Things more coveted, reckoned the better worth calling
Sweet, sad, sublime.
Thus do they now show hourly before the intenser
Stare of the mind
As they were ghosts avenging their slights by my bypast
Body-borne eyes,
Show, too, with fuller translation than rested upon them
As living kind.
Hence wag the tongues of the passing people, saying
In their surmise,
'Ah - whose is this dull form that perambulates, seeing nought
Round him that looms
Whithersoever his footsteps turn in his farings,
Save a few tombs?'

Thomas Hardy

In Tenebris

Wintertime nighs;
But my bereavement-pain
It cannot bring again:
Twice no one dies.

Flower-petals flee;
But since it once hath been,
No more that severing scene
Can harrow me.

Birds faint in dread:
I shall not lose old strength
In the lone frost's black length:
Strength long since fled!

Leaves freeze to dun;
But friends cannot turn cold
This season as of old
For him with none.

Tempests may scath;
But love cannot make smart
Again this year his heart
Who no heart hath.

Black is night's cope;
But death will not appal
One, who past doubtings all,
Waits in unhope.

Thomas Hardy

In The British Museum

'What do you see in that time-touched stone,
When nothing is there
But ashen blankness, although you give it
A rigid stare?

'You look not quite as if you saw,
But as if you heard,
Parting your lips, and treading softly
As mouse or bird.

'It is only the base of a pillar, they'll tell you,
That came to us
From a far old hill men used to name
Areopagus.'

- 'I know no art, and I only view
A stone from a wall,
But I am thinking that stone has echoed
The voice of Paul,

'Paul as he stood and preached beside it
Facing the crowd,
A small gaunt figure with wasted features,
Calling out loud

'Words that in all their intimate accents
Pattered upon
That marble front, and were far reflected,
And then were gone.

'I'm a labouring man, and know but little,
Or nothing at all;
But I can't help thinking that stone once echoed
The voice of Paul.'

Thomas Hardy

In The Days Of Crinoline

A plain tilt-bonnet on her head
She took the path across the leaze.
- Her spouse the vicar, gardening, said,
'Too dowdy that, for coquetries,
So I can hoe at ease.'

But when she had passed into the heath,
And gained the wood beyond the flat,
She raised her skirts, and from beneath
Unpinned and drew as from a sheath
An ostrich-feathered hat.

And where the hat had hung she now
Concealed and pinned the dowdy hood,
And set the hat upon her brow,
And thus emerging from the wood
Tripped on in jaunty mood.

The sun was low and crimson-faced
As two came that way from the town,
And plunged into the wood untraced....
When separately therefrom they paced
The sun had quite gone down.

The hat and feather disappeared,
The dowdy hood again was donned,
And in the gloom the fair one neared
Her home and husband dour, who conned
Calmly his blue-eyed blonde.

'To-day,' he said, 'you have shown good sense,
A dress so modest and so meek
Should always deck your goings hence
Alone.' And as a recompense

He kissed her on the cheek.

Thomas Hardy

In The Moonlight

"O lonely workman, standing there
In a dream, why do you stare and stare
At her grave, as no other grave where there?"

"If your great gaunt eyes so importune
Her soul by the shine of this corpse-cold moon,
Maybe you'll raise her phantom soon!"

"Why, fool, it is what I would rather see
Than all the living folk there be;
But alas, there is no such joy for me!"

"Ah - she was one you loved, no doubt,
Through good and evil, through rain and drought,
And when she passed, all your sun went out?"

"Nay: she was the woman I did not love,
Whom all the other were ranked above,
Whom during her life I thought nothing of."

Thomas Hardy

In The Old Theatre, Fiesole (April, 1887)

I traced the Circus whose gray stones incline
Where Rome and dim Etruria interjoin,
Till came a child who showed an ancient coin
That bore the image of a Constantine.

She lightly passed; nor did she once opine
How, better than all books, she had raised for me
In swift perspective Europe's history
Through the vast years of Caesar's sceptred line.

For in my distant plot of English loam
'Twas but to delve, and straightway there to find
Coins of like impress. As with one half blind
Whom common simples cure, her act flashed home
In that mute moment to my opened mind
The power, the pride, the reach of perished Rome.

Thomas Hardy

In The Old Theatre, Fiesole.

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Thomas Hardy

In The Servants' Quarters

'Man, you too, aren't you, one of these rough followers of the criminal?
All hanging hereabout to gather how he's going to bear
Examination in the hall.' She flung disdainful glances on
The shabby figure standing at the fire with others there,
Who warmed them by its flare.

'No indeed, my skipping maiden: I know nothing of the trial here,
Or criminal, if so he be. - I chanced to come this way,
And the fire shone out into the dawn, and morning airs are cold now;
I, too, was drawn in part by charms I see before me play,
That I see not every day.'

'Ha, ha!' then laughed the constables who also stood to warm themselves,
The while another maiden scrutinized his features hard,
As the blaze threw into contrast every line and knot that wrinkled them,
Exclaiming, 'Why, last night when he was brought in by the guard,
You were with him in the yard!'

'Nay, nay, you teasing wench, I say! You know you speak mistakenly.
Cannot a tired pedestrian who has footed it afar
Here on his way from northern parts, engrossed in humble marketings,
Come in and rest awhile, although judicial doings are
Moot by morning star?'

'O, come, come!' laughed the constables. 'Why, man, you speak the dialect
He uses in his answers; you can hear him up the stairs. So own it.
We sha'n't hurt ye. There he's speaking His syllables
Are those you sound yourself when you are talking unawares,
As this pretty girl declares.'

'And you shudder when his chain clinks!' she rejoined. 'O yes, I noticed it.
And you winced, too, when those cuffs they gave him echoed to us here.
They'll soon be coming down, and you may then have to defend yourself
Unless you hold your tongue, or go away and keep you clear

When he's led to judgment near!

'No! I'll be damned in hell if I know anything about the man!
No single thing about him more than everybody knows!
Must not I even warm my hands but I am charged with blasphemies?'...
- His face convulses as the morning cock that moment crows,
And he stops, and turns, and goes.

Thomas Hardy

In The Vaulted Way

In the vaulted way, where the passage turned
To the shadowy corner that none could see,
You paused for our parting, - plaintively:
Though overnight had come words that burned
My fond frail happiness out of me.

And then I kissed you, - despite my thought
That our spell must end when reflection came
On what you had deemed me, whose one long aim
Had been to serve you; that what I sought
Lay not in a heart that could breathe such blame.

But yet I kissed you: whereon you again
As of old kissed me. Why, why was it so?
Do you cleave to me after that light-tongued blow?
If you scorned me at eventide, how love then?
The thing is dark, Dear. I do not know.

Thomas Hardy

In Time Of

I

Only a man harrowing clods
In a slow silent walk
With an old horse that stumbles and nods
Half asleep as they stalk.

II

Only thin smoke without flame
From the heaps of couch-grass;
Yet this will go onwards the same
Though Dynasties pass.

III

Yonder a maid and her wight
Go whispering by:
War's annals will cloud into night
Ere their story die.

Thomas Hardy

In Time Of 'The Breaking Of Nations'

Only a man harrowing clods
In a slow silent walk
With an old horse that stumbles and nods
Half asleep as they stalk.

Only thin smoke without flame
From the heaps of couch-grass;
Yet this will go onward the same
Though Dynasties pass.

Yonder a maid and her wight
Come whispering by:
War's annals will cloud into night
Ere their story die.

Thomas Hardy

In Vision I Roamed

IN vision I roamed the flashing Firmament,
So fierce in blazon that the Night waxed wan,
As though with an awed sense of such ostent;
And as I thought my spirit ranged on and on

In footless traverse through ghastr heights of sky,
To the last chambers of the monstrous Dome,
Where stars the brightest here to darkness die:
Then, any spot on our own Earth seemed Home!

And the sick grief that you were far away
Grew pleasant thankfulness that you were near,
Who might have been, set on some outstep sphere,
Less than a Want to me, as day by day
I lived unaware, uncaring all that lay
Locked in that Universe taciturn and drear.

Thomas Hardy

Jezreel

On Its Seizure By The English Under Allenby, September 1918

Did they catch as it were in a Vision at shut of the day-
When their cavalry smote through the ancient Esdraelon Plain,
And they crossed where the Tishbite stood forth in his enemy's way-
His gaunt mournful Shade as he bade the King haste off amain?

On war-men at this end of time-even on Englishmen's eyes-
Who slay with their arms of new might in that long-ago place,
Flashed he who drove furiously? . . . Ah, did the phantom arise
Of that queen, of that proud Tyrian woman who painted her face?

Faintly marked they the words 'Throw her down!' rise from Night
eerily,
Spectre-spots of the blood of her body on some rotten wall?
And the thin note of pity that came: 'A King's daughter is she,'
As they passed where she trodden was once by the chargers' footfall?

Could such be the hauntings of men of to-day, at the cease
Of pursuit, at the dusk-hour, ere slumber their senses could seal?
Enghosted seers, kings-one on horseback who asked 'Is it peace?'...
Yea, strange things and spectral may men have beheld in Jezreel!

September 24, 1918.

Thomas Hardy

Lament

How she would have loved
A party to-day! -
Bright-hatted and gloved,
With table and tray
And chairs on the lawn
Her smiles would have shone
With welcomings.... But
She is shut, she is shut
From friendship's spell
In the jailing shell
Of her tiny cell.

Or she would have reigned
At a dinner tonight
With ardours unfeigned,
And a generous delight;
All in her abode
She'd have freely bestowed
On her guests.... But alas,
She is shut under grass
Where no cups flow,
Powerless to know
That it might be so.

And she would have sought
With a child's eager glance
The shy snowdrops brought
By the new year's advance,
And peered in the rime
Of Candlemas-time
For crocuses... chanced
It that she were not tranced
From sights she loved best;
Wholly possessed
By an infinite rest!

And we are here staying
Amid these stale things
Who care not for gaying,
And those junketings
That wed so to joy her,
And never to cloy her
As us they cloy!... But
She is shut, she is shut
From the cheer of them, dead
To all done and said
In a yew-arched bed.

Thomas Hardy

Last Words To A Dumb Friend

Pet was never mourned as you,
Purrer of the spotless hue,
Plummy tail, and wistful gaze
While you humoured our queer ways,
Or outshrilled your morning call
Up the stairs and through the hall -
Foot suspended in its fall -
While, expectant, you would stand
Arched, to meet the stroking hand;
Till your way you chose to wend
Yonder, to your tragic end.

Never another pet for me!
Let your place all vacant be;
Better blankness day by day
Than companion torn away.
Better bid his memory fade,
Better blot each mark he made,
Selfishly escape distress
By contrived forgetfulness,
Than preserve his prints to make
Every morn and eve an ache.

From the chair whereon he sat
Sweep his fur, nor wince thereat;
Rake his little pathways out
Mid the bushes roundabout;
Smooth away his talons' mark
From the claw-worn pine-tree bark,
Where he climbed as dusk embrowned,
Waiting us who loitered round.

Strange it is this speechless thing,
Subject to our mastering,
Subject for his life and food
To our gift, and time, and mood;
Timid pensioner of us Powers,
His existence ruled by ours,
Should - by crossing at a breath

Into safe and shielded death,
By the merely taking hence
Of his insignificance -
Loom as largened to the sense,
Shape as part, above man's will,
Of the Imperturbable.

As a prisoner, flight debarred,
Exercising in a yard,
Still retain I, troubled, shaken,
Mean estate, by him forsaken;
And this home, which scarcely took
Impress from his little look,
By his faring to the Dim
Grows all eloquent of him.

Housemate, I can think you still
Bounding to the window-sill,
Over which I vaguely see
Your small mound beneath the tree,
Showing in the autumn shade
That you moulder where you played.

Thomas Hardy

Leipzig

"OLD Norbert with the flat blue cap--
A German said to be--
Why let your pipe die on your lap,
Your eyes blink absently?"--

--"Ah!... Well, I had thought till my cheek was wet
Of my mother--her voice and mien
When she used to sing and pirouette,
And touse the tambourine

"To the march that yon street-fiddler plies;
She told me 'twas the same
She'd heard from the trumpets, when the Allies
Her city overcame.

"My father was one of the German Hussars,
My mother of Leipzig; but he,
Long quartered here, fetched her at close of the wars,
And a Wessex lad reared me.

"And as I grew up, again and again
She'd tell, after trilling that air,
Of her youth, and the battles on Leipzig plain
And of all that was suffered there!...

"--'Twas a time of alarms. Three Chiefs-at-arms
Combined them to crush One,
And by numbers' might, for in equal fight
He stood the matched of none.

"Carl Schwartzenburg was of the plot,
And Blücher, prompt and prow,
And Jean the Crown-Prince Bernadotte:
Buonaparte was the foe.

"City and plain had felt his reign
From the North to the Middle Sea,
And he'd now sat down in the noble town
Of the King of Saxony.

"October's deep dew its wet gossamer threw
Upon Leipzig's lawns, leaf-strewn,
Where lately each fair avenue
Wrought shade for summer noon.

"To westward two dull rivers crept
Through miles of marsh and slough,
Wherever a streak of whiteness swept--
The Bridge of Lindenau.

"Hard by, in the City, the One, care-crossed,
Gloomed over his shrunken power;
And without the walls the hemming host
Waxed denser every hour.

"He had speech that night on the morrow's designs
With his chiefs by the bivouac fire,
While the belt of flames from the enemy's lines
Flared nigher him yet and nigher.

"Three sky-lights then from the girdling trine
Told, 'Ready!' As they rose
Their flashes seemed his Judgment-Sign
For bleeding Europe's woes.

"'Twas seen how the French watch-fires that night
Glowed still and steadily;
And the Three rejoiced, for they read in the sight
That the One disdained to flee....

"--Five hundred guns began the affray
On next day morn at nine;
Such mad and mangling cannon-play
Had never torn human line.

"Around the town three battle beat,
Contracting like a gin;
As nearer marched the million feet
Of columns closing in.

"The first battle nighed on the low Southern side;

The second by the Western way;
The nearing of the third on the North was heard;
--The French held all at bay.

"Against the first band did the Emperor stand;
Against the second stood Ney;
Marmont against the third gave the order-word:
--Thus raged it throughout the day.

"Fifty thousand sturdy souls on those trampled plains and knolls,
Who met the dawn hopefully,
And were lotted their shares in a quarrel not theirs,
Dropt then in their agony.

"'O,' the old folks said, 'ye Preachers stern!
O so-called Christian time!
When will men's swords to ploughshares turn?
When come the promised prime?'

"--The clash of horse and man which that day began,
Closed not as evening wore;
And the morrow's armies, rear and van,
Still mustered more and more.

"From the City towers the Confederate Powers
Were eyed in glittering lines,
And up from the vast a murmuring passed
As from a wood of pines.

"'Tis well to cover a feeble skill
By numbers!' scoffèd He;
'But give me a third of their strength, I'd fill
Half Hell with their soldiery!'

"All that day raged the war they waged,
And again dumb night held reign,
Save that ever upspread from the dark death-bed
A miles-wide pant of pain.

"Hard had striven brave Ney, the true Bertrand,
Victor, and Augereau,
Bold Poniatowski, and Lauriston,

To stay their overthrow;

"But, as in the dream of one sick to death
There comes a narrowing room
That pens him, body and limbs and breath,
To wait a hideous doom,

"So to Napoleon, in the hush
That held the town and towers
Through these dire nights, a creeping crush
Seemed inborne with the hours.

"One road to the rearward, and but one,
Did fitful Chance allow;
'Twas where the Pleiss' and Elster run--
The Bridge of Lindenau.

"The nineteenth dawned. Down street and Platz
The wasted French sank back,
Stretching long lines across the Flats
And on the bridge-way track;

"When there surged on the sky on earthen wave,
And stones, and men, as though
Some rebel churchyard crew updrave
Their sepulchres from below.

"To Heaven is blown Bridge Lindenau;
Wrecked regiments reel therefrom;
And rank and file in masses plough
The sullen Elster-Strom.

"A gulf was Lindenau; and dead
Were fifties, hundreds, tens;
And every current rippled red
With Marshal's blood and men's.

"The smart Macdonald swam therein,
And barely won the verge;
Bold Poniatowski plunged him in
Never to re-emerge.

"Then stayed the strife. The remnants wound
Their Rhineward way pell-mell;
And thus did Leipzig City sound
An Empire's passing bell;

"While in cavalcade, with band and blade,
Came Marshals, Princes, Kings;
And the town was theirs.... Ay, as simple maid,
My mother saw these things!

"And whenever those notes in the street begin,
I recall her, and that far scene,
And her acting of how the Allies marched in,
And her touse of the tambourine!"

Thomas Hardy

Let Me Enjoy

<i>Minor Key</i>

I

Let me enjoy the earth no less
Because the all-enacting Might
That fashioned forth its loveliness
Had other aims than my delight.

II

About my path there flits a Fair,
Who throws me not a word or sign;
I'll charm me with her ignoring air,
And laud the lips not meant for mine.

III

From manuscripts of moving song
Inspired by scenes and dreams unknown
I'll pour out raptures that belong
To others, as they were my own.

IV

And some day hence, towards Paradise
And all its blest -- if such should be --
I will lift glad, afar-off eyes
Though it contain no place for me.

Thomas Hardy

Lines

Spoken by Miss Ada Rehan at the Lyceum Theatre, July 23, 1890, at a performance on behalf of Lady Jeune's Holiday Fund for City Children.

BEFORE we part to alien thoughts and aims,
Permit the one brief word the occasion claims;
--When mumming and grave projects are allied,
Perhaps an Epilogue is justified.

Our under-purpose has, in truth, to-day
Commanded most our musings; least the play:
A purpose futile but for your good-will
Swiftly responsive to the cry of ill:
A purpose all too limited!--to aid
Frail human flowerets, sicklied by the shade,
In winning some short spell of upland breeze,
Or strengthening sunlight on the level leas.

Who has not marked, where the full cheek should be,
Incipient lines of lank flaccidity,
Lymphatic pallor where the pink should glow,
And where the throb of transport, pulses low?--
Most tragical of shapes from Pole to Line,
O wondering child, unwitting Time's design,
Why should Art add to Nature's quandary,
And worsen ill by thus immuring thee?
--That races can do despite to their own,
That Might supernal do indeed condone
Wrongs individual for the general ease,
Instance the proof in victims such as these.

Launched into thoroughfares too thronged before,
Mothered by those whose protest is "No more!"
Vitalized without option: who shall say
That did Life hang on choosing--Yea or Nay--
They had not scorned it with such penalty,
And nothingness implored of Destiny?

And yet behind the horizon smile serene
The down, the cornland, and the stretching green--

Space--the child's heaven: scenes which at least ensure
Some palliative for ill they cannot cure.

Dear friends--now moved by this poor show of ours
To make your own long joy in buds and bowers
For one brief while the joy of infant eyes,
Changing their urban murk to paradise--
You have our thanks!--may your reward include
More than our thanks, far more: their gratitude.

Thomas Hardy

Lines On The Loss Of The "Titanic"

In a solitude of the sea
Deep from human vanity,
And the Pride of Life that planned her, stilly couches she.

Steel chambers, late the pyres
Of her salamandrine fires,
Cold currents thrid, and turn to rhythmic tidal lyres.

Over the mirrors meant
To glass the opulent
The sea-worm crawls -- grotesque, slimed, dumb, indifferent.

Jewels in joy designed
To ravish the sensuous mind
Lie lightless, all their sparkles bleared and black and blind.

Dim moon-eyed fishes near
Gaze at the gilded gear
And query: "What does this vaingloriousness down here?" ...

Well: while was fashioning
This creature of cleaving wing,
The Immanent Will that stirs and urges everything

Prepared a sinister mate
For her -- so gaily great --
A Shape of Ice, for the time far and dissociate.

And as the smart ship grew
In stature, grace, and hue,
In shadowy silent distance grew the Iceberg too.

Alien they seemed to be;
No mortal eye could see
The intimate welding of their later history,

Or sign that they were bent
By paths coincident
On being anon twin halves of one august event,

Till the Spinner of the Years
Said "Now!" And each one hears,
And consummation comes, and jars two hemispheres.

Thomas Hardy

Men Who March Away

Song of the Soldiers

What of the faith and fire within us
Men who march away
Ere the barn-cocks say
Night is growing gray,
To hazards whence no tears can win us;
What of the faith and fire within us
Men who march away!

Is it a purblind prank, O think you,
Friend with the musing eye
Who watch us stepping by,
With doubt and dolorous sigh?
Can much pondering so hoodwink you?
Is it a purblind prank, O think you,
Friend with the musing eye?

Nay. We see well what we are doing,
Though some may not see --
Dalliers as they be --
England's need are we;
Her distress would leave us rueing:
Nay. We well see what we are doing,
Though some may not see!

In our heart of hearts believing
Victory crowns the just,
And that braggarts must
Surely bite the dust,
Press we to the field ungrieving,
In our heart of hearts believing
Victory crowns the just.

Hence the faith and fire within us
Men who march away
Ere the barn-cocks say
Night is growing gray,
To hazards whence no tears can win us;

Hence the faith and fire within us
Men who march away.

Thomas Hardy

Middle-Age Enthusiasms

To M. H.

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 no more."

Thomas Hardy

Midnight On The Great Western

In the third-class seat sat the journeying boy,
And the roof-lamp's oily flame
Played down on his listless form and face,
Bewrapt past knowing to what he was going,
Or whence he came.

In the band of his hat the journeying boy
Had a ticket stuck; and a string
Around his neck bore the key of his box,
That twinkled gleams of the lamp's sad beams
Like a living thing.

What past can be yours, O journeying boy
Towards a world unknown,
Who calmly, as if incurious quite
On all at stake, can undertake
This plunge alone?

Knows your soul a sphere, O journeying boy,
Our rude realms far above,
Whence with spacious vision you mark and mete
This region of sin that you find you in,
But are not of?

Thomas Hardy

Mismet

He was leaning by a face,
He was looking into eyes,
And he knew a trysting-place,
And he heard seductive sighs;
But the face,
And the eyes,
And the place,
And the sighs,
Were not, alas, the right ones--the ones meet for him--
Though fine and sweet the features, and the feelings all abrim.

II

She was looking at a form,
She was listening for a tread,
She could feel a waft of charm
When a certain name was said;
But the form,
And the tread,
And the charm,
And name said,
Were the wrong ones for her, and ever would be so,
While the heritor of the right it would have saved her soul to know!

Thomas Hardy

Moments Of Vision

That mirror
Which makes of men a transparency,
Who holds that mirror
And bids us such a breast-bare spectacle see
Of you and me?

That mirror
Whose magic penetrates like a dart,
Who lifts that mirror
And throws our mind back on us, and our heart,
until we start?

That mirror
Works well in these night hours of ache;
Why in that mirror
Are tincts we never see ourselves once take
When the world is awake?

That mirror
Can test each mortal when unaware;
Yea, that strange mirror
May catch his last thoughts, whole life foul or fair,
Glassing it -- where?

Thomas Hardy

Mute Opinion

I

I traversed a dominion
Whose spokesmen spake out strong
Their purpose and opinion
Through pulpit, press, and song.
I scarce had means to note there
A large-eyed few, and dumb,
Who thought not as those thought there
That stirred the heat and hum.

II

When, grown a Shade, beholding
That land in lifetime trode,
To learn if its unfolding
Fulfilled its clamoured code,
I saw, in web unbroken,
Its history outwrought
Not as the loud had spoken,
But as the mute had thought.

Thomas Hardy

My Cicely

"ALIVE?"--And I leapt in my wonder,
Was faint of my joyance,
And grasses and grove shone in garments
Of glory to me.

"She lives, in a plenteous well-being,
To-day as aforehand;
The dead bore the name--though a rare one--
The name that bore she."

She lived ... I, afar in the city
Of frenzy-led factions,
Had squandered green years and maturer
In bowing the knee

To Baals illusive and specious,
Till chance had there voiced me
That one I loved vainly in nonage
Had ceased her to be.

The passion the planets had scowled on,
And change had let dwindle,
Her death-rumor smartly relifted
To full apogee.

I mounted a steed in the dawning
With acheful remembrance,
And made for the ancient West Highway
To far Exonb'ry.

Passing heaths, and the House of Long Sieging,
I neared the thin steeple
That tops the fair fane of Poore's olden
Episcopal see;

And, changing anew my onbearer,
I traversed the downland
Whereon the bleak hill-graves of Chieftains
Bulge barren of tree;

And still sadly onward I followed
That Highway the Icen,
Which trails its pale ribbon down Wessex
O'er lynchet and lea.

Along through the Stour-bordered Forum,
Where Legions had wayfared,
And where the slow river upglasses
Its green canopy,

And by Weatherbury Castle, and thence
Through Casterbridge, bore I,
To tomb her whose light, in my deeming,
Extinguished had He.

No highwayman's trot blew the night-wind
To me so life-weary,
But only the creak of the gibbets
Or wagoners' jee.

Triple-ramparted Maidon gloomed grayly
Above me from southward,
And north the hill-fortress of Eggar,
And square Pummerie.

The Nine-Pillared Cromlech, the Bride-streams,
The Axe, and the Otter
I passed, to the gate of the city
Where Exe scents the sea;

Till, spent, in the graveacre pausing,
I learnt 'twas not my Love
To whom Mother Church had just murmured
A last lullaby.

--"Then, where dwells the Canon's kinswoman,
My friend of aforetime?"--
('Twas hard to repress my heart-heavings
And new ecstasy.)

"She wedded."--"Ah!"--"Wedded beneath her--

She keeps the stage-hostel
Ten miles hence, beside the great Highway--
The famed Lions-Three.

"Her spouse was her lackey--no option
'Twixt wedlock and worse things;
A lapse over-sad for a lady
Of her pedigree!"

I shuddered, said nothing, and wandered
To shades of green laurel:
Too ghastly had grown those first tidings
So brightsome of blee!

For, on my ride hither, I'd halted
Awhile at the Lions,
And her--her whose name had once opened
My heart as a key--

I'd looked on, unknowing, and witnessed
Her jests with the tapsters,
Her liquor-fired face, her thick accents
In naming her fee.

"O God, why this hocus satiric!"
I cried in my anguish:
"O once Loved, of fair Unforgotten--
That Thing--meant it thee!

"Inurned and at peace, lost but sainted,
Where grief I could compass;
Depraved--'tis for Christ's poor dependent
A cruel decree!"

I backed on the Highway; but passed not
The hostel. Within there
Too mocking to Love's re-expression
Was Time's repartee!

Uptracking where Legions had wayfared,
By cromlechs unstoried,
And lynchets, and sepultured Chieftains,

In self-colloquy,

A feeling stirred in me and strengthened
That she was not my Love,
But she of the garth, who lay rapt in
Her long reverie.

And thence till to-day I persuade me
That this was the true one;
That Death stole intact her young dearness
And innocency.

Frail-witted, illuded they call me;
I may be. 'Tis better
To dream than to own the debasement
Of sweet Cicely.

Moreover I rate it unseemly
To hold that kind Heaven
Could work such device--to her ruin
And my misery.

So, lest I disturb my choice vision,
I shun the West Highway,
Even now, when the knaps ring with rhythms
From blackbird and bee;

And feel that with slumber half-conscious
She rests in the church-hay,
Her spirit unsoiled as in youth-time
When lovers were we.

Thomas Hardy

My Spirit Will Not Haunt The Mound

My spirit will not haunt the mound
Above my breast,
But travel, memory-possessed,
To where my tremulous being found
Life largest, best.

My phantom-footed shape will go
When nightfall grays
Hither and thither along the ways
I and another used to know
In backward days.

And there you'll find me, if a jot
You still should care
For me, and for my curious air;
If otherwise, then I shall not,
For you, be there.

Thomas Hardy

Nature's Questioning

WHEN I look forth at dawning, pool,
Field, flock, and lonely tree,
All seem to look 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, ever 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 Achievement 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 neighbors nigh.

Thomas Hardy

Near Lanivet 1872

There was a stunted handpost just on the crest,
Only a few feet high:
She was tired, and we stopped in the twilight-time for her rest,
At the crossways close thereby.

She leant back, being so weary, against its stem,
And laid her arms on its own,
Each open palm stretched out to each end of them,
Her sad face sideways thrown.

Her white-clothed form at this dim-lit cease of day
Made her look as one crucified
In my gaze at her from the midst of the dusty way,
And hurriedly 'Don't,' I cried.

I do not think she heard. Loosing thence she said,
As she stepped forth ready to go,
'I am rested now.-Something strange came into my head;
I wish I had not leant so!'

And wordless we moved onward down from the hill
In the west cloud's murked obscure,
And looking back we could see the handpost still
In the solitude of the moor.

'It struck her too,' I thought, for as if afraid
She heavily breathed as we trailed;
Till she said, 'I did not think how 'twould look in the shade,
When I leant there like one nailed.'

I, lightly: 'There's nothing in it. For YOU, anyhow!'
-'O I know there is not,' said she . . .
'Yet I wonder . . . If no one is bodily crucified now,
In spirit one may be!'

And we dragged on and on, while we seemed to see
In the running of Time's far glass
Her crucified, as she had wondered if she might be
Some day.-Alas, alas!

Thomas Hardy

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.

Thomas Hardy

New Year's Eve

"I have finished another year," said God,
 "In grey, green, white, and brown;
I have strewn the leaf upon the sod,
Sealed up the worm within the clod,
 And let the last sun down."

"And what's the good of it?" I said.
 "What reasons made you call
From formless void this earth we tread,
When nine-and-ninety can be read
 Why nought should be at all?

"Yea, Sire; why shaped you us, 'who in
 This tabernacle groan'—
If ever a joy be found herein,
Such joy no man had wished to win
 If he had never known!"

Then he: "My labours—logicless—
 You may explain; not I:
Sense-sealed I have wrought, without a guess
That I evolved a Consciousness
 To ask for reasons why.

"Strange that ephemeral creatures who
 By my own ordering are,
Should see the shortness of my view,
Use ethic tests I never knew,
 Or made provision for!"

He sank to raptness as of yore,
 And opening New Year's Day
Wove it by rote as theretofore,
And went on working evermore
 In his unweeing way.

Thomas Hardy

Night In The Old Home

When the wasting embers redden the chimney-breast,
And Life's bare pathway looms like a desert track to me,
And from hall and parlour the living have gone to their rest,
My perished people who housed them here come back to me.

They come and seat them around in their mouldy places,
Now and then bending towards me a glance of wistfulness,
A strange upbraiding smile upon all their faces,
And in the bearing of each a passive tristfulness.

'Do you uphold me, lingering and languishing here,
A pale late plant of your once strong stock?' I say to them;
'A thinker of crooked thoughts upon Life in the sere,
An on That which consigns men to night after showing the day to them?'

'--O let be the Wherefore! We fevered our years not thus:
Take of Life what it grants, without question!' they answer me seemingly.
'Enjoy, suffer, wait: spread the table here freely like us,
And, satisfied, placid, unfretting, watch Time away beamingly!'

Thomas Hardy

No Buyers

A Load of brushes and baskets and cradles and chairs
Labours along the street in the rain:
With it a man, a woman, a pony with whiteybrown hairs. --
The man foots in front of the horse with a shambling sway
At a slower tread than a funeral train,
While to a dirge-like tune he chants his wares,
Swinging a Turk's-head brush (in a drum-major's way
When the bandsmen march and play).

A yard from the back of the man is the whiteybrown pony's nose:
He mirrors his master in every item of pace and pose:
He stops when the man stops, without being told,
And seems to be eased by a pause; too plainly he's old,
Indeed, not strength enough shows
To steer the disjointed waggon straight,
Which wriggles left and right in a rambling line,
Deflected thus by its own warp and weight,
And pushing the pony with it in each incline.

The woman walks on the pavement verge,
Parallel to the man:
She wears an apron white and wide in span,
And carries a like Turk's-head, but more in nursing-wise:
Now and then she joins in his dirge,
But as if her thoughts were on distant things,
The rain clams her apron till it clings. --
So, step by step, they move with their merchandize,
And nobody buys.

Thomas Hardy

On An Invitation To The United States.

My ardours for emprise nigh lost
Since Life has bared its bones to me,
I shrink to seek a modern coast
Whose riper times have yet to be;
Where the new regions claim them free
From that long drip of human tears
Which peoples old in tragedy
Have left upon the centuried years.

For, wonning in these ancient lands,
Enchased and lettered as a tomb,
And scored with prints of perished hands,
And chronicled with dates of doom,
Though my own Being bear no bloom
I trace the lives such scenes enshrine,
Give past exemplars present room,
And their experience count as mine.

Thomas Hardy

Places

Nobody says: Ah, that is the place
Where chanced, in the hollow of years ago,
What none of the Three Towns cared to know -
The birth of a little girl of grace -
The sweetest the house saw, first or last;
Yet it was so
On that day long past.

Nobody thinks: There, there she lay
In a room by the Hoe, like the bud of a flower,
And listened, just after the bedtime hour,
To the stammering chimes that used to play
The quaint Old Hundred-and-Thirteenth tune
In Saint Andrew's tower
Night, morn, and noon.

Nobody calls to mind that here
Upon Boterel Hill, where the carters skid,
With cheeks whose airy flush outbid
Fresh fruit in bloom, and free of fear,
She cantered down, as if she must fall
(Though she never did),
To the charm of all.

Nay: one there is to whom these things,
That nobody else's mind calls back,
Have a savour that scenes in being lack,
And a presence more than the actual brings;
To whom to-day is beneaped and stale,
And its urgent clack
But a vapid tale.

Thomas Hardy

Postponement

SNOW-BOUND in woodland, a mournful 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!"

Thomas Hardy

Rain on a Grave

Clouds spout upon her
Their waters amain
In ruthless disdain, -
Her who but lately
Had shivered with pain
As at touch of dishonour
If there had lit on her
So coldly, so straightly
Such arrows of rain:

One who to shelter
Her delicate head
Would quicken and quicken
Each tentative tread
If drops chanced to pelt her
That summertime spills
In dust-paven rills
When thunder-clouds thicken
And birds close their bills.

Would that I lay there
And she were housed here!
Or better, together
Were folded away there
Exposed to one weather
We both, - who would stray there
When sunny the day there,
Or evening was clear
At the prime of the year.

Soon will be growing
Green blades from her mound,
And daisies be showing
Like stars on the ground,
Till she form part of them -
Ay - the sweet heart of them,
Loved beyond measure
With a child's pleasure
All her life's round.

Thomas Hardy

Revulsion

THOUGH I waste watches framing words to fetter
Some spirit to mine own in 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 law fulfilling,
And my heart's table bear no woman's name.

Thomas Hardy

Rom: On The Palatine (April, 1887)

We walked where Victor Jove was shrined awhile,
And passed to Livia's rich red mural show,
Whence, thridding cave and Criptoportico,
We gained Caligula's dissolving pile.

And each ranked ruin tended to beguile
The outer sense, and shape itself as though
It wore its marble hues, its pristine glow
Of scenic frieze and pompous peristyle.

When lo, swift hands, on strings nigh over-head,
Began to melodize a waltz by Strauss:
It stirred me as I stood, in Caesar's house,
Raised the old routs Imperial lyres had led,

And blended pulsing life with lives long done,
Till Time seemed fiction, Past and Present one.

Thomas Hardy

Rome: At The Pyramid Of Cestius. (Near The Graves Of Shelley & Keats)

Who, then, was Cestius,
And what is he to me? -
Amid thick thoughts and memories multitudinous
One thought alone brings he.

I can recall no word
Of anything he did;
For me he is a man who died and was interred
To leave a pyramid

Whose purpose was exprest
Not with its first design,
Nor till, far down in Time, beside it found their rest
Two countrymen of mine.

Cestius in life, maybe,
Slew, breathed out threatening;
I know not. This I know: in death all silently
He does a kindlier thing,

In beckoning pilgrim feet
With marble finger high
To where, by shadowy wall and history-haunted street,
Those matchless singers lie . . .

--Say, then, he lived and died
That stones which bear his name
Should mark, through Time, where two immortal Shades abide;
It is an ample fame.

Thomas Hardy

Rome: Building A New Street In The Ancient Quarter.

These numbered cliffs and gnarls of masonry
Outskeleton Time's central city, Rome;
Whereof each arch, entablature, and dome
Lies bare in all its gaunt anatomy.

And cracking frieze and rotten metope
Express, as though they were an open tome
Top-lined with caustic monitory gnome;
"Dunces, Learn here to spell Humanity!"

And yet within these ruins' very shade
The singing workmen shape and set and join
Their frail new mansion's stuccoed cove and quoin
With no apparent sense that years abrade,
Though each rent wall their feeble works invade
Once shamed all such in power of pier and groin.

Thomas Hardy

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Thomas Hardy

Rome: The Vatican--Sala Delle Muse (1887)

I sat in the Muses' Hall at the mid of the day,
And it seemed to grow still, and the people to pass away,
And the chiselled shapes to combine in a haze of sun,
Till beside a Carrara column there gleamed forth One.

She was nor this nor that of those beings divine,
But each and the whole--an essence of all the Nine;
With tentative foot she neared to my halting-place,
A pensive smile on her sweet, small, marvellous face.

"Regarded so long, we render thee sad?" said she.
"Not you," sighed I, "but my own inconstancy!
I worship each and each; in the morning one,
And then, alas! another at sink of sun.

"To-day my soul clasps Form; but where is my troth
Of yesternight with Tune: can one cleave to both?"
- "Be not perturbed," said she. "Though apart in fame,
As I and my sisters are one, those, too, are the same.

- "But my loves go further--to Story, and Dance, and Hymn,
The lover of all in a sun-sweep is fool to whim -
Is swayed like a river-weed as the ripples run!"
- "Nay, wight, thou sway'st not. These are but phases of one;

"And that one is I; and I am projected from thee,
One that out of thy brain and heart thou causest to be -
Extern to thee nothing. Grieve not, nor thyself becall,
Woo where thou wilt; and rejoice thou canst love at all!

Thomas Hardy

San Sebastian

With Thoughts of Sergeant M---- (Pensioner), who died 185-

"WHY, Sergeant, stray on the Ivel Way,
As though at home there were spectres rife?
From first to last 'twas a proud career!
And your sunny years with a gracious wife
Have brought you a daughter dear.

"I watched her to-day; a more comely maid,
As she danced in her muslin bowed with blue,
Round a Hintock maypole never gayed."
--"Aye, aye; I watched her this day, too,
As it happens," the Sergeant said.

"My daughter is now," he again began,
"Of just such an age as one I knew
When we of the Line, in the Foot-Guard van,
On an August morning--a chosen few--
Stormed San Sebastian.

"She's a score less three; so about was she--
The maiden I wronged in Peninsular days....
You may prate of your prowess in lusty times,
But as years gnaw inward you blink your bays,
And see too well your crimes!

"We'd stormed it at night, by the vlander-light
Of burning towers, and the mortar's boom:
We'd topped the breach but had failed to stay,
For our files were misled by the baffling gloom;
And we said we'd storm by day.

"So, out of the trenches, with features set,
On that hot, still morning, in measured pace,
Our column climbed; climbed higher yet,
Past the fauss'bray, scarp, up the curtain-face,
And along the parapet.

"From the battered hornwork the cannoneers

Hove crashing balls of iron fire;
On the shaking gap mount the volunteers
In files, and as they mount expire
 Amid curses, groans, and cheers.

"Five hours did we storm, five hours re-form,
As Death cooled those hot blood pricked on;
Till our cause was helped by a woe within;
They swayed from the summit we'd leapt upon,
 And madly we entered in.

"On end for plunder, 'mid rain and thunder
That burst with the lull of our cannonade,
We vamped the streets in the stifling air--
Our hunger unsoothed, our thirst unstayed--
 And ransacked the buildings there.

"Down the stony steps of the house-fronts white
We rolled rich puncheons of Spanish grape,
Till at length, with the fire of the wine alight,
I saw at a doorway a fair fresh shape--
 A woman, a sylph, or sprite.

"Afeard she fled, and with heated head
I pursued to the chamber she called her own;
--When might is right no qualms deter,
And having her helpless and alone
 I wreaked my lust on her.

"She raised her beseeching eyes to me,
And I heard the words of prayer she sent
In her own soft language.... Seemingly
I copied those eyes for my punishment
 In begetting the girl you see!

"So, to-day I stand with a God-set brand
Like Cain's, when he wandered from kindred's ken....
I served through the war that made Europe free;
I wived me in peace-year. But, hid from men,
 I bear that mark on me.

"And I nightly stray on the Ivel Way

As though at home there were spectres rife;
I delight me not in my proud career;
And 'tis coals of fire that a gracious wife
Should have brought me a daughter dear!"

Thomas Hardy

Satires Of Circumstance In Fifteen Glimpses Viii: In The St

He enters, and mute on the edge of a chair
Sits a thin-faced lady, a stranger there,
A type of decayed gentility;
And by some small signs he well can guess
That she comes to him almost breakfastless.
"I have called -- I hope I do not err --
I am looking for a purchaser
Of some score volumes of the works
Of eminent divines I own, --
Left by my father -- though it irks
My patience to offer them." And she smiles
As if necessity were unknown;
"But the truth of it is that oftenwhiles
I have wished, as I am fond of art,
To make my rooms a little smart,
And these old books are so in the way."
And lightly still she laughs to him,
As if to sell were a mere gay whim,
And that, to be frank, Life were indeed
To her not vinegar and gall,
But fresh and honey-like; and Need
No household skeleton at all.

Thomas Hardy

Seen By The Waits

Through snowy woods and shady
We went to play a tune
To the lonely manor-lady
By the light of the Christmas moon.

We violed till, upward glancing
To where a mirror leaned,
We saw her airily dancing,
Deeming her movements screened;

Dancing alone in the room there,
Thin-draped in her robe of night;
Her postures, glassed in the gloom there,
Were a strange phantasmal sight.

She had learnt (we heard when homing)
That her roving spouse was dead;
Why she had danced in the gloaming
We thought, but never said.

Thomas Hardy

Self- Unconscious

Along the way
He walked that day,
Watching shapes that reveries limn,
And seldom he
Had eyes to see
The moment that encompassed him.

Bright yellowhammers
Made mirthful clamours,
And billed long straws with a bustling air,
And bearing their load
Flew up the road
That he followed, alone, without interest there.

From bank to ground
And over and round
They sidled along the adjoining hedge;
Sometimes to the gutter
Their yellow flutter
Would dip from the nearest slatestone ledge.

The smooth sea-line
With a metal shine,
And flashes of white, and a sail thereon,
He would also descry
With a half-wrapt eye
Between the projects he mused upon.

Yes, round him were these
Earth's artistries,
But specious plans that came to his call
Did most engage
His pilgrimage,
While himself he did not see at all.

Dead now as sherds
Are the yellow birds,
And all that mattered has passed away;
Yet God, the Elf,
Now shows him that self
As he was, and should have been shown, that day.

O it would have been good
Could he then have stood
At a focussed distance, and conned the whole,
But now such vision
Is mere derision,
Nor soothes his body nor saves his soul.

Not much, some may
Incline to say,
To see in him, had it all been seen.
Nay! he is aware
A thing was there
That loomed with an immortal mien.

Thomas Hardy

Seventy-Four And Twenty

Here goes a man of seventy-four,
Who sees not what life means for him,
And here another in years a score
Who reads its very figure and trim.

The one who shall walk to-day with me
Is not the youth who gazes far,
But the breezy wight who cannot see
What Earth's ingrained conditions are.

Thomas Hardy

She At His Funeral

THEY bear him to his resting-place--
 In slow procession sweeping by;
I follow at a stranger's space;
 His kindred they, his sweetheart I.
Unchanged my gown of garish dye,
 Though sable-sad is their attire;
But they stand round with griefless eye,
 Whilst my regret consumes like fire!

Thomas Hardy

She Charged Me

She charged me with having said this and that
To another woman long years before,
In the very parlour where we sat, -

Sat on a night when the endless pour
Of rain on the roof and the road below
Bent the spring of the spirit more and more....

- So charged she me; and the Cupids bow
Of her mouth was hard, and her eyes, and her face,
And her white forefinger lifted slow.

Had she done it gently, or shown a trace
That not too curiously would she view
A folly passed ere her reign had place,

A kiss might have ended it. But I knew
From the fall of each word, and the pause between,
That the curtain would drop upon us two
Ere long, in our play of slave and queen.

Thomas Hardy

She Hears The Storm

There was a time in former years-
While my roof-tree was his-
When I should have been distressed by fears
At such a night as this!

I should have murmured anxiously,
'The prickling rain strikes cold;
His road is bare of hedge or tree,
And he is getting old.'

But now the fitful chimney-roar,
The drone of Thorncombe trees,
The From in flood upon the moor,
The mud of Mellstock Leaze,

The candle slanting sooty-wick'd,
The thuds upon the thatch,
The eaves drops on the window flicked,
The clanking garden-hatch,

And what they mean to wayfarers,
I scarcely heed or mind;
He has won that storm-tight roof of hers
Which Earth grants all her kind.

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Whilst my regret consumes like fire!

Thomas Hardy

She, To Him

I

WHEN you shall see me lined by tool of Time,
My lauded beauties carried off from me,
My eyes no longer stars as in their prime,
My name forgot of Maiden Fair and Free;

When in your being heart concedes to mind,
And judgment, though you scarce its process know,
Recalls the excellencies I once enshrined,
And you are irked that they have withered so:

Remembering that with me lies not the blame,
That Sportsman Time but rears his brood to kill,
Knowing me in my soul the very same--
One who would die to spare you touch of ill!--
Will you not grant to old affection's claim
The hand of friendship down Life's sunless hill?

Thomas Hardy

She, To Him Iii

I WILL be faithful to thee; aye, I will!

And Death shall choose me with a wondering eye
That he did not discern and domicile
One his by right ever since that last Good-bye!

I have no care for friends, or kin, or prime
Of manhood who deal gently with me here;
Amid the happy people of my time
Who work their love's fulfilment, I appear

Numb as a vane that cankers on its point,
True to the wind that kissed ere canker came;
Despised by souls of Now, who would disjoint
The mind from memory, and make Life all aim,

My old dexterities of hue quite gone,
And nothing left for Love to look upon.

Thomas Hardy

She, To Him Iv

THIS love puts all humanity from me;
I can but maledict her, pray her dead,
For giving love and getting love of thee--
Feeding a heart that else mine own had fed!

How much I love I know not, life not known,
Save as some unit I would add love by;
But this I know, my being is but thine own--
Fused from its separateness by ecstasy.

And thus I grasp thy amplitudes, of her
Ungrasped, though helped by nigh-regarding eyes;
Canst thou then hate me as an envier
Who see unrecked what I so dearly prize?
Believe me, Lost One, Love is lovelier
The more it shapes its moans in selfish-wise.

Thomas Hardy

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Thomas Hardy

She, To Him, II

Perhaps, long hence, when I have passed away,
Some other's feature, accent, thought like mine,
Will carry you back to what I used to say,
And bring some memory of your love's decline.

Then you may pause awhile and think, "Poor jade!"
And yield a sigh to me—as gift benign,
Not as the tittle of a debt unpaid
To one who could to you her all resign—

And thus reflecting, you will never see
That your thin thought, in two small words conveyed,
Was no such fleeting phantom-thought to me,
But the Whole Life wherein my part was played;
And you amid its fitful masquerade
A Thought—as I in yours but seem to be.

Thomas Hardy

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Thomas Hardy

Shelley's Skylark (The Neighbourhood Of Leghorn: March, 1887)

Somewhere afield here something lies
In Earth's oblivious eyeless trust
That moved a poet to prophecies -
A pinch of unseen, unguarded dust

The dust of the lark that Shelley heard,
And made immortal through times to be; -
Though it only lived like another bird,
And knew not its immortality.

Lived its meek life; then, one day, fell -
A little ball of feather and bone;
And how it perished, when piped farewell,
And where it wastes, are alike unknown.

Maybe it rests in the loam I view,
Maybe it throbs in a myrtle's green,
Maybe it sleeps in the coming hue
Of a grape on the slopes of yon inland scene.

Go find it, faeries, go and find
That tiny pinch of priceless dust,
And bring a casket silver-lined,
And framed of gold that gems encrust;

And we will lay it safe therein,
And consecrate it to endless time;
For it inspired a bard to win
Ecstatic heights in thought and rhyme.

Thomas Hardy

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Thomas Hardy

Song Of The Soldiers

What of the faith and fire within us
Men who march away
Ere the barn-cocks say
Night is growing gray,
To hazards whence no tears can win us;
What of the faith and fire within us
Men who march away?

Is it a purblind prank, O think you,
Friend with the musing eye
Who watch us stepping by,
With doubt and dolorous sigh?
Can much pondering so hoodwink you!
Is it a purblind prank, O think you,
Friend with the musing eye?

Nay. We see well what we are doing,
Though some may not see --
Dalliers as they be! --
England's need are we;
Her distress would leave us rueing:
Nay. We see well what we are doing,
Though some may not see!

In our heart of hearts believing
Victory crowns the just,
And that braggarts must
Surely bite the dust,
Press we to the field ungrieving,
In our heart of hearts believing
Victory crowns the just.

Hence the faith and fire within us
Men who march away
Ere the barn-cocks say
Night is growing gray,
To hazards whence no tears can win us;
Hence the faith and fire within us
Men who march away.

Thomas Hardy

Song Of The Soldier's Wifes.

I

At last! In sight of home again,
Of home again;
No more to range and roam again
As at that bygone time?
No more to go away from us
And stay from us? -
Dawn, hold not long the day from us,
But quicken it to prime!

II

Now all the town shall ring to them,
Shall ring to them,
And we who love them cling to them
And clasp them joyfully;
And cry, "O much we'll do for you
Anew for you,
Dear Loves!--aye, draw and hew for you,
Come back from oversea."

III

Some told us we should meet no more,
Should meet no more;
Should wait, and wish, but greet no more
Your faces round our fires;
That, in a while, uncharily
And drearily
Men gave their lives--even wearily,
Like those whom living tires.

IV

And now you are nearing home again,
Dears, home again;
No more, may be, to roam again
As at that bygone time,

Which took you far away from us
 To stay from us;
Dawn, hold not long the day from us,
 But quicken it to prime!

Thomas Hardy

The Alarm

In Memory of one of the Writer's Family who was a Volunteer during the War
with Napoleon

In a ferny byway
Near the great South-Wessex Highway,
A homestead raised its breakfast-smoke aloft;
The dew-damps still lay steamless, for the sun had made no sky-way,
And twilight cloaked the croft.

'Twas hard to realize on
This snug side the mute horizon
That beyond it hostile armaments might steer,
Save from seeing in the porchway a fair woman weep with eyes on
A harnessed Volunteer.

In haste he'd flown there
To his comely wife alone there,
While marching south hard by, to still her fears,
For she soon would be a mother, and few messengers were known there
In these campaigning years.

'Twas time to be Good-bying,
Since the assembly-hour was nighing
In royal George's town at six that morn;
And betwixt its wharves and this retreat were ten good miles of hieing
Ere ring of bugle-horn.

"I've laid in food, Dear,
And broached the spiced and brewed, Dear;
And if our July hope should antedate,
Let the char-wench mount and gallop by the halterpath and wood, Dear,
And fetch assistance straight.

"As for Buonaparte, forget him;
He's not like to land! But let him,
Those strike with aim who strike for wives and sons!
And the war-boats built to float him; 'twere but wanted to upset him
A slat from Nelson's guns!

"But, to assure thee,
And of creeping fears to cure thee,
If he should be rumored anchoring in the Road,
Drive with the nurse to Kingsbere; and let nothing thence allure thee
Till we've him safe-bestowed.

"Now, to turn to marching matters:--
I've my knapsack, firelock, spatters,
Crossbelts, priming-horn, stock, bay'net, blackball, clay,
Pouch, magazine, flints, flint-box that at every quick-step clatters;
...My heart, Dear; that must stay!"

--With breathings broken
Farewell was kissed unspoken,
And they parted there as morning stroked the panes;
And the Volunteer went on, and turned, and twirled his glove for
token,
And took the coastward lanes.

When above He'th Hills he found him,
He saw, on gazing round him,
The Barrow-Beacon burning--burning low,
As if, perhaps, uplighted ever since he'd homeward bound him;
And it meant: Expect the Foe!

Leaving the byway,
And following swift the highway,
Car and chariot met he, faring fast inland;
"He's anchored, Soldier!" shouted some:
"God save thee, marching thy way,
Th'lt front him on the strand!"

He slowed; he stopped; he paltered
Awhile with self, and faltered,
"Why courting misadventure shoreward roam?
To Molly, surely! Seek the woods with her till times have altered;
Charity favors home.

"Else, my denying
He would come she'll read as lying--
Think the Barrow-Beacon must have met my eyes--
That my words were not unawareness, but deceit of her, while trying

My life to jeopardize.

"At home is stocked provision,
And to-night, without suspicion,
We might bear it with us to a covert near;
Such sin, to save a chiding wife, would earn it Christ's remission,
Though none forgive it here!"

While thus he, thinking,
A little bird, quick drinking
Among the crowfoot tufts the river bore,
Was tangled in their stringy arms, and fluttered, well-nigh sinking,
Near him, upon the moor.

He stepped in, reached, and seized it,
And, preening, had released it
But that a thought of Holy Writ occurred,
And Signs Divine ere battle, till it seemed him Heaven had pleased it
As guide to send the bird.

"O Lord, direct me!...
Doth Duty now expect me
To march a-coast, or guard my weak ones near?
Give this bird a flight according, that I thence know to elect me
The southward or the rear."

He loosed his clasp; when, rising,
The bird--as if surmising--
Bore due to southward, crossing by the Froom,
And Durnover Great-Field and Fort, the soldier clear advising--
Prompted he wist by Whom.

Then on he panted
By grim Mai-Don, and slanted
Up the steep Ridge-way, hearkening betwixt whiles,
Till, nearing coast and harbor, he beheld the shore-line planted
With Foot and Horse for miles.

Mistrusting not the omen,
He gained the beach, where Yeomen,
Militia, Fencibles, and Pikemen bold,
With Regulars in thousands, were enmassed to meet the Foemen,

Whose fleet had not yet shoaled.

Captain and Colonel,
Sere Generals, Ensigns vernal,
Were there, of neighbor-natives, Michel, Smith,
Meggs, Bingham, Gambier, Cunningham, roused by the hued nocturnal
Swoop on their land and kith.

But Buonaparte still tarried;
His project had miscarried;
At the last hour, equipped for victory,
The fleet had paused; his subtle combinations had been parried
By British strategy.

Homeward returning
Anon, no beacons burning,
No alarms, the Volunteer, in modest bliss,
Te Deum sang with wife and friends: "We praise Thee, Lord, discerning
That Thou hast helped in this!"

Thomas Hardy

Thomas Hardy

The Bridge Of Lodi.

I

When of tender mind and body
I was moved by minstrelsy,
And that strain "The Bridge of Lodi"
Brought a strange delight to me.

II

In the battle-breathing jingle
Of its forward-footing tune
I could see the armies mingle,
And the columns cleft and hewn

III

On that far-famed spot by Lodi
Where Napoleon clove his way
To his fame, when like a god he
Bent the nations to his sway.

IV

Hence the tune came capering to me
While I traced the Rhone and Po;
Nor could Milan's Marvel woo me
From the spot enamoured so.

V

And to-day, sunlit and smiling,
Here I stand upon the scene,
With its saffron walls, dun tiling,
And its meads of maiden green,

VI

Even as when the trackway thundered
With the charge of grenadiers,

And the blood of forty hundred
Splashed its parapets and piers . . .

VII

Any ancient crone I'd toady
Like a lass in young-eyed prime,
Could she tell some tale of Lodi
At that moving mighty time.

VIII

So, I ask the wives of Lodi
For traditions of that day;
But alas! not anybody
Seems to know of such a fray.

IX

And they heed but transitory
Marketings in cheese and meat,
Till I judge that Lodi's story
Is extinct in Lodi's street.

X

Yet while here and there they thrid them
In their zest to sell and buy,
Let me sit me down amid them
And behold those thousands die . . .

XI

- Not a creature cares in Lodi
How Napoleon swept each arch,
Or where up and downward trod he,
Or for his memorial March!

XII

So that wherefore should I be here,
Watching Adda lip the lea,

When the whole romance to see here
Is the dream I bring with me?

XIII

And why sing "The Bridge of Lodi"
As I sit thereon and swing,
When none shows by smile or nod he
Guesses why or what I sing? . . .

XIV

Since all Lodi, low and head ones,
Seem to pass that story by,
It may be the Lodi-bred ones
Rate it truly, and not I.

XV

Once engrossing Bridge of Lodi,
Is thy claim to glory gone?
Must I pipe a palinody,
Or be silent thereupon?

XVI

And if here, from strand to steeple,
Be no stone to fame the fight,
Must I say the Lodi people
Are but viewing crime aright?

XVII

Nay; I'll sing "The Bridge of Lodi" -
That long-loved, romantic thing,
Though none show by smile or nod he
Guesses why and what I sing!

Thomas Hardy

The Burghers

THE sun had wheeled from Grey's to Dammer's Crest,
And still I mused on that Thing imminent:
At length I sought the High-street to the West.

The level flare raked pane and pediment
And my wrecked face, and shaped my nearing friend
Like one of those the Furnace held unshent.

"I've news concerning her," he said. "Attend.
They fly to-night at the late moon's first gleam:
Watch with thy steel: two righteous thrusts will end

"Her shameless visions and his passion'd dream.
I'll watch with thee, to testify thy wrong--
To aid, maybe--Law consecrates the scheme."

I started, and we paced the flags along
Till I replied: "Since it has come to this
I'll do it! But alone. I can be strong."

Three hours past Curfew, when the Froom's mild hiss
Reigned sole, undull'd by whirr of merchandise,
From Pummery-Tout to where the Gibbet is,

I crossed my pleasaunce hard by Glyd'path Rise,
And stood beneath the wall. Eleven strokes went,
And to the door they came, contrariwise,

And met in clasp so close I had but bent
My lifted blade upon them to have let
Their two souls loose upon the firmament.

But something held my arm. "A moment yet
As pray-time ere you wantons die!" I said;
And then they saw me. Swift her gaze was set

With eye and cry of love illimited
Upon her Heart-king. Never upon me
Had she thrown look of love so thorough-sped!...

At once she flung her faint form shieldingly
On his, against the vengeance of my vows;
The which o'erruling, her shape shielded he.

Blanked by such love, I stood as in a drowse,
And the slow moon edged from the upland nigh,
My sad thoughts moving thuswise: "I may house

"And I may husband her, yet what am I
But licensed tyrant to this bonded pair?
Says Charity, Do as ye would be done by."...

Hurling my iron to the bushes there,
I bade them stay. And, as if brain and breast
Were passive, they walked with me to the stair.

Inside the house none watched; and on we prest
Before a mirror, in whose gleam I read
Her beauty, his,--and mine own mien unblest;

Till at her room I turned. "Madam," I said,
"Have you the wherewithal for this? Pray speak.
Love fills no cupboard. You'll need daily bread."

"We've nothing, sire," said she, "and nothing seek.
'Twere base in me to rob my lord unaware;
Our hands will earn a pittance week by week."

And next I saw she'd piled her raiment rare
Within the garde-ropes, and her household purse,
Her jewels, and least lace of personal wear;

And stood in homespun. Now grown wholly hers,
I handed her the gold, her jewells all,
And him the choicest of her robes diverse.

"I'll take you to the doorway in the wall,
And then adieu," I to them. "Friends, withdraw."
They did so; and she went--beyond recall.

And as I paused beneath the arch I saw

Their moonlit figures--slow, as in surprise--
Descend the slope, and vanish on the haw.

"'Fool,' some will say," I thought. "But who is wise,
Save God alone, to weigh my reasons why?"
--"Hast thou struck home?" came with the boughs' night-sighs.

It was my friend. "I have struck well. They fly,
But carry wounds that none can cicatrize."
--"Not mortal?" said he. "Lingering--worse," said I.

Thomas Hardy

The Caged Thrush Freed And Home Again (Villanelle)

"Men know but little more than we,
Who count us least of things terrene,
How happy days are made to be!

"Of such strange tidings what think ye,
O birds in brown that peck and preen?
Men know but little more than we!

"When I was borne from yonder tree
In bonds to them, I hoped to glean
How happy days are made to be,

"And want and wailing turned to glee;
Alas, despite their mighty mien
Men know but little more than we!

"They cannot change the Frost's decree,
They cannot keep the skies serene;
How happy days are made to be

"Eludes great Man's sagacity
No less than ours, O tribes in treen!
Men know but little more than we
How happy days are made to be."

Thomas Hardy

The Casterbridge Captains

THREE captains went to Indian wars,
And only one returned:
Their mate of yore, he singly wore
The laurels all had earned.

At home he sought the ancient aisle
Wherein, untrumped of fame,
The three had sat in pupilage,
And each had carved his name.

The names, rough-hewn, of equal size,
Stood on the panel still;
Unequal since.--"Twas theirs to aim,
Mine was it to fulfil!"

--"Who saves his life shall lose it, friends!"
Outspake the preacher then,
Unweeing he his listener, who
Looked at the names again.

That he had come and they'd been stayed,
'Twas but the chance of war:
Another chance, and they'd sat here,
And he had lain afar.

Yet saw he something in the lives
Of those who'd ceased to live
That rounded them with majesty
Which living failed to give.

Transcendent triumph in return
No longer lit his brain;
Transcendence rayed the distant urn
Where slept the fallen twain.

Thomas Hardy

The Cave Of The Unborn

I rose at night and visited
The Cave of the Unborn,
And crowding shapes surrounded me
For tidings of the life to be,
Who long had prayed the silent Head
To speed their advent morn.

Their eyes were lit with artless trust;
Hope thrilled their every tone:
"A place the loveliest, is it not?
A pure delight, a beauty-spot
Where all is gentle, pure and just
And ??violence?? is unknown?"

My heart was anguished for their sake;
I could not frame a word;
But they descried my sunken face
And seemed to read therein, and trace
The news which Pity would not break
Nor Truth leave unaverred.

And as I silently retired
I turned and watched them still:
And they came helter-skelter out,
Driven forward like a rabble rout
Into the world they had so desired,
By the all-immanent Will.

Thomas Hardy

The Cheval-Glass

Why do you harbour that great cheval-glass
Filling up your narrow room?
You never preen or plume,
Or look in a week at your full-length figure -
Picture of bachelor gloom!

'Well, when I dwelt in ancient England,
Renting the valley farm,
Thoughtless of all heart-harm,
I used to gaze at the parson's daughter,
A creature of nameless charm.

'Thither there came a lover and won her,
Carried her off from my View.
O it was then I knew
Misery of a cast undreamt of -
More than, indeed, my due!

'Then far rumours of her ill-usage
Came, like a chilling breath
When a man languisheth;
Followed by news that her mind lost balance,
And, in a space, of her death.

'Soon sank her father; and next was the auction -
Everything to be sold:
Mid things new and old
Stood this glass in her former chamber,
Long in her use, I was told.

'Well, I awaited the sale and bought it....
There by my bed it stands,
And as the dawn expands
Often I see her pale-faced form there
Brushing her hairs bright bands.

'There, too, at pallid midnight moments

Quick she will come to my call,
Smile from the frame withal
Ponderingly, as she used to regard me
Passing her father's wall.

'So that it was for it's revelations
I brought it oversea,
And drag it about with me....
Anon I shall break it and bury its, fragments
Where my grave is to be.

Thomas Hardy

The Choirmaster's Burial

He often would ask us
That, when he died,
After playing so many
To their last rest,
If out of us any
Should here abide,
And it would not task us,
We would with our lutes
Play over him
By his grave-brim
The psalm he liked best—
The one whose sense suits
'Mount Ephraim'—
And perhaps we should seem
To him, in Death's dream,
Like the seraphim.

As soon as I knew
That his spirit was gone
I thought this his due,
And spoke thereupon.
'I think', said the vicar,
'A read service quicker
Than viols out-of-doors
In these frosts and hoars.
That old-fashioned way
Requires a fine day,
And it seems to me
It had better not be.'
Hence, that afternoon,
Though never knew he
That his wish could not be,
To get through it faster
They buried the master
Without any tune.

But 'twas said that, when
At the dead of next night
The vicar looked out,

There struck on his ken
Thronged roundabout,
Where the frost was graying
The headstoned grass,
A band all in white
Like the saints in church-glass,
Singing and playing
The ancient stave
By the choirmaster's grave.

Such the tenor man told
When he had grown old.

Thomas Hardy

The Church-Builder

The church flings forth a battled shade
Over the moon-blanch'd sword:
The church; my gift; whereto I paid
My all in hand and hoard;
Lavished my gains
With stintless pains
To glorify the Lord.

I squared the broad foundations in
Of ashlar'd masonry;
I moulded mullions thick and thin,
Hewed fillet and ogee;
I circled
Each sculptured head
With nimb and canopy.

I called in many a craftsman
To fix emblazoned glass,
To figure Cross and Sepulchre
On dossal, boss, and brass.
My gold all spent,
My jewels went
To gem the cups of Mass.

I borrowed deep to carve the screen
And raise the ivoried Rood;
I parted with my small demesne
To make my owings good.
Heir-looms unpriced
I sacrificed,
Until debt-free I stood.

So closed the task. "Deathless the Creed
Here substantiated!" said my soul:
"I heard me bidden to this deed,
And straight obeyed the call.
Illumed this fane,
That not in vain
I build it, Lord of all!"

But, as it chanced me, then and there
Did dire misfortunes burst;
My home went waste for lack of care,
My sons rebelled and curst;
Till I confessed
That aims the best
Were looking like the worst.

Enkindled by my votive work
No burning faith I find;
The deeper thinkers sneer and smirk,
And give my toil no mind;
From nod and wink
I read they think
That I am fool and blind.

My gift to God seems futile, quite;
The world moves as erstwhile;
And powerful Wrong on feeble Right
Tramples in olden style.
My faith burns down,
I see no crown;
But Cares, and Griefs, and Guile.

So now, the remedy? Yea, this:
I gently swing the door
Here, of my fane--no soul to wis--
And cross the patterned floor
To the rood-screen
That stands between
The nave and inner chore.

The rich red windows dim the moon,
But little light need I;
I mount the prie-dieu, lately hewn
From woods of rarest dye;
Then from below
My garment, so,
I draw this cord, and tie

One end thereof around the beam

Midway 'twixt Cross and truss:
I noose the nethermost extreme,
And in ten seconds thus
I journey hence--
To that land whence
No rumour reaches us.

Well: Here at morn they'll light on one
Dangling in mockery
Of what he spent his substance on
Blindly and uselessly!...
"He might," they'll say,
"Have built, some way,
A cheaper gallows-tree!"

Thomas Hardy

The Colonel's Soliloquy.

"The quay recedes. Hurrah! Ahead we go! . . .
It's true I've been accustomed now to home,
And joints get rusty, and one's limbs may grow
More fit to rest than roam.

"But I can stand as yet fair stress and strain;
There's not a little steel beneath the rust;
My years mount somewhat, but here's to't again!
And if I fall, I must.

"God knows that for myself I've scanty care;
Past scrimmages have proved as much to all;
In Eastern lands and South I've had my share
Both of the blade and ball.

"And where those villains ripped me in the flitch
With their old iron in my early time,
I'm apt at change of wind to feel a twitch,
Or at a change of clime.

"And what my mirror shows me in the morning
Has more of blotch and wrinkle than of bloom;
My eyes, too, heretofore all glasses scorning,
Have just a touch of rheum . . .

"Now sounds 'The Girl I've left behind me,'--Ah,
The years, the ardours, wakened by that tune!
Time was when, with the crowd's farewell 'Hurrah!'
'Twould lift me to the moon.

"But now it's late to leave behind me one
Who if, poor soul, her man goes underground,
Will not recover as she might have done
In days when hopes abound.

"She's waving from the wharfside, palely grieving,
As down we draw . . . Her tears make little show,
Yet now she suffers more than at my leaving
Some twenty years ago.

"I pray those left at home will care for her!
I shall come back; I have before; though when
The Girl you leave behind you is a grandmother,
Things may not be as then."

Thomas Hardy

The Contretemps

A forward rush by the lamp in the gloom,
And we clasped, and almost kissed;
But she was not the woman whom
I had promised to meet in the thawing brume
On that harbour-bridge; nor was I he of her tryst.

So loosening from me swift she said:
"O why, why feign to be
The one I had meant - to whom I have sped
To fly with, being so sorrily wed,"
'Twas thus and thus that she upbraided me.

My assignation had struck upon
Some others' like it, I found.
And her lover rose on the night anon;
And then her husband entered on
The lamplit, snowflaked, sloppiness around.

"Take her and welcome, man!" he cried:
"I wash my hands of her.
I'll find me twice as good a bride!"
- All this to me, whom he had eyed,
Plainly, as his wife's planned deliverer.

And next the lover: "Little I knew,
Madam, you had a third!
Kissing here in my very view!"
- Husband and lover then withdrew.
I let them; and I told them not they erred.

Why not? Well, there faced she and I -
Two strangers who'd kissed, or near,
Chancewise. To see stand weeping by
A woman once embraced, will try
The tension of a man the most austere.

So it began; and I was young,
She pretty, by the lamp,
As flakes came waltzing down among

The waves of her clinging hair, that hung
Heavily on her temples, dark and damp.

And there alone still stood we two;
She once cast off for me,
Or so it seemed: while night on drew,
Forcing a parley what should do
We twain hearts caught in one catastrophe.

In stranded souls a common strait
Wakes latencies unknown,
Whose impulse may precipitate
A life-long leap. The hour was late,
And there was the Jersey boat with its funnel agroan.

"Is wary walking worth much pother?"
It grunted, as still it stayed.
"One pairing is as good as another
Where is all venture! Take each other,
And scrap the oaths that you have aforetime made."

- Of the four involved there walks but one
On earth at this late day.
And what of the chapter so begun?
In that odd complex what was done?
Well; happiness comes in full to none:
Let peace lie on lulled lips: I will not say.

Thomas Hardy

The Convergence Of The Twain

I

In a solitude of the sea
Deep from human vanity,
And the Pride of Life that planned her, stilly couches she.

II

Steel chambers, late the pyres
Of her salamandrine fires,
Cold currents thrud, and turn to rhythmic tidal lyres.

III

Over the mirrors meant
To glass the opulent
The sea-worm crawls-grotesque, slimed, dumb, indifferent.

IV

Jewels in joy designed
To ravish the sensuous mind
Lie lightless, all their sparkles bleared and black and blind.

V

Dim moon-eyed fishes near
Gaze at the gilded gear
And query: "What does this vaingloriousness down here?" . . .

VI

Well: while was fashioning
This creature of cleaving wing,
The Immanent Will that stirs and urges everything

VII

Prepared a sinister mate
For her - so gaily great -
A Shape of Ice, for the time far and dissociate.

VIII

And as the smart ship grew
In stature, grace, and hue,
In shadowy silent distance grew the Iceberg too.

IX

Alien they seemed to be:
No mortal eye could see
The intimate welding of their later history,

X

Or sign that they were bent
by paths coincident
On being anon twin halves of one august event,

XI

Till the Spinner of the Years
Said "Now!" And each one hears,
And consummation comes, and jars two hemispheres.

Thomas Hardy

The Coquette, And After (Triolets)

I

For long the cruel wish I knew
That your free heart should ache for me
While mine should bear no ache for you;
For, long--the cruel wish!--I knew
How men can feel, and craved to view
My triumph--fated not to be
For long! . . . The cruel wish I knew
That your free heart should ache for me!

II

At last one pays the penalty -
The woman--women always do.
My farce, I found, was tragedy
At last!--One pays the penalty
With interest when one, fancy-free,
Learns love, learns shame . . . Of sinners two
At last ONE pays the penalty -
The woman--women always do!

Thomas Hardy

The Coronation

At Westminster, hid from the light of day,
Many who once had shone as monarchs lay.

Edward the Pious, and two Edwards more,
The second Richard, Henrys three or four;

That is to say, those who were called the Third,
Fifth, Seventh, and Eighth (the much self-widowed),

And James the Scot, and near him Charles the Second,
And, too, the second George could there be reckoned.

Of women, Mary and Queen Elizabeth,
And Anne, all silent in a musing death;

And Williams Mary, and Mary, Queen of Scots,
And consort-queens whose names oblivion blots;

And several more whose chronicle one sees
Adorning ancient royal pedigrees.

- Now, as they drowsed on, freed from Life's old thrall,
And heedless, save of things exceptional,

Said one: 'What means this throbbing thudding sound
That reaches to us here from overground;

'A sound of chisels, augers, planes, and saws,
Infringing all ecclesiastic laws?

'And these tons-weight of timber on us pressed,
Unfelt here since we entered into rest?

'Surely, at least to us, being corpses royal,
A meet repose is owing by the loyal?

'- Perhaps a scaffold!' Mary Stuart sighed,
'If such still be. It was that way I died.'

'- Ods! Far more like,' said he the many-wived,
'That for a wedding 'tis this works contrived.

'Ha-ha! I never would bow down to Rimmon,
But I had a rare time with those six women!'

'Not all at once?' gasped he who loved confession.
'Nay, nay!' said Hal. 'That would have been transgression.'

- They build a catafalque here, black and tall,
Perhaps,' mused Richard, 'for some funeral?'

And Anne chimed in: 'Ah, yes: it may be so!'
'Nay!' squeaked Eliza. 'Little you seem to know -

'Clearly 'tis for some crowning here in state,
As they crowned us at our long bygone date;

'Though we'd no such a power of carpentry,
But let the ancient architecture be;

'If I were up there where the parsons sit,

In one of my gold robes, I'd see to it!

'But you are not,' Charles chuckled. 'You are here,
And never will know the sun again, my dear!'

'Yea,' whispered those whom no one had addressed;
'With slow, sad march, amid a folk distressed,
We were brought here, to take our dusty rest.

'And here, alas, in darkness laid below,
We'll wait and listen, and endure the show....
Clamour dogs kingship; afterwards not so!'

Thomas Hardy

The Curtains Now Are Drawn

I

The curtains now are drawn,
And the spindrift strikes the glass,
Blown up the jagged pass
By the surly salt sou'-west,
And the sneering glare is gone
Behind the yonder crest,
While she sings to me:
'O the dream that thou art my Love, be it thine,
And the dream that I am thy Love, be it mine,
And death may come, but loving is divine.'

II

I stand here in the rain,
With its smite upon her stone,
And the grasses that have grown
Over women, children, men,
And their texts that 'Life is vain';
But I hear the notes as when
Once she sang to me:
'O the dream that thou art my Love, be it thine,
And the dream that I am thy Love, be it mine,
And death may come, but loving is divine.'

1913

Thomas Hardy

 "Thoughts call me back -
I would still lose all for your dear, dear sake;
My heart is thine, friend! But my track
I home to Athelhall must take
 To hinder household wrack!"

VI

He appealed. But they parted, weak and wan:
 And he left the shore;
His ship diminished, was low, was gone;
And she heard in the waves as the daytide wore,
And read in the leer of the sun that shone,
 That they parted for evermore.

VII

She homed as she came, at the dip of eve
 On Athel Coomb
Regaining the Hall she had sworn to leave . . .
The house was soundless as a tomb,
And she entered her chamber, there to grieve
 Lone, kneeling, in the gloom.

VIII

From the lawn without rose her husband's voice
 To one his friend:
"Another her Love, another my choice,
Her going is good. Our conditions mend;
In a change of mates we shall both rejoice;
 I hoped that it thus might end!

IX

"A quick divorce; she will make him hers,
 And I wed mine.
So Time rights all things in long, long years -
Or rather she, by her bold design!
I admire a woman no balk deters:
 She has blessed my life, in fine.

The Dance At The Phoenix

TO Jenny came a gentle youth
From inland leazes lone;
His love was fresh as apple-blooth
By Parrett, Yeo, or Tone.
And duly he entreated her
To be his tender minister,
And call him aye her own.

Fair Jenny's life had hardly been
A life of modesty;
At Casterbridge experience keen
Of many loves had she
From scarcely sixteen years above:
Among them sundry troopers of
The King's-Own Cavalry.

But each with charger, sword, and gun,
Had bluffed the Biscay wave;
And Jenny prized her gentle one
For all the love he gave.
She vowed to be, if they were wed,
His honest wife in heart and head
From bride-ale hour to grave.

Wedded they were. Her husband's trust
In Jenny knew no bound,
And Jenny kept her pure and just,
Till even malice found
No sin or sign of ill to be
In one who walked so decently
The duteous helpmate's round.

Two sons were born, and bloomed to men,
And roamed, and were as not:
Alone was Jenny left again
As ere her mind had sought
A solace in domestic joys,
And ere the vanished pair of boys
Were sent to sun her cot.

She numbered near on sixty years,
And passed as elderly,
When, in the street, with flush of fears,
On day discovered she,
From shine of swords and thump of drum,
Her early loves from war had come,
The King's Own Cavalry.

She turned aside, and bowed her head
Anigh Saint Peter's door;
"Alas for chastened thoughts!" she said;
"I'm faded now, and hoar,
And yet those notes--they thrill me through,
And those gay forms move me anew
As in the years of yore!"...

--'Twas Christmas, and the Phoenix Inn
Was lit with tapers tall,
For thirty of the trooper men
Had vowed to give a ball
As "Theirs" had done (fame handed down)
When lying in the self-same town
Ere Buonaparté's fall.

That night the throbbing "Soldier's Joy,"
The measured tread and sway
Of "Fancy-Lad" and "Maiden Coy,"
Reached Jenny as she lay
Beside her spouse; till springtide blood
Seemed scouring through her like a flood
That whisked the years away.

She rose, and rayed, and decked her head
To hide her ringlets thin;
Upon her cap two bows of red
She fixed with hasty pin;
Unheard descending to the street,
She trod the flags with tune-led feet,
And stood before the Inn.

Save for the dancers', not a sound

Disturbed the icy air;
No watchman on his midnight round
Or traveller was there;
But over All-Saints', high and bright,
Pulsed to the music Sirius white,
The Wain by Bullstake Square.

She knocked, but found her further stride
Checked by a sergeant tall:
"Gay Granny, whence come you?" he cried;
"This is a private ball."
--"No one has more right here than me!
Ere you were born, man," answered she,
"I knew the regiment all!"

"Take not the lady's visit ill!"
Upspoke the steward free;
"We lack sufficient partners still,
So, prithee let her be!"
They seized and whirled her 'mid the maze,
And Jenny felt as in the days
Of her immodesty.

Hour chased each hour, and night advanced;
She sped as shod with wings;
Each time and every time she danced--
Reels, jigs, poussettes, and flings:
They cheered her as she soared and swooped
(She'd learnt ere art in dancing drooped
From hops to slothful swings).

The favorite Quick-step "Speed the Plough"--
(Cross hands, cast off, and wheel)--
"The Triumph," "Sylph," "The Row-dow dow,"
Famed "Major Malley's Reel,"
"The Duke of York's," "The Fairy Dance,"
"The Bridge of Lodi" (brought from France),
She beat out, toe and heel.

The "Fall of Paris" clanged its close,
And Peter's chime told four,
When Jenny, bosom-beating, rose

To seek her silent door.
They tiptoed in escorting her,
Lest stroke of heel or chink of spur
Should break her goodman's snore.

The fire that late had burnt fell slack
When lone at last stood she;
Her nine-and-fifty years came back;
She sank upon her knee
Beside the durn, and like a dart
A something arrowed through her heart
In shoots of agony.

Their footsteps died as she leant there,
Lit by the morning star
Hanging above the moorland, where
The aged elm-rows are;
And, as o'ernight, from Pummery Ridge
To Maembury Ring and Standfast Bridge
No life stirred, near or far.

Though inner mischief worked amain,
She reached her husband's side;
Where, toil-weary, as he had lain
Beneath the patchwork pied
When yestereve she'd forthward crept,
And as unwitting, still he slept
Who did in her confide.

A tear sprang as she turned and viewed
His features free from guile;
She kissed him long, as when, just wooed.
She chose his domicile.
Death menaced now; yet less for life
She wished than that she were the wife
That she had been erstwhile.

Time wore to six. Her husband rose
And struck the steel and stone;
He glanced at Jenny, whose repose
Seemed deeper than his own.
With dumb dismay, on closer sight,

He gathered sense that in the night,
Or morn, her soul had flown.

When told that some too mighty strain
For one so many-yearred
Had burst her bosom's master-vein,
His doubts remained unstirred.
His Jenny had not left his side
Betwixt the eve and morning-tide:
--The King's said not a word.

Well! times are not as times were then,
Nor fair ones half so free;
And truly they were martial men,
The King's-Own Cavalry.
And when they went from Casterbridge
And vanished over Mellstock Ridge,
'Twas saddest morn to see.

Thomas Hardy

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 of broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted night
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to me
The Century's corpse outleant,
Its crypt the cloudy canopy,
The wind its death-lament.
The ancient pulse of germ and birth
Was shrunken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon earth
Seemed fervorless as I.

At once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead,
In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy illimited.
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt and small,
With blast-battered plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings
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.

Thomas Hardy

The Dead Man Walking

They hail me as one living,
But don't they know
That I have died of late years,
Untombed although?

I am but a shape that stands here,
A pulseless mould,
A pale past picture, screening
Ashes gone cold.

Not at a minute's warning,
Not in a loud hour,
For me ceased Time's enchantments
In hall and bower.

There was no tragic transit,
No catch of breath,
When silent seasons inched me
On to this death ...

-- A Troubadour-youth I rambled
With Life for lyre,
The beats of being raging
In me like fire.

But when I practised eyeing
The goal of men,
It iced me, and I perished
A little then.

When passed my friend, my kinsfolk,
Through the Last Door,
And left me standing bleakly,
I died yet more;

And when my Love's heart kindled
In hate of me,
Wherefore I knew not, died I
One more degree.

And if when I died fully
I cannot say,
And changed into the corpse-thing
I am to-day,

Yet is it that, though whiling
The time somehow
In walking, talking, smiling,
I live not now.

Thomas Hardy

The Death Of Regret

I opened my shutter at sunrise,
And looked at the hill hard by,
And I heartily grieved for the comrade
Who wandered up there to die.

I let in the morn on the morrow,
And failed not to think of him then,
As he trod up that rise in the twilight,
And never came down again.

I undid the shutter a week thence,
But not until after I'd turned
Did I call back his last departure
By the upland there discerned.

Uncovering the casement long later,
I bent to my toil till the gray,
When I said to myself, 'Ah - what ails me,
To forget him all the day!'

As daily I flung back the shutter
In the same blank bald routine,
He scarcely once rose to remembrance
Through a month of my facing the scene.

And ah, seldom now do I ponder
At the window as heretofore
On the long valued one who died yonder,
And wastes by the sycamore.

Thomas Hardy

The Difference

I

Sinking down by the gate I discern the thin moon,
And a blackbird tries over old airs in the pine,
But the moon is a sorry one, sad the bird's tune,
For this spot is unknown to that Heartmate of mine.

II

Did my Heartmate but haunt here at times such as now,
The song would be joyous and cheerful the moon;
But she will see never this gate, path, or bough,
Nor I find a joy in the scene or the tune.

Thomas Hardy

The Discovery

I wandered to a crude coast
Like a ghost;
Upon the hills I saw fires -
Funeral pyres
Seemingly - and heard breaking
Waves like distant cannonades that set the land shaking.

And so I never once guessed
A Love-nest,
Bowered and candle-lit, lay
In my way,
Till I found a hid hollow,
Where I burst on her my heart could not but follow.

Thomas Hardy

The Elopement

'A woman never agreed to it!' said my knowing friend to me.
'That one thing she'd refuse to do for Solomon's mines in fee:
No woman ever will make herself look older than she is.'
I did not answer; but I thought, 'You err there, ancient Quiz.'

It took a rare one, true, to do it; for she was surely rare -
As rare a soul at that sweet time of her life as she was fair.
And urging motives, too, were strong, for ours was a passionate case,
Yea, passionate enough to lead to freaking with that young face.

I have told no one about it, should perhaps make few believe,
But I think it over now that life looms dull and years bereave,
How blank we stood at our bright wits' end, two frail barks in distress,
How self-regard in her was slain by her large tenderness.

I said: 'The only chance for us in a crisis of this kind
Is going it thorough!' - 'Yes,' she calmly breathed. 'Well, I don't mind.'
And we blanched her dark locks ruthlessly: set wrinkles on her brow;
Ay - she was a right rare woman then, whatever she may be now.

That night we heard a coach drive up, and questions asked below.
'A gent with an elderly wife, sir,' was returned from the bureau.
And the wheels went rattling on, and free at last from public ken
We washed all off in her chamber and restored her youth again.

How many years ago it was! Some fifty can it be
Since that adventure held us, and she played old wife to me?
But in time convention won her, as it wins all women at last,
And now she is rich and respectable, and time has buried the past.

Thomas Hardy

The Fallow Deer At The Lonely House

One without looks in tonight
Through the curtain-chink
From the sheet of glistening white;
One without looks in tonight
As we sit and think
By the fender-brink.

We do not discern those eyes
Watching in the snow;
Lit by lamps of rosy dyes
We do not discern those eyes
Wandering, aglow
Four-footed, tiptoe.

Thomas Hardy

The Farm Woman's Winter

I

If seasons all were summers,
And leaves would never fall,
And hopping casement-comers
Were foodless not at all,
And fragile folk might be here
That white winds bid depart;
Then one I used to see here
Would warm my wasted heart!

II

One frail, who, bravely tilling
Long hours in gripping gusts,
Was mastered by their chilling,
And now his ploughshare rusts.
So savage winter catches
The breath of limber things,
And what I love he snatches,
And what I love not, brings.

Thomas Hardy

The Fire At Tranter Sweatley's

They had long met o' Zundays--her true love and she--
And at junketings, maypoles, and flings;
But she bode wi' a thirtover uncle, and he
Swore by noon and by night that her goodman should be
Naibor Sweatley--a gaffer oft weak at the knee
From taking o' sommat more cheerful than tea--
Who tranted, and moved people's things.

She cried, "O pray pity me!" Nought would he hear;
Then with wild rainy eyes she obeyed,
She chid when her Love was for clinking off wi' her.
The pa'son was told, as the season drew near
To throw over pu'pit the names of the peäir
As fitting one flesh to be made.

The wedding-day dawned and the morning drew on;
The couple stood bridegroom and bride;
The evening was passed, and when midnight had gone
The folks horned out, "God save the King," and anon
The two home-along gloomily hied.

The lover Tim Tankens mourned heart-sick and drear
To be thus of his darling deprived:
He roamed in the dark ath'art field, mound, and mere,
And, a'most without knowing it, found himself near
The house of the tranter, and now of his Dear,
Where the lantern-light showed 'em arrived.

The bride sought her cham'er so calm and so pale
That a Northern had thought her resigned;
But to eyes that had seen her in tide-times of weal,
Like the white cloud o' smoke, the red battlefield's vail,
That look spak' of havoc behind.

The bridegroom yet laitered a beaker to drain,
Then reeled to the linhay for more,
When the candle-snoff kindled some chaff from his grain--
Flames spread, and red vlinkers, wi' might and wi' main,
And round beams, thatch, and chimley-tun roar.

Young Tim away yond, rafted up by the light,
Through brimble and underwood tears,
Till he comes to the orchet, when crooping thereright
In the lewth of a codlin-tree, bivering wi' fright,
Wi' on'y her night-rail to screen her from sight,
His lonesome young Barbree appears.

Her cwold little figure half-naked he views
Played about by the frolicsome breeze,
Her light-tripping totties, her ten little tooes,
All bare and besprinkled wi' Fall's chilly dews,
While her great gallied eyes, through her hair hanging loose,
Sheened as stars through a tardle o' trees.

She eyed en; and, as when a weir-hatch is drawn,
Her tears, penned by terror afore,
With a rushing of sobs in a shower were strawn,
Till her power to pour 'em seemed wasted and gone
From the heft o' misfortune she bore.

"O Tim, my own Tim I must call 'ee--I will!
All the world ha' turned round on me so!
Can you help her who loved 'ee, though acting so ill?
Can you pity her misery--feel for her still?
When worse than her body so quivering and chill
Is her heart in its winter o' woe!

"I think I mid almost ha' borne it," she said,
"Had my griefs one by one come to hand;
But O, to be slave to thik husbird for bread,
And then, upon top o' that, driven to wed,
And then, upon top o' that, burnt out o' bed,
Is more than my nater can stand!"

Tim's soul like a lion 'ithin en outsprung--
(Tim had a great soul when his feelings were wrung)--
"Feel for 'ee, dear Barbree?" he cried;
And his warm working-jacket about her he flung,
Made a back, horsed her up, till behind him she clung
Like a chiel on a gipsy, her figure uphung
By the sleeves that around her he tied.

Over piggeries, and mixens, and apples, and hay,
They lumpered straight into the night;
And finding bylong where a halter-path lay,
At dawn reached Tim's house, on'y seen on their way
By a naibor or two who were up wi' the day;
But they gathered no clue to the sight.

Then tender Tim Tankens he searched here and there
For some garment to clothe her fair skin;
But though he had breeches and waistcoats to spare,
He had nothing quite seemly for Barbree to wear,
Who, half shrammed to death, stood and cried on a chair
At the caddle she found herself in.

There was one thing to do, and that one thing he did,
He lent her some clouts of his own,
And she took 'em perforce; and while in 'em she slid,
Tim turned to the winder, as modesty bid,
Thinking, "O that the picter my duty keeps hid
To the sight o' my eyes mid be shown!"

In the tallet he stowed her; there huddled she lay,
Shortening sleeves, legs, and tails to her limbs;
But most o' the time in a mortal bad way,
Well knowing that there'd be the divel to pay
If 'twere found that, instead o' the elements' prey,
She was living in lodgings at Tim's.

"Where's the tranter?" said men and boys; "where can er be?"
"Where's the tranter?" said Barbree alone.
"Where on e'th is the tranter?" said everybod-y:
They sifted the dust of his perished roof-tree,
And all they could find was a bone.

Then the uncle cried, "Lord, pray have mercy on me!"
And in terror began to repent.
But before 'twas complete, and till sure she was free,
Barbree drew up her loft-ladder, tight turned her key--
Tim bringing up breakfast and dinner and tea--
Till the news of her hiding got vent.

Then followed the custom-kept rout, shout, and flare
Of a skimmington-ride through the naiborhood, ere
Folk had proof o' wold Sweatley's decay.
Whereupon decent people all stood in a stare,
Saying Tim and his lodger should risk it, and pair:
So he took her to church. An' some laughing lads there
Cried to Tim, "After Sweatley!" She said, "I declare
I stand as a maiden to-day!"

Thomas Hardy

The Garden Seat

Its former green is blue and thin,
And its once firm legs sink in and in;
Soon it will break down unaware,
Soon it will break down unaware.

At night when reddest flowers are black
Those who once sat thereon come back;
Quite a row of them sitting there,
Quite a row of them sitting there.

With them the seat does not break down,
Nor winter freeze them, nor floods drown,
For they are as light as upper air,
They are as light as upper air!

Thomas Hardy

The Ghost Of The Past

We two kept house, the Past and I,
The Past and I;
I tended while it hovered nigh,
Leaving me never alone.
It was a spectral housekeeping
Where fell no jarring tone,
As strange, as still a housekeeping
As ever has been known.

As daily I went up the stair,
And down the stair,
I did not mind the Bygone there --
The Present once to me;
Its moving meek companionship
I wished might ever be,
There was in that companionship
Something of ecstasy.

It dwelt with me just as it was,
Just as it was
When first its prospects gave me pause
In wayward wanderings,
Before the years had torn old troths
As they tear all sweet things,
Before gaunt griefs had torn old troths
And dulled old rapturings.

And then its form began to fade,
Began to fade,
Its gentle echoes faintlier played
At eves upon my ear
Than when the autumn's look embrowned
The lonely chambers here,
The autumn's settling shades embrowned
Nooks that it haunted near.

And so with time my vision less,
Yea, less and less
Makes of that Past my housemistress,

It dwindles in my eye;
It looms a far-off skeleton
And not a comrade nigh,
A fitful far-off skeleton
Dimming as days draw by.

Thomas Hardy

The Going

Why did you give no hint that night
That quickly after the morrow's dawn,
And calmly, as if indifferent quite,
You would close your term here, up and be gone
Where I could not follow
With wing of swallow
To gain one glimpse of you ever anon!

Never to bid good-bye
Or lip me the softest call,
Or utter a wish for a word, while I
Saw morning harden upon the wall,
Unmoved, unknowing
That your great going
Had place that moment, and altered all.

Why do you make me leave the house
And think for a breath it is you I see
At the end of the alley of bending boughs
Where so often at dusk you used to be;
Till in darkening dankness
The yawning blankness
Of the perspective sickens me!

You were she who abode
By those red-veined rocks far West,
You were the swan-necked one who rode
Along the beetling Beeny Crest,
And, reining nigh me,
Would muse and eye me,
While Life unrolled us its very best.

Why, then, latterly did we not speak,
Did we not think of those days long dead,
And ere your vanishing strive to seek
That time's renewal? We might have said,
"In this bright spring weather
We'll visit together
Those places that once we visited."

Well, well! All's past amend,
Unchangeable. It must go.
I seem but a dead man held on end
To sink down soon. . . . O you could not know
That such swift fleeing
No soul foreseeing--
Not even I--would undo me so!

Thomas Hardy

The Going Of The Battery [wive's Lament November 2nd 1899]

I

O it was sad enough, weak enough, mad enough -
Light in their loving as soldiers can be -
First to risk choosing them, leave alone losing them
Now, in far battle, beyond the South Sea! . . .

II

- Rain came down drenchingly; but we unblenchingly
Trudged on beside them through mirk and through mire,
They stepping steadily-only too readily! -
Scarce as if stepping brought parting-time nigher.

III

Great guns were gleaming there, living things seeming there,
Cloaked in their tar-cloths, upmouthed to the night;
Wheels wet and yellow from axle to felloe,
Throats blank of sound, but prophetic to sight.

IV

Gas-glimmers drearily, blearily, eerily
Lit our pale faces outstretched for one kiss,
While we stood prest to them, with a last quest to them
Not to court perils that honour could miss.

V

Sharp were those sighs of ours, blinded these eyes of ours,
When at last moved away under the arch
All we loved. Aid for them each woman prayed for them,
Treading back slowly the track of their march.

VI

Someone said: 'Nevermore will they come: evermore
Are they now lost to us.' O it was wrong!
Though may be hard their ways, some Hand will guard their ways,
Bear them through safely, in brief time or long.

VII

- Yet, voices haunting us, daunting us, taunting us,
Hint in the night-time when life beats are low
Other and graver things . . . Hold we to braver things,
Wait we, in trust, what Time's fulness shall show.

Thomas Hardy

The Going Of The Battery Wives. (Lament)

I

O it was sad enough, weak enough, mad enough -
Light in their loving as soldiers can be -
First to risk choosing them, leave alone losing them
Now, in far battle, beyond the South Sea! . . .

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Wait we, in trust, what Time's fulness shall show.

Thomas Hardy

The Haunter

He does not think that I haunt here nightly:
How shall I let him know
That whither his fancy sets him wandering
I, too, alertly go? -
Hover and hover a few feet from him
Just as I used to do,
But cannot answer his words addressed me -
Only listen thereto!

When I could answer he did not say them:
When I could let him know
How I would like to join in his journeys
Seldom he wished to go.
Now that he goes and wants me with him
More than he used to do,
Never he sees my faithful phantom
Though he speaks thereto.

Yes, I accompany him to places
Only dreamers know,
Where the shy hares show their faces,
Where the night rooks go;
Into old aisles where the past is all to him,
Close as his shade can do,
Always lacking the power to call to him,
Near as I reach thereto!

What a good haunter I am, O tell him,
Quickly make him know
If he but sigh since my loss befell him
Straight to his side I go.
And if it be that at night I am stronger,
Go, too, by day I do:
Please, then, keep him in gloom no longer,
Even ghosts tend thereto!

The House Of Hospitalities

Here we broached the Christmas barrel,
Pushed up the charred log-ends;
Here we sang the Christmas carol,
And called in friends.

Time has tired me since we met here
When the folk now dead were young,
And the viands were outset here
And quaint songs sung.

And the worm has bored the viol
That used to lead the tune,
Rust eaten out the dial
That struck night's noon.

Now no Christmas brings in neighbours,
And the New Year comes unlit;
Where we sang the mole now labours,
And spiders knit.

Yet at midnight if here walking,
When the moon sheets wall and tree,
I see forms of old time talking,
Who smile on me.

Thomas Hardy

The Impercipient

(at a Cathedral Service)

THAT from this bright believing band
An outcast I should be,
That faiths by which my comrades stand
Seem fantasies to me,
And mirage-mists their Shining Land,
Is a drear destiny.

Why thus my soul should be consigned
To infelicity,
Why always I must feel as blind
To sights my brethren see,
Why joys they've found I cannot find,
Abides a mystery.

Since heart of mine knows not that ease
Which they know; since it be
That He who breathes All's Well to these
Breathes no All's Well to me,
My lack might move their sympathies
And Christian charity!

I am like a gazer who should mark
An inland company
Standing upfingered, with, "Hark! hark!
The glorious distant sea!"
And feel, "Alas, 'tis but yon dark
And wind-swept pine to me!"

Yet I would bear my shortcomings
With meet tranquillity,
But for the charge that blessed things
I'd liefer have unbe.

O, doth a bird deprived of wings
Go earth-bound wilfully!

. . . .
Enough. As yet disquiet clings

About us. Rest shall we.

Thomas Hardy

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!

Thomas Hardy

The Jubilee Of A Magazine:(To The Editor)

Yes; your up-dated modern page -
All flower-fresh, as it appears -
Can claim a time-tried lineage,

That reaches backward fifty years
(Which, if but short for sleepy squires,
Is much in magazines' careers).

- Here, on your cover, never tires
The sower, reaper, thresher, while
As through the seasons of our sires

Each wills to work in ancient style
With seedlip, sickle, share and flail,
Though modes have since moved many a mile!

The steel-roped plough now rips the vale,
With cog and tooth the sheaves are won,
Wired wheels druin out the wheat like hail;

If we ask, what has been done
To unify the mortal lot
Since your bright leaves first saw the sun,

Beyond mechanic furtherance - what
Advance can rightness, candour, claim?
Truth bends abashed, and answers not.

Despite your volumes' gentle aim
To straighten visions wry and wrong,
Events jar onward much the same!

- Had custom tended to prolong.
As on your golden page engrained,
Old processes of blade and prong,

And best invention been retained
For high crusades to lessen tears
Throughout the race, the world had gained!...

But too much, this, for fifty years.

Thomas Hardy

The Maid Of Keinton Mandeville (A Tribute To Sir H. Bishop)

I hear that maiden still
Of Keinton Mandeville
Singing, in flights that played
As wind-wafts through us all,
Till they made our mood a thrall
To their aery rise and fall,
'Should he upbraid.'

Rose-necked, in sky-gray gown,
From a stage in Stower Town
Did she sing, and singing smile
As she blent that dexterous voice
With the ditty of her choice,
And banished our annoys
Thereawhile.

One with such song had power
To wing the heaviest hour
Of him who housed with her.
Who did I never knew
When her spoused estate ondrew,
And her warble flung its woo
In his ear.

Ah, she's a beldame now,
Time-trenched on cheek and brow,
Whom I once heard as a maid
From Keinton Mandeville
Of matchless scope and skill
Sing, with smile and swell and trill,
'Should he upbraid!'

Thomas Hardy

The Man He Killed

Had he and I but met
By some old ancient inn,
We should have set us down to wet
Right many a nipperkin!

But ranged as infantry,
And staring face to face,
I shot at him as he at me,
And killed him in his place.

I shot him dead because--
Because he was my foe,
Just so: my foe of course he was;
That's clear enough; although

He thought he'd 'list, perhaps,
Off-hand like--just as I--
Was out of work--had sold his traps--
No other reason why.

Yes; quaint and curious war is!
You shoot a fellow down
You'd treat, if met where any bar is,
Or help to half a crown.

Thomas Hardy

The Masked Face

I found me in a great surging space,
At either end a door,
And I said: "What is this giddy place,
With no firm-fixed floor,
That I knew not of before?"
"It is Life," said a mask-clad face.

I asked: "But how do I come here,
Who never wished to come;
Can the light and air be made more clear,
The floor more quiet some,
And the doors set wide? They numb
Fast-locked, and fill with fear."

The mask put on a bleak smile then,
And said, "O vassal-wight,
There once complained a goosequill pen
To the scribe of the Infinite
Of the words it had to write
Because they were past its ken."

Thomas Hardy

The Master And The Leaves

I

We are budding, master, budding,
We of your favourite tree;
March drought and April flooding
Arouse us merrily.
The stemlets brightly studding;
And yet you do not see.

II

We are fully woven for summer
In modes of limpest green,
The twitterer and the hummer
Here rest their rounds between,
While like a 'long-roll' drummer
The night-hawk thrills the treen.

III

We are turning yellow, master,
And next we are turning red,
And faster then and faster
Shall seek our rooty bed—
All wasted in disaster
The magic show we spread!

IV

'I mark your early going,
And that you'll soon be clay,
I have seen your summer showing
As in my youthful day;
But why I seem unknowing
Is too deep down to say.'

Thomas Hardy

The Missed Train

How I was caught
Hieing home, after days of allure,
And driven to an inn—small, obscure—
At the junction, fret-fraught!

How civil my face
To get them to chamber me there—
A roof I had passed scarce aware
That it stood at the place.

And how all the night
I had dreams of the unwitting cause
Of my lodgment. How lonely I was;
How consoled by her sprite!

Thus onetime to me
Dim wastes of dead years bar away
Then from now! But the like haps to-day
To young lovers, may be.

Years, years as gray seas,
Truly, stretch now between! Less and less
Shrink the visions then great in me.—Yes,
Then in me. Now in these.

Thomas Hardy

The Moon Looks In

I

I have risen again,
And awhile survey
By my chilly ray
Through your window-pane
Your upturned face,
As you think, 'Ah - she
Now dreams of me
In her distant place!'

II

I pierce her blind
In her far-off home:
She fixes a comb,
And says in her mind,
'I start in an hour;
Whom shall I meet?
Won't the men be sweet,
And the women sour!'

Thomas Hardy

The Mother Mourns

When mid-autumn's moan shook the night-time,
And sedges were horny,
And summer's green wonderwork faltered
On leaze and in lane,

I fared Yell'ham-Firs way, where dimly
Came wheeling around me
Those phantoms obscure and insistent
That shadows unchain.

Till airs from the needle-thicks brought me
A low lamentation,
As 'twere of a tree-god disheartened,
Perplexed, or in pain.

And, heeding, it awed me to gather
That Nature herself there
Was breathing in aerie accents,
With dirgeful refrain,

Weary plaint that Mankind, in these late days,
Had grieved her by holding
Her ancient high fame of perfection
In doubt and disdain...

- 'I had not proposed me a Creature
(She soughed) so excelling
All else of my kingdom in compass
And brightness of brain

'As to read my defects with a god-glance,
Uncover each vestige
Of old inadvertence, annunciate
Each flaw and each stain!

'My purpose went not to develop
Such insight in Earthland;
Such potent appraisements affront me,
And sadden my reign!

'Why loosened I olden control here
To mechanize skywards,
Undeeming great scope could outshape in
A globe of such grain?

'Man's mountings of mind-sight I checked not,
Till range of his vision
Has topped my intent, and found blemish
Throughout my domain.

'He holds as inept his own soul-shell -
My deftest achievement -
Contemns me for fitful inventions
Ill-timed and inane:

'No more sees my sun as a Sanct-shape,
My moon as the Night-queen,
My stars as august and sublime ones
That influences rain:

'Reckons gross and ignoble my teaching,
Immoral my story,
My love-lights a lure, that my species
May gather and gain.

'Give me,' he has said, 'but the matter
And means the gods lot her,
My brain could evolve a creation
More seemly, more sane.'

- 'If ever a naughtiness seized me
To woo adulation
From creatures more keen than those crude ones
That first formed my train -

'If inly a moment I murmured,
'The simple praise sweetly,
But sweetlier the sage'- and did rashly
Man's vision unrein,

'I rue it! ... His guileless forerunners,

Whose brains I could blandish,
To measure the deeps of my mysteries
Applied them in vain.

'From them my waste aimings and futile
I subtly could cover;
'Every best thing,' said they, 'to best purpose
Her powers preordain.' -

'No more such! ... My species are dwindling,
My forests grow barren,
My popinjays fail from their tappings,
My larks from their strain.

'My leopardine beauties are rarer,
My tusky ones vanish,
My children have aped mine own slaughters
To quicken my wane.

'Let me grow, then, but mildews and mandrakes,
And slimy distortions,
Let nevermore things good and lovely
To me appertain;

'For Reason is rank in my temples,
And Vision unruly,
And chivalrous laud of my cunning
Is heard not again! '

Thomas Hardy

The Moth-Signal (On Egdon Heath)

'What are you still, still thinking,
He asked in vague surmise,
'That you stare at the wick unblinking
With those great lost luminous eyes?'

'O, I see a poor moth burning
In the candle-flame,' said she,
'Its wings and legs are turning
To a cinder rapidly.'

'Moths fly in from the heather,'
He said, 'now the days decline.'
'I know,' said she. 'The weather,
I hope, will at last be fine.'

'I think,' she added lightly,
'I'll look out at the door.
The ring the moon wears nightly,
May be visible now no more.'

She rose, and, little heeding,
Her husband then went on
With his attentive reading
In the annals of ages gone.

Outside the house a figure
Came from the tumulus near,
And speedily waxed bigger,
And clasped and called her Dear.

'I saw the pale-winged token
You sent through the crack,' sighed she.
'That moth is burnt and broken
With which you lured out me.'

'And were I as the moth is
It might be better far
For one whose marriage troth is
Shattered as potsherds are!'

Then grinned the Ancient Briton
From the tumulus treed with pine:
'So, hearts are thwartly smitten
In these days as in mine!'

Thomas Hardy

The Newcomer's Wife

He paused on the sill of a door ajar
That screened a lively liquor-bar,
For the name had reached him through the door
Of her he had married the week before.

'We called her the Hack of the Parade;
But she was discreet in the games she played;
If slightly worn, she's pretty yet,
And gossips, after all, forget.

'And he knows nothing of her past;
I am glad the girls in luck at last;
Such ones, though stale to native eyes,
Newcomers snatch at as a prize.'

'Yes, being a stranger he sees her blent
Of all that's fresh and innocent,
Nor dreams how many a love-campaign
She had enjoyed before his reign!'

That night there was the splash of a fall
Over the slimy harbour-wall:
They searched, and at the deepest place
Found him with crabs upon his face.

Thomas Hardy

The Night Of Trafalgar

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 the bones of
thousands are,
We knew not what the day had done for us at Trafalgar.
Had done,
Had done,
For us at Trafalgar!

'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 fighting through the day,
Were beating up and down the dark, sou'west of Cadiz Bay.
The dark,
The dark,
Sou'west of Cadiz Bay!

The victors and the vanquished then the storm it tossed and tore,
As hard they strove, those worn-out men, upon that 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!
The deep,
The deep,
That night at Trafalgar!

Thomas Hardy

The Obliterate Tomb

'More than half my life long
Did they weigh me falsely, to my bitter wrong,
But they all have shrunk away into the silence
Like a lost song.

'And the day has dawned and come
For forgiveness, when the past may hold it dumb
On the once reverberate words of hatred uttered
Half in delirium....

'With folded lips and hands
They lie and wait what next the Will commands,
And doubtless think, if think they can: 'Let discord
Sink with Life's sands!'

'By these late years their names,
Their virtues, their hereditary claims,
May be as near defacement at their grave-place
As are their fames.'

- Such thoughts bechanced to seize
A traveller's mind - a man of memories -
As he set foot within the western city
Where had died these

Who in their lifetime deemed
Him their chief enemy - one whose brain had schemed
To get their dingy greatness deeper dingied
And disesteemed.

So, sojourning in their town,
He mused on them and on their once renown, said,
'I'll seek their resting-place to-morrow

Ere I lie down,

'And end, lest I forget,
Those ired of many years that I regret,
Renew their names, that men may see some liegeness
Is left them yet.'

Duly next day he went
And sought the church he had known them to frequent,
And wandered in the precincts, set on eyeing
Where they lay pent,

Till by remembrance led
He stood at length beside their slighted bed,
Above which, truly, scarce a line or letter
Could now be read.

'Thus years obliterate
Their graven worth, their chronicle, their date!
At once I'll garnish and revive the record
Of their past state,

'That still the sage may say
In pensive progress here where they decay,
'This stone records a luminous line whose talents
Told in their day.'

While speaking thus he turned,
For a form shadowed where they lay inurned,
And he beheld a stranger in foreign vesture,
And tropic-burned.

'Sir, I am right pleased to view
That ancestors of mine should interest you,
For I have come of purpose here to trace them....

They are time-worn, true,

'But that's a fault, at most,
Sculptors can cure. On the Pacific coast
I have vowed for long that relics of my forbears
I'd trace ere lost,

'And hitherward I come,
Before this same old Time shall strike me numb,
To carry it out.' - 'Strange, this is!' said the other;
'What mind shall plumb

'Coincident design!
Though these my father's enemies were and mine,
I nourished a like purpose - to restore them
Each letter and line.'

'Such magnanimity
Is now not needed, sir; for you will see
That since I am here, a thing like this is, plainly,
Best done by me.'

The other bowed, and left,
Crestfallen in sentiment, as one bereft
Of some fair object he had been moved to cherish,
By hands more deft.

And as he slept that night
The phantoms of the ensepulchred stood upright
Before him, trembling that he had set him seeking
Their charnel-site.

And, as unknowing his ruth,
Asked as with terrors founded not on truth
Why he should want them. 'Ha,' they hollowly hacked,

'You come, forsooth,

'By stealth to obliterate
Our graven worth, our chronicle, our date,
That our descendant may not gild the record
Of our past state,

'And that no sage may say
In pensive progress near where we decay:
'This stone records a luminous line whose talents
Told in their day.'

Upon the morrow he went
And to that town and churchyard never bent
His ageing footsteps till, some twelvemonths onward,
An accident

Once more detained him there;
And, stirred by hauntings, he must needs repair
To where the tomb was. Lo, it stood still wasting
In no man's care.

'The travelled man you met
The last time,' said the sexton, 'has not yet
Appeared again, though wealth he had in plenty.
- Can he forget?

'The architect was hired
And came here on smart summons as desired,
But never the descendent came to tell him
What he required.'

And so the tomb remained
Untouched, untended, crumbling, weather-stained,
And though the one-time foe was fain to right it

He still refrained.

'I'll set about it when
I am sure he'll come no more. Best wait till then.'
But so it was that never the stranger entered
That city again.

And the well-meaner died
While waiting tremulously unsatisfied
That no return of the family's foreign scion
Would still betide.

And many years slid by,
And active church-restorers cast their eye
Upon the ancient garth and hoary building
The tomb stood nigh.

And when they had scraped each wall,
Pulled out the stately pews, and smartened all,
'It will be well,' declared the spruce church-warden,
'To overhaul

'And broaden this path where shown;
Nothing prevents it but an old tombstone
Pertaining to a family forgotten,
Of deeds unknown.

'Their names can scarce be read,
Depend on't, all who care for them are dead.'
So went the tomb, whose shards were as path-paving
Distributed.

Over it and about
Men's footsteps beat, and wind and waterspout,
Until the names, aforetime gnawed by weathers,

Were quite worn out.

So that no sage can say
In pensive progress near where they decay,
'This stone records a luminous line whose talents
Told in their day.'

Thomas Hardy

The Oxen

Christmas Eve, and twelve of the clock.
"Now they are all on their knees,"
An elder said as we sat in a flock
By the embers in hearthside ease.

We pictured the meek mild creatures where
They dwelt in their strawy pen,
Nor did it occur to one of us there
To doubt they were kneeling then.

So fair a fancy few would weave
In these years! Yet, I feel,
If someone said on Christmas Eve,
"Come; see the oxen kneel

"In the lonely barton by yonder coomb
Our childhood used to know,"
I should go with him in the gloom,
Hoping it might be so.

Thomas Hardy

The Peasant's Confession

"Si le maréchal Grouchy avait été rejoint par l'officier que Napoléon lui avait expédié la veille à dix heures du soir, toute question eût disparu. Mais cet officier n'était point parvenu à sa destination, ainsi que le maréchal n'a cessé de l'affirmer toute sa vie, et il faut l'en croire, car autrement il n'aurait eu aucune raison pour hésiter. Cet officier avait-il été pris? avait-il passé à l'ennemi? C'est ce qu'on a toujours ignoré."

--Thiers: Histoire de l'Empire. "Waterloo."

GOOD Father!... 'Twas an eve in middle June,
And war was waged anew
By great Napoleon, who for years had strewn
Men's bones all Europe through.

Three nights ere this, with columned corps he'd crossed
The Sambre at Charleroi,
To move on Brussels, where the English host
Dallied in Parc and Bois.

The yestertide we'd heard the gloomy gun
Growl through the long-sunned day
From Quatre-Bras and Ligny; till the dun
Twilight suppressed the fray;

Albeit therein--as lated tongues bespoke--
Brunswick's high heart was drained,
And Prussia's Line and Landwehr, though unbroke,
Stood cornered and constrained.

And at next noon-time Grouchy slowly passed
With thirty thousand men:
We hoped thenceforth no army, small or vast,
Would trouble us again.

My hut lay deeply in a vale recessed,
And never a soul seemed nigh
When, reassured at length, we went to rest--
My children, wife, and I.

But what was this that broke our humble ease?

What noise, above the rain,
Above the dripping of the poplar trees
That smote along the pane?

--A call of mastery, bidding me arise,
Compelled me to the door,
At which a horseman stood in martial guise--
Splashed--sweating from every pore.

Had I seen Grouchy? Yes? Which track took he?
Could I lead thither on?--
Fulfilment would ensure gold pieces three,
Perchance more gifts anon.

"I bear the Emperor's mandate," then he said,
"Charging the Marshal straight
To strike between the double host ahead
Ere they co-operate,

"Engaging Blücher till the Emperor put
Lord Wellington to flight,
And next the Prussians. This to set afoot
Is my emprise to-night."

I joined him in the mist; but, pausing, sought
To estimate his say,
Grouchy had made for Wavre; and yet, on thought,
I did not lead that way.

I mused: "If Grouchy thus instructed be,
The clash comes sheer hereon;
My farm is stript. While, as for pieces three,
Money the French have none.

"Grouchy unwarned, moreo'er, the English win,
And mine is left to me--
They buy, not borrow."--Hence did I begin
To lead him treacherously.

By Joidoigne, near to east, as we on drew,
Dawn pierced the humid air;

And eastward faced I with him, though I knew
Never marched Grouchy there.

Near Ottignies we passed, across the Dyle
(Lim'lette left far aside),
And thence direct toward Pervez and Noville
Through green grain, till he cried:

"I doubt thy conduct, man! no track is here
I doubt they gagèd word!"
Thereat he scowled on me, and pranced me near,
And pricked me with his sword.

"Nay, Captain, hold! We skirt, not trace the course
Of Grouchy," said I then:
"As we go, yonder went he, with his force
Of thirty thousand men."

--At length noon nighed, when west, from Saint-John's-Mound,
A hoarse artillery boomed,
And from Saint-Lambert's upland, chapel-crowned,
The Prussian squadrons loomed.

Then to the wayless wet gray ground he leapt;
"My mission fails!" he cried;
"Too late for Grouchy now to intercept,
For, peasant, you have lied!"

He turned to pistol me. I sprang, and drew
The sabre from his flank,
And 'twixt his nape and shoulder, ere he knew,
I struck, and dead he sank.

I hid him deep in nodding rye and oat--
His shroud green stalks and loam;
His requiem the corn-blade's husky note--
And then I hastened home....

--Two armies writhe in coils of red and blue,
And brass and iron clang
From Goumont, past the front of Waterloo,
To Pap'lotte and Smohain.

The Guard Imperial wavered on the height;
The Emperor's face grew glum;
"I sent," he said, "to Grouchy yesternight,
And yet he does not come!"

'Twas then, Good Father, that the French espied,
Streaking the summer land,
The men of Blücher. But the Emperor cried,
"Grouchy is now at hand!"

And meanwhile Vand'leur, Vivian, Maitland, Kempt,
Met d'Erlon, Friant, Ney;
But Grouchy--mis-sent, blamed, yet blame-exempt--
Grouchy was far away.

Be even, slain or struck, Michel the strong,
Bold Travers, Dnop, Delord,
Smart Guyot, Reil-le, l'Heriter, Friant.
Scattered that champaign o'er.

Fallen likewise wronged Duhesme, and skilled Lobau
Did that red sunset see;
Colbert, Legros, Blancard!... And of the foe
Picton and Ponsonby;

With Gordon, Canning, Blackman, Ompteda,
L'Estrange, Delancey, Packe,
Grose, D'Oyly, Stables, Morice, Howard, Hay,
Von Schwerin, Watzdorf, Boek,

Smith, Phelps, Fuller, Lind, and Battersby,
And hosts of ranksmen round...
Memorials linger yet to speak to thee
Of those that bit the ground!

The Guards' last column yielded; dykes of dead
Lay between vale and ridge,
As, thinned yet closing, faint yet fierce, they sped
In packs to Genappe Bridge.

Safe was my stock; my capple cow unslain;

Intact each cock and hen;
But Grouchy far at Wavre all day had lain,
And thirty thousand men.

O Saints, had I but lost my earing corn
And saved the cause once prized!
O Saints, why such false witness had I borne
When late I'd sympathized!...

So, now, being old, my children eye askance
My slowly dwindling store,
And crave my mite; till, worn with tarriance,
I care for life no more.

To Almighty God henceforth I stand confessed,
And Virgin-Saint Marie;
O Michael, John, and Holy Ones in rest,
Entreat the Lord for me!

Thomas Hardy

The Phantom Horsewoman.

Queer are the ways of a man I know:
He comes and stands
In a careworn craze,
And looks at the sands
And in the seaward haze
With moveless hands
And face and gaze,
Then turns to go...
And what does he see when he gazes so?

They say he sees as an instant thing
More clear than today,
A sweet soft scene
That once was in play
By that briny green;
Yes, notes alway
Warm, real, and keen,
What his back years bring-
A phantom of his own figuring.

Of this vision of his they might say more:
Not only there
Does he see this sight,
But everywhere
In his brain-day, night,
As if on the air
It were drawn rose bright-
Yea, far from that shore
Does he carry this vision of heretofore:

A ghost-girl-rider. And though, toil-tried,
He withers daily,
Time touches her not,
But she still rides gaily
In his rapt thought
On that shagged and shaly
Atlantic spot,
And as when first eyed
Draws rein and sings to the swing of the tide.

Thomas Hardy

The Pity Of It

I walked in loamy Wessex lanes, afar
From rail-track and from highway, and I heard
In field and farmstead many an ancient word
Of local lineage like 'Thu bist,' 'Er war,'
'Ich woll,' 'Er sholl,' and by-talk similar,
Nigh as they speak who in this month's moon gird
At England's very loins, thereunto spurred
By gangs whose glory threats and slaughters are.

Then seemed a Heart crying: 'Whosoever they be
At root and bottom of this, who flung this flame
Between kin folk kin tongued even as are we,
Sinister, ugly, lurid, be their fame;
May their familiars grow to shun their name,
And their brood perish everlastingly.'

Thomas Hardy

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By gangs whose glory threats and slaughters are.

Then seemed a Heart crying: "Whosoever they be
At root and bottom of this, who flung this flame
Between kin folk kin tongued even as are we,
Sinister, ugly, lurid, be their fame;
May their familiars grow to shun their name,
And their brood perish everlastingly."

Thomas Hardy

The Puzzled Game-Birds (Triolet)

They are not those who used to feed us
When we were young--they cannot be -
These shapes that now bereave and bleed us?
They are not those who used to feed us, -
For would they not fair terms concede us?
- If hearts can house such treachery
They are not those who used to feed us
When we were young--they cannot be!

Thomas Hardy

The Rambler

I do not see the hills around,
Nor mark the tints the copses wear;
I do not note the grassy ground
And constellated daisies there.

I hear not the contralto note
Of cuckoos hid on either hand,
The whirr that shakes the nighthawk's throat
When eve's brown awning hoods the land.

Some say each songster, tree and mead--
All eloquent of love divine--
Receives their constant careful heed:
Such keen appraisal is not mine.

The tones around me that I hear,
The aspects, meanings, shapes I see,
Are those far back ones missed when near,
And now perceived too late by me!

Thomas Hardy

The Recalcitrants

Let us off and search, and find a place
Where yours and mine can be natural lives,
Where no one comes who dissects and dives
And proclaims that ours is a curious case,
That its touch of romance can scarcely grace.

You would think it strange at first, but then
Everything has been strange in its time.
When some one said on a day of the prime
He would bow to no brazen god again
He doubtless dazed the mass of men.

None will recognize us as a pair whose claims
Righteous judgment we care not making;
Who have doubted if breath be worth the taking,
And have no respect for the current fames
Whence the savour has flown while abide the names.

We have found us already shunned, disdained,
And for re-acceptance have not once striven;
Whatever offence our course has given
The brunt thereof we have long sustained.
Well, let us away, scorned, unexplained.

Thomas Hardy

The Re-Enactment

Between the folding sea-downs,
In the gloom
Of a wailful wintry nightfall,
When the boom
Of the ocean, like a hammering in a hollow tomb,

Throbbled up the copse-clothed valley
From the shore
To the chamber where I darkled,
Sunk and sore
With gray ponderings why my Loved one had not come before

To salute me in the dwelling
That of late
I had hired to waste a while in -
Vague of date,
Quaint, and remote - wherein I now expectant sate;

On the solitude, unsignalled,
Broke a man
Who, in air as if at home there,
Seemed to scan
Every fire-flecked nook of the apartment span by span.

A stranger's and no lover's
Eyes were these,
Eyes of a man who measures
What he sees
But vaguely, as if wrapt in filmy phantasies.

Yea, his bearing was so absent
As he stood, It bespoke a chord so plaintive
In his mood, That soon I judged he would not wrong my quietude.

'Ah - the supper is just ready,'
Then he said,
'And the years' - long binned Madeira
Flashes red!'
(There was no wine, no food, no supper-table spread.)

'You will forgive my coming,
Lady fair?
I see you as at that time
Rising there,
The self-same curious querying in your eyes and hair.

'Yet no. How so? You wear not
The same gown,
Your locks show woful difference,
Are not brown:
What, is it not as when I hither came from town?

'And the place.... But you seem other -
Can it be?
What's this that Time is doing
Unto me?
You dwell here, unknown woman?... Whereabouts, then, is she?

'And the house-things are much shifted. -
Put them where
They stood on this nights fellow;
Shift her chair:
Here was the couch: and the piano should be there.'

I indulged him, verily nerve-strained
Being alone,
And I moved the things as bidden.
One by one,
And feigned to push the old piano where he had shown.

'Aha - now I can see her!
Stand aside:
Don't thrust her from the table
Where, meek-eyed,
She makes attempt with matron-manners to preside.

'She serves me: now she rises,
Goes to play....
But you obstruct her, fill her
With dismay,
And embarrassed, scared, she vanishes away!'

And, as 'twere useless longer
To persist,
He sighed, and sought the entry
Ere I wist,
And retreated, disappearing soundless in the mist.

That here some mighty passion
Once had burned,
Which still the walls enghosted,
I discerned,
And that by its strong spell mine might be overturned.

I sat depressed; till, later,
My Love came;
But something in the chamber
Dimmed our flame, -
An emanation, making our due words fall tame,

As if the intenser drama
Shown me there
Of what the walls had witnessed
Filled the air,
And left no room for later passion anywhere.

So came it that our fervours
Did quite fail
Of future consummation -
Being made quail
By the weird witchery of the parlour's hidden tale,

Which I, as years passed, faintly
Learnt to trace, -
One of sad love, born full-winged
In that place
Where the predestined sorrowers first stood face to face.

And as that month of winter
Circles round,
And the evening of the date-day
Grows embrowned,
I am conscious of those presences, and sit spellbound.

There, often - lone, forsaken -
Queries breed
Within me; whether a phantom
Had my heed
On that strange night, or was it some wrecked heart indeed?

Thomas Hardy

The Respectable Burgher On "The Higher Criticism"

Since Reverend Doctors now declare
That clerks and people must prepare
To doubt if Adam ever were;
To hold the flood a local scare;
To argue, though the stolid stare,
That everything had happened ere
The prophets to its happening sware;
That David was no giant-slayer,
Nor one to call a God-obeyer
In certain details we could spare,
But rather was a debonair
Shrewd bandit, skilled as banjo-player:
That Solomon sang the fleshly Fair,
And gave the Church no thought whate'er;
That Esther with her royal wear,
And Mordecai, the son of Jair,
And Joshua's triumphs, Job's despair,
And Balaam's ass's bitter blare;
Nebuchadnezzar's furnace-flare,
And Daniel and the den affair,
And other stories rich and rare,
Were writ to make old doctrine wear
Something of a romantic air:
That the Nain widow's only heir,
And Lazarus with cadaverous glare
(As done in oils by Piombo's care)
Did not return from Sheol's lair:
That Jael set a fiendish snare,
That Pontius Pilate acted square,
That never a sword cut Malchus' ear
And (but for shame I must forbear)
That -- -- did not reappear! . . .
- Since thus they hint, nor turn a hair,
All churchgoing will I forswear,
And sit on Sundays in my chair,
And read that moderate man Voltaire.

Thomas Hardy

The Roman Gravemounds

By Rome's dim relics there walks a man,
Eyes bent; and he carries a basket and spade;
I guess what impels him to scrape and scan;
Yea, his dreams of that Empire long decayed.

'Vast was Rome,' he must muse, 'in the worlds regard,
Vast it looms there still, Vast it ever will be;'
And he stoops as to dig and unmine some shard
Left by those who are held in such memory.

But no; in his basket, see, he has brought
A little white furred thing, stiff of limb,
Whose life never won from the world a thought;
It is this, and not Rome, that is moving him.

And to make it a grave he has come to the spot,
And he delves in the ancient dead's long home;
Their fames, their achievements, the man knows not;
The furred thing is all to him - nothing Rome!

'Here say you that Caesar's warriors lie? -
But my little white cat was my only friend!
Could she but live, might the record die
Of Caesar, his legions, his aims, his end!'

Well, Rome's long rule here is oft and again
A theme for the sages of history,
And the small furred life was worth no one's pen;
Yet its mourner's mood has a charm for me.

Thomas Hardy

The Roman Road

The Roman Road runs straight and bare
As the pale parting-line in hair
Across the heath. And thoughtful men
Contrast its days of Now and Then,
And delve, and measure, and compare;

Visioning on the vacant air
Helmeted legionnaires, who proudly rear
The Eagle, as they pace again
The Roman Road.

But no tall brass-helmeted legionnaire
Haunts it for me. Uprises there
A mother's form upon my ken,
Guiding my infant steps, as when
We walked that ancient thoroughfare,
The Roman Road.

Thomas Hardy

The Ruined Maid

"O 'Melia, my dear, this does everything crown!
Who could have supposed I should meet you in Town?
And whence such fair garments, such prosperi-ty?"-
"O didn't you know I'd been ruined?" said she.

- "You left us in tatters, without shoes or socks,
Tired of digging potatoes, and spudding up docks;
And now you've gay bracelets and bright feathers three!"-
"Yes: that's how we dress when we're ruined," said she.

- "At home in the barton you said 'thee' and 'thou,'
And 'thik oon' and 'theäs oon' and 't'other'; but now
Your talking quite fits 'ee for high compan-ny!"-
"Some polish is gained with one's ruin," said she.

- "Your hands were like paws then, you face blue and bleak
But now I'm bewitched by your delicate cheek,
And your little gloves fit as on any la-dy!"-
"We never do work when we're ruined," said she.

- "You used to call home-life a hag-ridden dream,
And you'd sigh, and you'd sock; but at present you seem
To know not of megrims or melancho-ly!"-
"True. One's pretty lively when ruined," said she.

- "I wish I had feathers, a fine sweeping gown,
And a delicate face, and could strut about Town"-
"My dear - raw country girl, such as you be,

Cannot quite expect that. You ain't ruined," said she.

Thomas Hardy

The Sacrilege: (A Ballad-Tragedy)

PART I

'I have a Love I love too well
Where Dunkery frowns on Exon Moor;
I have a Love I love too well,
To whom, ere she was mine,
'Such is my love for you,' I said,
'That you shall have to hood your head
A silken kerchief crimson-red,
Wove finest of the fine.'

'And since this Love, for one mad moon,
On Exon Wild by Dunkery Tor,
Since this my Love for one mad moon
Did clasp me as her king,
I snatched a silk-piece red and rare
From off a stall at Priddy Fair,
For handkerchief to hood her hair
When we went gallanting.

'Full soon the four weeks neared their end
Where Dunkery frowns on Exon Moor;
And when the four weeks neared their end,
And their swift sweets outwore,
I said, 'What shall I do to own
Those beauties bright as tulips blown,
And keep you here with me alone
As mine for evermore?'

'And as she drowsed within my van
On Exon Wild by Dunkery Tor -
And as she drowsed within my van,
And dawning turned to day,
She heavily raised her sloe-black eyes
And murmured back in softest wise,
'One more thing. and the charms you prize
Are yours henceforth for aye.

"And swear I will I'll never go

While Dunkery frowns on Exon Moor
To meet the Cornish Wrestler Joe
For dance and dallyings.
If you'll to yon cathedral shrine,
And finger from the chest divine
Treasure to buy me ear-drops fine,
And richly jewelled rings.'

'I said: 'I am one who has gathered gear
From Marlbury Downs to Dunkery Tor,
Who has gathered gear for many a year
From mansion, mart and fair;
But at God's house I've stayed my hand,
Hearing within me some command -
Curbed by a law not of the land
From doing damage there.'

'Whereat she pouts, this Love of mine,
As Dunkery frowns on Exon Moor,
And still she pouts, this Love of mine,
So cityward I go.
But ere I start to do the thing,
And speed my souls imperilling
One who is my ravishing
And all the joy I know,

'I come to lay this charge on thee -
On Exon Wild by Dunkery Tor -
I come to lay this charge on thee
With solemn speech and sign:
Should things go ill, and my life pay
For botchery in this rash assay,
You are to take hers likewise - yea,
The month the law takes mine.

'For should my rival, Wrestler Joe,
Where Dunkery frowns on Exon Moor -
My reckless rival, Wrestler Joe,
My Love's possessor be,
My tortured spirit would not rest,
But wander weary and distress
Throughout the world in wild protest:

The thought nigh maddens me!'

PART II

Thus did he speak - this brother of mine -
On Exon Wild by Dunkery Tor,
Born at my birth of mother of mine,
And forthwith went his way
To dare the deed some coming night....
I kept the watch with shaking sight,
The moon at moments breaking bright,
At others glooming gray.

Three full days I heard no sound
Where Dunkery frowns on Exon Moor,
I heard no sound at all around
Whether his fay prevailed,
Or one malign the master were,
Till some afoot did tidings bear
How that, for all his practised care,
He had been caught and jailed.

They had heard a crash when twelve had chimed
By Mendip east of Dunkery Tor,
When twelve had chimed and moonlight climbed;
They watched, and he was tracked
By arch and aisle and saint and knight
Of sculptured stonework sheeted white
In the cathedral's ghostly light,
And captured in the act.

Yes; for this Love he loved too well
Where Dunkery sights the Severn shore,
All for this Love he loved too well
He burst the holy bars,
Seized golden vessels from the chest
To buy her ornaments of the best,
At her ill-witchery's request
And lure of eyes like stars....

When blustering March confused the sky
In Toneborough Town by Exon Moor,

When blustering March confused the sky
They stretched him; and he died.
Down in the crowd where I, to see
The end of him, stood silently,
With a set face he lipped to me -
'Remember.' 'Ay!' I cried.

By night and day I shadowed her
From Toneborough Deane to Dunkery Tor,
I shadowed her asleep, astir,
And yet I could not bear -
Till Wrestler Joe anon began
To figure as her chosen man,
And took her to his shining van -
To doom a form so fair!

He made it handsome for her sake -
And Dunkery smiled to Exon Moor -
He made it handsome for her sake,
Painting it out and in;
And on the door of apple-green
A bright brass knocker soon was seen,
And window-curtains white and clean
For her to sit within.

And all could see she clave to him
As cleaves a cloud to Dunkery Tor,
Yea, all could see she clave to him,
And every day I said,
'A pity it seems to part those two
That hourly grow to love more true:
Yet she's the wanton woman who
Sent one to swing till dead!'

That blew to blazing all my hate,
While Dunkery frowned on Exon Moor,
And when the river swelled, her fate
Came to her pitilessly....
I dogged her, crying: 'Across that plank
They use as bridge to reach yon bank
A coat and hat lie limp and dank;
Your goodman's, can they be?'

She paled, and went, I close behind -
And Exon frowned to Dunkery Tor,
She went, and I came up behind
And tipped the plank that bore
Her, fleetly flitting across to eye
What such might bode. She slid awry;
And from the current came a cry,
A gurgle; and no more.

How that befell no mortal knew
From Marlbury Downs to Exon Moor;
No mortal knew that deed undue
But he who schemed the crime,
Which night still covers.... But in dream
Those ropes of hair upon the stream
He sees, and he will hear that scream
Until his judgment-time.

Thomas Hardy

The Satin Shoes

'If ever I walk to church to wed,
As other maidens use,
And face the gathered eyes,' she said,
'I'll go in satin shoes!'

She was as fair as early day
Shining on meads unmown,
And her sweet syllables seemed to play
Like flute-notes softly blown.

The time arrived when it was meet
That she should be a bride;
The satin shoes were on her feet,
Her father was at her side.

They stood within the dairy door,
And gazed across the green;
The church loomed on the distant moor,
But rain was thick between.

'The grass-path hardly can be stepped.
The lane is like a pool!' -
Her dream is shown to be inept,
Her wish they overrule.

'To go forth shod in satin soft
A coach would be required!' -
For thickest boots the shoes were doffed -
Those shoes her soul desired....

All day the bride, as overborne,
Was seen to brood apart,
And that the shoes had not been worn

Sat heavy on her heart.

From her wrecked dream, as months flew on,
Her thought seemed not to range.
'What ails the wife?' they said anon,
'That she should be so strange?'

Ah - what coach comes with furtive glide -
A coach of closed-up kind?
It comes to fetch the last year's bride,
Who wanders in her mind.

She strove with them, and fearfully ran
Stairward with one low scream:
'Nay - coax her,' said the madhouse man,
'With some old household theme.'

'If you will go, dear, you must fain
Put on those shoes - the pair
For your marriage, which the rain
Forbade you then to wear.'

She clapped her hands, flushed joyous hues;
'O yes - I'll up and ride
If I am to wear my satin shoes
And be a proper bride!'

Out then her little foot held she,
As to depart with speed;
The madhouse man smiled pleasantly
To see the wile succeed.

She turned to him when all was done,
And gave him her thin hand,
Exclaiming like an enraptured one,

'This time it will be grand!'

She mounted with a face elate,
Shut was the carriage door;
They drove her to the madhouse gate,
And she was seen no more....

Yet she was fair as early day
Shining on meads unmown,
And her sweet syllables seemed to play
Like flute-notes softly blown.

Thomas Hardy

The Selfsame Song

A bird sings the selfsame song,
With never a fault in its flow,
That we listened to here those long
Long years ago.

A pleasing marvel is how
A strain of such rapturous rote
Should have gone on thus till now
unchanged in a note!

--But its not the selfsame bird.--
No: perished to dust is he....
As also are those who heard
That song with me.

Thomas Hardy

The Self-Unseeing

Here is the ancient floor,
Footworn and hollowed and thin,
Here was the former door
Where the dead feet walked in.

She sat here in her chair,
Smiling into the fire;
He who played stood there,
Bowing it higher and higher.

Childlike, I danced in a dream;
Blessings emblazoned that day;
Everything glowed with a gleam;
Yet we were looking away!

Thomas Hardy

The Sergeant's Song

WHEN Lawyers strive to heal a breach,
And Parsons practise what they preach;
Then Little Boney he'll pounce down,
And march his men on London town!
 Rollicum-rorum, tol-lol-lorum,
 Rollicum-rorum, tol-lol-lay!

When Justices hold equal scales,
And Rogues are only found in jails;
Then Little Boney he'll pounce down,
And march his men on London town!
 Rollicum-rorum, etc.

When Rich Men find their wealth a curse,
And fill therewith the Poor Man's purse;
Then Little Boney he'll pounce down,
And march his men on London town!
 Rollicum-rorum, etc.

When Husbands with their Wives agree,
And Maids won't wed from modesty;
Then Little Boney he'll pounce down,
And march his men on London town!
 Rollicum-rorum, tol-lol-lorum,
 Rollicum-rorum, tol-lol-lay!

Thomas Hardy

The Shadow On The Stone

I went by the Druid stone
That broods in the garden white and lone,
And I stopped and looked at the shifting shadows
That at some moments fall thereon
From the tree hard by with a rhythmic swing,
And they shaped in my imagining
To the shade that a well-known head and shoulders
Threw there when she was gardening.

I thought her behind my back,
Yea, her I long had learned to lack,
And I said: 'I am sure you are standing behind me,
Though how do you get into this old track?'
And there was no sound but the fall of a leaf
As a sad response; and to keep down grief
I would not turn my head to discover
That there was nothing in my belief.

Yet I wanted to look and see
That nobody stood at the back of me;
But I thought once more: 'Nay, I'll not unvision
A shape which, somehow, there may be.'
So I went on softly from the glade,
And left her behind me throwing her shade,
As she were indeed an apparition—
My head unturned lest my dream should fade.

Thomas Hardy

The Sleep-Worker

When wilt thou wake, O Mother, wake and see -
As one who, held in trance, has laboured long
By vacant rote and prepossession strong -
The coils that thou hast wrought unwittingly;

Wherein have place, unrealized by thee,
Fair growths, foul cankers, right enmeshed with wrong,
Strange orchestras of victim-shriek and song,
And curious blends of ache and ecstasy? -

Should that morn come, and show thy opened eyes
All that Life's palpitating tissues feel,
How wilt thou bear thyself in thy surprise? -

Wilt thou destroy, in one wild shock of shame,
Thy whole high heaving firmamental frame,
Or patiently adjust, amend, and heal?

Thomas Hardy

The Slow Nature

(an Incident of Froom Valley)

"THY husband--poor, poor Heart!--is dead--
Dead, out by Moreford Rise;
A bull escaped the barton-shed,
Gored him, and there he lies!"

--"Ha, ha--go away! 'Tis a tale, methink,
Thou joker Kit!" laughed she.
"I've known thee many a year, Kit Twink,
And ever hast thou fooled me!"

--"But, Mistress Damon--I can swear
Thy goodman John is dead!
And soon th'lt hear their feet who bear
His body to his bed."

So unwontedly sad was the merry man's face--
That face which had long deceived--
That she gazed and gazed; and then could trace
The truth there; and she believed.

She laid a hand on the dresser-ledge,
And scanned far Egdon-side;
And stood; and you heard the wind-swept sedge
And the rippling Froom; till she cried:

"O my chamber's untidied, unmade my bed,
Though the day has begun to wear!
'What a slovenly hussif!' it will be said,
When they all go up my stair!"

She disappeared; and the joker stood
Depressed by his neighbor's doom,
And amazed that a wife struck to widowhood
Thought first of her unkempt room.

But a fortnight thence she could take no food,
And she pined in a slow decay;

While Kit soon lost his mournful mood
And laughed in his ancient way.

Thomas Hardy

The Souls Of The Slain.

I

The thick lids of Night closed upon me
Alone at the Bill
Of the Isle by the Race -
Many-caverned, bald, wrinkled of face -
And with darkness and silence the spirit was on me
To brood and be still.

II

No wind fanned the flats of the ocean,
Or promontory sides,
Or the ooze by the strand,
Or the bent-bearded slope of the land,
Whose base took its rest amid everlong motion
Of criss-crossing tides.

III

Soon from out of the Southward seemed nearing
A whirr, as of wings
Waved by mighty-vanned flies,
Or by night-moths of measureless size,
And in softness and smoothness well-nigh beyond hearing
Of corporal things.

IV

And they bore to the bluff, and alighted -
A dim-discerned train
Of sprites without mould,
Frameless souls none might touch or might hold -
On the ledge by the turreted lantern, farsighted
By men of the main.

V

And I heard them say "Home!" and I knew them

For souls of the felled
On the earth's nether bord
Under Capricorn, whither they'd warred,
And I neared in my awe, and gave heedfulness to them
With breathings inheld.

VI

Then, it seemed, there approached from the northward
A senior soul-flame
Of the like filmy hue:
And he met them and spake: "Is it you,
O my men?" Said they, "Aye! We bear homeward and hearthward
To list to our fame!"

VII

"I've flown there before you," he said then:
"Your households are well;
But--your kin linger less
On your glory arid war-mightiness
Than on dearer things."--"Dearer?" cried these from the dead then,
"Of what do they tell?"

VIII

"Some mothers muse sadly, and murmur
Your doings as boys -
Recall the quaint ways
Of your babyhood's innocent days.
Some pray that, ere dying, your faith had grown firmer,
And higher your joys.

IX

"A father broods: 'Would I had set him
To some humble trade,
And so slacked his high fire,
And his passionate martial desire;
Had told him no stories to woo him and whet him
To this due crusade!"

X

"And, General, how hold out our sweethearts,
Sworn loyal as doves?"

--"Many mourn; many think
It is not unattractive to prink
Them in sables for heroes. Some fickle and fleet hearts
Have found them new loves."

XI

"And our wives?" quoth another resignedly,
"Dwell they on our deeds?"

--"Deeds of home; that live yet
Fresh as new--deeds of fondness or fret;
Ancient words that were kindly expressed or unkindly,
These, these have their heeds."

XII

--"Alas! then it seems that our glory
Weighs less in their thought
Than our old homely acts,
And the long-ago commonplace facts
Of our lives--held by us as scarce part of our story,
And rated as nought!"

XIII

Then bitterly some: "Was it wise now
To raise the tomb-door
For such knowledge? Away!"
But the rest: "Fame we prized till to-day;
Yet that hearts keep us green for old kindness we prize now
A thousand times more!"

XIV

Thus speaking, the trooped apparitions
Began to disband
And resolve them in two:
Those whose record was lovely and true

Bore to northward for home: those of bitter traditions
Again left the land,

XV

And, towering to seaward in legions,
They paused at a spot
Overbending the Race -
That engulfing, ghastr, sinister place -
Whither headlong they plunged, to the fathomless regions
Of myriads forgot.

XVI

And the spirits of those who were homing
Passed on, rushingly,
Like the Pentecost Wind;
And the whirr of their wayfaring thinned
And surceased on the sky, and but left in the gloaming
Sea-mutterings and me.

Thomas Hardy

The Spell Of The Rose

'I mean to build a hall anon,
And shape two turrets there,
And a broad newelled stair,
And a cool well for crystal water;
Yes; I will build a hall anon,
Plant roses love shall feed upon,
And apple trees and pear.'

He set to build the manor-hall,
And shaped the turrets there,
And the broad newelled stair,
And the cool well for crystal water;
He built for me that manor-hall,
And planted many trees withal,
But no rose anywhere.

And as he planted never a rose
That bears the flower of love,
Though other flower's throve
A frost-wind moved our souls to sever
Since he had planted never a rose;
And misconceits raised horrid shows,
And agonies came thereof.

'I'll mend these miseries,' then said I,
And so, at dead of night,
I went and, screened from sight,
That nought should keep our souls in severance,
I set a rose-bush. 'This,' said I,
'May end divisions dire and wry,
And long-drawn days of blight.'

But I was called from earth - yea, called
Before my rose-bush grew;
And would that now I knew

What feels he of the tree I planted,
And whether, after I was called
To be a ghost, he, as of old,
Gave me his heart anew!

Perhaps now blooms that queen of trees
I set but saw not grow,
And he, beside its glow -
Eyes couched of the mis-vision that blurred me -
Ay, there beside that queen of trees
He sees me as I was, though sees
Too late to tell me so!

Thomas Hardy

The Stranger's Song

(As sung by Mr. Charles Charrington in the play of "The Three Wayfarers")

O MY trade it is the rarest one,
Simple shepherds all--
My trade is a sight to see;
For my customers I tie, and take 'em up on high,
And waft 'em to a far countree!

My tools are but common ones,
Simple shepherds all--
My tools are no sight to see:
A little hempen string, and a post whereon to swing,
Are implements enough for me!

To-morrow is my working day,
Simple shepherds all--
To-morrow is a working day for me:
For the farmer's sheep is slain, and the lad who did it ta'en,
And on his soul may God ha' mer-cy!

Thomas Hardy

The Subalterns

I

"Poor wanderer," said the leaden sky,
"I fain would lighten thee,
But there are laws in force on high
Which say it must not be."

II

--"I would not freeze thee, shorn one," cried
The North, "knew I but how
To warm my breath, to slack my stride;
But I am ruled as thou."

III

--"To-morrow I attack thee, wight,"
Said Sickness. "Yet I swear
I bear thy little ark no spite,
But am bid enter there."

IV

--"Come hither, Son," I heard Death say;
"I did not will a grave
Should end thy pilgrimage to-day,
But I, too, am a slave!"

V

We smiled upon each other then,
And life to me had less
Of that fell look it wore ere when
They owned their passiveness.

Thomas Hardy

The Sun On The Bookcase

Once more the cauldron of the sun
Smears the bookcase with winy red,
And here my page is, and there my bed,
And the apple-tree shadows travel along.
Soon their intangible track will be run,
And dusk grow strong
And they have fled.

Yes: now the boiling ball is gone,
And I have wasted another day....
But wasted-wasted, do I say?
Is it a waste to have imagined one
Beyond the hills there, who, anon,
My great deeds done,
Will be mine alway?

Thomas Hardy

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Thomas Hardy

The Sweet Hussy

In his early days he was quite surprised
When she told him she was compromised
By meetings and lingerings at his whim,
And thinking not of herself but him;
While she lifted orbs aggrieved and round
That scandal should so soon abound,
(As she had raised them to nine or ten
Of antecedent nice young men):
And in remorse he thought with a sigh,
How good she is, and how bad am I! -
It was years before he understood
That she was the wicked one - he the good.

Thomas Hardy

The Telegram

'O He's suffering - maybe dying - and I not there to aid,
And smooth his bed and whisper to him! Can I nohow go?
Only the nurse's brief twelve words thus hurriedly conveyed,
As by stealth, to let me know.

'He was the best and brightest! - candour shone upon his brow,
And I shall never meet again a soldier such as he,
And I loved him ere I knew it, and perhaps he's sinking now,
Far, far removed from me!'

- The yachts ride mute at anchor and the fulling moon is fair,
And the giddy folk are strutting up and down the smooth parade,
And in her wild distraction she seems not to be aware
That she lives no more a maid,

But has vowed and wived herself to one who blessed the ground she trod
To and from his scene of ministry, and thought her history known
In its last particular to him - aye, almost as to God,
And believed her quite his own.

So great her absentmindedness she droops as in a swoon,
And a movement of aversion mars her recent spousal grace,
And in silence we two sit here in our waning honeymoon
At this idle watering-place....

What now I see before me is a long lane overhung
With lovelessness, and stretching from the present to the grave.
And I would I were away from this, with friends I knew when young,
Ere a woman held me slave.

Thomas Hardy

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 divergence,
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 unbounded."
So self-communed I.

Thwart my wistful way did a damsel saunter,
Fair not fairest, good not best of her feather;
"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!

Thomas Hardy

The Tenant-For-Life

The sun said, watching my watering-pot
 "Some morn you'll pass away;
These flowers and plants I parch up hot -
 Who'll water them that day?

"Those banks and beds whose shape your eye
 Has planned in line so true,
New hands will change, unreasoning why
 Such shape seemed best to you.

"Within your house will strangers sit,
 And wonder how first it came;
They'll talk of their schemes for improving it,
 And will not mention your name.

"They'll care not how, or when, or at what
 You sighed, laughed, suffered here,
Though you feel more in an hour of the spot
 Than they will feel in a year

"As I look on at you here, now,
 Shall I look on at these;
But as to our old times, avow
 No knowledge--hold my peace! . . .

"O friend, it matters not, I say;
 Bethink ye, I have shined
On nobler ones than you, and they
 Are dead men out of mind!"

Thomas Hardy

The To-Be-Forgotten

I

I heard a small sad sound,
And stood awhile among the tombs around:
"Wherefore, old friends," said I, "are you distressed,
Now, screened from life's unrest?"

II

--"O not at being here;
But that our future second death is near;
When, with the living, memory of us numbs,
And blank oblivion comes!

III

"These, our sped ancestry,
Lie here embraced by deeper death than we;
Nor shape nor thought of theirs can you descry
With keenest backward eye.

IV

"They count as quite forgot;
They are as men who have existed not;
Theirs is a loss past loss of fitful breath;
It is the second death.

V

"We here, as yet, each day
Are blest with dear recall; as yet, can say
We hold in some soul loved continuance
Of shape and voice and glance.

VI

"But what has been will be --
First memory, then oblivion's swallowing sea;
Like men foregone, shall we merge into those
Whose story no one knows.

VII

"For which of us could hope
To show in life that world-awakening scope

Granted the few whose memory none lets die,
But all men magnify?

VIII

"We were but Fortune's sport;
Things true, things lovely, things of good report
We neither shunned nor sought ... We see our bourne,
And seeing it we mourn."

Thomas Hardy

The Two Men

THERE were two youths of equal age,
Wit, station, strength, and parentage;
They studied at the self-same schools,
And shaped their thoughts by common rules.

One pondered on the life of man,
His hopes, his endings, and began
To rate the Market's sordid war
As something scarce worth living for.

"I'll brace to higher aims," said he,
"I'll further Truth and Purity;
Thereby to mend and mortal lot
And sweeten sorrow. Thrive I not,

"Winning their hearts, my kind will give
Enough that I may lowly live,
And house my Love in some dim dell,
For pleasing them and theirs so well."

Idly attired, with features wan,
In secret swift he labored on;
Such press of power had brought much gold
Applied to things of meaner mould.

Sometimes he wished his aims had been
To gather gains like other men;
Then thanked his God he'd traced his track
Too far for wish to drag him back.

He lookèd from his loft one day
To where his slighted garden lay;
Nettles and hemlock hid each lawn,
And every flower was starved and gone.

He fainted in his heart, whereon
He rose, and sought his plighted one,
Resolved to loose her bond withal,
Lest she should perish in his fall.

He met her with a careless air,
As though he'd ceased to find her fair,
And said: "True love is dust to me;
I cannot kiss: I tire of thee!"

(That she might scorn him was he fain,
To put her sooner out of pain;
For incensed love breathes quick and dies,
When famished love a-lingering lies.)

Once done, his soul was so betossed,
It found no more the force it lost:
Hope was his only drink and food,
And hope extinct, decay ensued.

And, living long so closely penned,
He had not kept a single friend;
He dwindled thin as phantoms be,
And drooped to death in poverty....

Meantime his schoolmate had gone out
To join the fortune-finding rout;
He liked the winnings of the mart,
But wearied of the working part.

He turned to seek a privy lair,
Neglecting note of garb and hair,
And day by day reclined and thought
How he might live by doing nought.

"I plan a valued scheme," he said
To some. "But lend me of your bread,
And when the vast result looms nigh,
In profit you shall stand as I."

Yet they took counsel to restrain
Their kindness till they saw the gain;
And, since his substance now had run,
He rose to do what might be done.

He went unto his Love by night,

And said: "My Love, I faint in fight:
Deserving as thou dost a crown,
My cares shall never drag thee down."

(He had descried a maid whose line
Would hand her on much corn and wine,
And held her far in worth above
One who could only pray and love.)

But this Fair read him; whence he failed
To do the deed so blithely hailed;
He saw his projects wholly marred,
And gloom and want oppressed him hard;

Till, living to so mean an end,
Whereby he'd lost his every friend,
He perished in a pauper sty,
His mate the dying pauper nigh.

And moralists, reflecting, said,
As "dust to dust" in burial read
Was echoed from each coffin-lid,
"These men were like in all they did."

Thomas Hardy

The Two Soldiers

Just at the corner of the wall
We met - yes, he and I -
Who had not faced in camp or hall
Since we bade home good-bye,
And what once happened came back - all -
Out of those years gone by.

And that strange woman whom we knew
And loved - long dead and gone,
Whose poor half-perished residue,
Tombless and trod, lay yon!
But at this moment to our view
Rose like a phantom wan.

And in his fixed face I could see,
Lit by a lurid shine,
The drama re-enact which she
Had dyed incarnadine
For us, and more. And doubtless he
Beheld it too in mine.

A start, as at one slightly known,
And with an indifferent air
We passed, without a sign being shown
That, as it real were,
A memory-acted scene had thrown
Its tragic shadow there.

Thomas Hardy

The Voice

Woman much missed, how you call to me, call to me,
Saying that now you are not as you were
When you had changed from the one who was all to me,
But as at first, when our day was fair.

Can it be you that I hear? Let me view you, then,
Standing as when I drew near to the town
Where you would wait for me: yes, as I knew you then,
Even to the original air-blue gown!

Or is it only the breeze, in its listlessness
Travelling across the wet mead to me here,
You being ever dissolved to wan wistlessness,
Heard no more again far or near?

Thus I; faltering forward,
Leaves around me falling,
Wind oozing thin through the thorn from norward,
And the woman calling.

Thomas Hardy

The Walk

You did not walk with me
Of late to the hill-top tree
As in earlier days,
By the gated ways:
You were weak and lame,
So you never came,
And I went alone, and I did not mind,
Not thinking of you as left behind.

I walked up there to-day
Just in the former way:
Surveyed around
The familiar ground
By myself again:
What difference, then?
Only that underlying sense
Of the look of a room on returning thence.

Thomas Hardy

The West-Of-Wessex Girl

A very West-of-Wessex girl,
As blithe as blithe could be,
Was once well-known to me,
And she would laud her native town,
And hope and hope that we
Might sometime study up and down
Its charms in company.

But never I squired my Wessex girl
In jaunts to Hoe or street
When hearts were high in beat,
Nor saw her in the marbled ways
Where market-people meet
That in her bounding early days
Were friendly with her feet.

Yet now my West-of-Wessex girl,
When midnight hammers slow
From Andrew's, blow by blow,
As phantom draws me by the hand
To the place-Plymouth Hoe-
Where side by side in life, as planned,
We never were to go!

Begun in Plymouth, March 1913

Thomas Hardy

The Wistful Lady

'Love, while you were away there came to me -
From whence I cannot tell -
A plaintive lady pale and passionless,
Who bent her eyes upon me critically,
And weighed me with a wearing wistfulness,
As if she knew me well.'

'I saw no lady of that wistful sort
As I came riding home.
Perhaps she was some dame the Fates constrain
By memories sadder than she can support,
Or by unhappy vacancy of brain,
To leave her roof and roam?'

'Ah, but she knew me. And before this time
I have seen her, lending ear
To my light outdoor words, and pondering each,
Her frail white finger swayed in pantomime,
As if she fain would close with me in speech,
And yet would not come near.

'And once I saw her beckoning with her hand
As I came into sight
At an upper window. And I at last went out;
But when I reached where she had seemed to stand,
And wandered up and down and searched about,
I found she had vanished quite.'

Then thought I how my dead Love used to say,
With a small smile, when she
Was waning wan, that she would hover round
And show herself after her passing day
To any newer Love I might have found,
But show her not to me.

The Woman In The Rye

'Why do you stand in the dripping rye,
Cold-lipped, unconscious, wet to the knee,
When there are firesides near?' said I.
'I told him I wished him dead,' said she.

'Yea, cried it in my haste to one
Whom I had loved, whom I well loved still;
And die he did. And I hate the sun,
And stand here lonely, aching, chill;

'Stand waiting, waiting under skies
That blow reproach, the while I see
The rooks sheer off to where he lies
Wrapt in a peace withheld from me.'

Thomas Hardy

The Workbox

See, here's the workbox, little wife,
That I made of polished oak.'
He was a joiner, of village life;
She came of borough folk.

He holds the present up to her
As with a smile she nears
And answers to the profferer,
'Twill last all my sewing years!'

'I warrant it will. And longer too.
'Tis a scantling that I got
Off poor John Wayward's coffin, who
Died of they knew not what.

'The shingled pattern that seems to cease
Against your box's rim
Continues right on in the piece
That's underground with him.

'And while I worked it made me think
Of timber's varied doom;
One inch where people eat and drink,
The next inch in a tomb.

'But why do you look so white, my dear,
And turn aside your face?
You knew not that good lad, I fear,
Though he came from your native place?'

'How could I know that good young man,
Though he came from my native town,
When he must have left there earlier than
I was a woman grown?'

'Ah, no. I should have understood!
It shocked you that I gave
To you one end of a piece of wood
Whose other is in a grave?'

'Don't, dear, despise my intellect,
Mere accidental things
Of that sort never have effect
On my imaginings.'

Yet still her lips were limp and wan,
Her face still held aside,
As if she had known not only John,
But known of what he died.

Thomas Hardy

The Year's Awakening

How do you know that the pilgrim track
Along the belting zodiac
Swept by the sun in his seeming rounds
Is traced by now to the Fishes' bounds
And into the Ram, when weeks of cloud
Have wrapt the sky in a clammy shroud,
And never as yet a tinct of spring
Has shown in the Earth's apparelling;
O vespering bird, how do you know,
How do you know?

How do you know, deep underground,
Hid in your bed from sight and sound,
Without a turn in temperature,
With weather life can scarce endure,
That light has won a fraction's strength,
And day put on some moments' length,
Whereof in merest rote will come,
Weeks hence, mild airs that do not numb;
O crocus root, how do you know,
How do you know?

Thomas Hardy

Then And Now

When battles were fought
With a chivalrous sense of should and ought,
In spirit men said,
"End we quick or dead,
Honour is some reward!
Let us fight fair -- for our own best or worst;
So, Gentlemen of the Guard,
Fire first!"

In the open they stood,
Man to man in his knightlihood:
They would not deign
To profit by a stain
On the honourable rules,
Knowing that practise perfidy no man durst
Who in the heroic schools
Was nurst.

But now, behold, what
Is war with those where honour is not!
Rama laments
Its dead innocents;
Herod howls: "Sly slaughter
Rules now! Let us, by modes once called accurst,
Overhead, under water,
Stab first."

Thomas Hardy

Thought Of Ph---A At News Of Her Death

NOT a line of her writing have I,
Not a thread of her hair,
No mark of her late time as dame in her dwelling, whereby
I may picture her there;
And in vain do I urge my unsight
To conceive my lost prize
At her close, whom I knew when her dreams were upbrimming with light,
And with laughter her eyes.

What scenes spread around her last days,
Sad, shining, or dim?
Did her gifts and compassions enray and enarch her sweet ways
With an aureate nimb?
Or did life-light decline from her years,
And mischances control
Her full day-star; unease, or regret, or forebodings, or fears
Disennoble her soul?

Thus I do but the phantom retain
Of the maiden of yore
As my relic; yet haply the best of her--fined in my brain
It may be the more
That no line of her writing have I,
Nor a thread of her hair,
No mark of her late time as dame in her dwelling, whereby
I may picture her there.

Thomas Hardy

Thoughts Of Phena

at news of her death

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That no line of her writing have I,
Nor a thread of her hair,
No mark of her late time as dame in her dwelling, whereby
I may picture her there.

March 1890.

Thomas Hardy

To A Lady

Offended by a Book of the Writer's

NOW that my page upcloses, doomed, maybe,
Never to press thy cosy cushions more,
Or wake thy ready Yeas as heretofore,
Or stir thy gentle vows of faith in me:

Knowing thy natural receptivity,
I figure that, as flambeaux banish eve,
My sombre image, warped by insidious heave
Of those less forthright, must lose place in thee.

So be it. I have borne such. Let thy dreams
Of me and mine diminish day by day,
And yield their space to shine of smuggler things;
Till I shape to thee but in fitful gleams,
And then in far and feeble visitings,
And then surcease. Truth will be truth always.

Thomas Hardy

To A Sea-Cliff

(Durlston Head)

Lend me an ear
While I read you here
A page from your history,
Old cliff—not known
To your solid stone,
Yet yours inseparably.

Near to your crown
There once sat down
A silent listless pair;
And the sunset ended,
And dark descended,
And still the twain sat there.

Past your jutting head
Then a line-ship sped,
Lit brightly as a city;
And she sobbed: 'There goes
A man who knows
I am his, beyond God's pity! '

He slid apart
Who had thought her heart
His own, and not aboard
A bark, sea-bound....
That night they found
Between them lay a sword.

Thomas Hardy

To An Orphan Child

A Whimsey

AH, child, thou art but half thy darling mother's;
Hers couldst thou wholly be,
My light in thee would outglow all in others;
She would relive to me.
But niggard Nature's trick of birth
Bars, lest she overjoy,
Renewal of the loved on earth
Save with alloy.

The Dame has no regard, alas, my maiden,
For love and loss like mine--
No sympathy with mind-sight memory-laden;
Only with fickle eyne.
To her mechanic artistry
My dreams are all unknown,
And why I wish that thou couldst be
But One's alone!

Thomas Hardy

To An Unborn Pauper Child

Breathe not, hid Heart: cease silently,
And though thy birth-hour beckons thee,
Sleep the long sleep:
The Doomsters heap
Travails and teens around us here,
And Time-Wraiths turn our songsingings to fear.

Hark, how the peoples surge and sigh,
And laughters fail, and greetings die;
Hopes dwindle; yea,
Faiths waste away,
Affections and enthusiasms numb:
Thou canst not mend these things if thou dost come.

Had I the ear of wombed souls
Ere their terrestrial chart unrolls,
And thou wert free
To cease, or be,
Then would I tell thee all I know,
And put it to thee: Wilt thou take Life so?

Vain vow! No hint of mine may hence
To theeward fly: to thy locked sense
Explain none can
Life's pending plan:
Thou wilt thy ignorant entry make
Though skies spout fire and blood and nations quake.

Fain would I, dear, find some shut plot
Of earth's wide wold for thee, where not
One tear, one qualm,
Should break the calm.
But I am weak as thou and bare;
No man can change the common lot to rare.

Must come and bide. And such are we --
Unreasoning, sanguine, visionary --
That I can hope
Health, love, friends, scope

In full for thee; can dream thou'lt find
Joys seldom yet attained by humankind!

Thomas Hardy

To Lizbie Browne

I

Dear Lizbie Browne,
Where are you now?
In sun, in rain? -
Or is your brow
Past joy, past pain,
Dear Lizbie Browne?

II

Sweet Lizbie Browne
How you could smile,
How you could sing! -
How archly wile
In glance-giving,
Sweet Lizbie Browne!

III

And, Lizbie Browne,
Who else had hair
Bay-red as yours,
Or flesh so fair
Bred out of doors,
Sweet Lizbie Browne?

IV

When, Lizbie Browne,
You had just begun
To be endeared
By stealth to one,
You disappeared
My Lizbie Browne!

V

Ay, Lizbie Browne,

So swift your life,
And mine so slow,
You were a wife
Ere I could show
Love, Lizbie Browne.

VI

Still, Lizbie Browne,
You won, they said,
The best of men
When you were wed . . .
Where went you then,
O Lizbie Browne?

VII

Dear Lizbie Browne,
I should have thought,
"Girls ripen fast,"
And coaxed and caught
You ere you passed,
Dear Lizbie Browne!

VIII

But, Lizbie Browne,
I let you slip;
Shaped not a sign;
Touched never your lip
With lip of mine,
Lost Lizbie Browne!

IX

So, Lizbie Browne,
When on a day
Men speak of me
As not, you'll say,
"And who was he?" -
Yes, Lizbie Browne!

To Meet, Or Otherwise

Whether to sally and see thee, girl of my dreams,
Or whether to stay
And see thee not! How vast the difference seems
Of Yea from Nay
Just now. Yet this same sun will slant its beams
At no far day
On our two mounds, and then what will the difference weigh!
Yet I will see thee, maiden dear, and make
The most I can
Of what remains to us amid this brake
Cimmerian
Through which we grope, and from whose thorns we ache,
While still we scan
Round our frail faltering progress for some path or plan.
By briefest meeting something sure is won;
It will have been:
Nor God nor Daemon can undo the done,
Un sight the seen,
Make muted music be as unbegun,
Though things terrene
Groan in their bondage till oblivion supervene.
So, to the one long-sweeping symphony
From times remote
Till now, of human tenderness, shall we
Supply one note,
Small and untraced, yet that will ever be
Somewhere afloat
Amid the spheres, as part of sick Life's antidote.

Thomas Hardy

To Outer Nature

SHOW thee as I thought thee
When I early sought thee,
Omen-scouting,
All undoubting
Love alone had wrought thee--

Wrought thee for my pleasure,
Planned thee as a measure
For expounding
And resounding
Glad things that men treasure.

O for but a moment
Of that old endowment--
Light to gaily
See thy daily
Irisèd embowment!

But such readorning
Time forbids with scorning--
Makes me see things
Cease to be things
They were in my morning.

Fad'st thou, glow-forsaken,
Darkness-overtaken!
Thy first sweetness,
Radiance, meetness,
None shall reawaken.

Why not sempiternal
Thou and I? Our vernal
Brightness keeping,
Time outleaping;
Passed the hodiernal!

Thomas Hardy

Tolerance

'It is a foolish thing,' said I,
'To bear with such, and pass it by;
Yet so I do, I know not why!'

And at each clash I would surmise
That if I had acted otherwise
I might have saved me many sighs.

But now the only happiness
In looking back that I possess -
Whose lack would leave me comfortless -

Is to remember I refrained
From masteries I might have gained,
And for my tolerance was disdained;

For see, a tomb. And if it were
I had bent and broke, I should not dare
To linger in the shadows there.

Thomas Hardy

Transformations

Portion of this yew
Is a man my grandsire knew,
Bosomed here at its foot:
This branch may be his wife,
A ruddy human life
Now turned to a green shoot.

These grasses must be made
Of her who often prayed,
Last century, for repose;
And the fair girl long ago
Whom I often tried to know
May be entering this rose.

So, they are not underground,
But as nerves and veins abound
In the growths of upper air,
And they feel the sun and rain,
And the energy again
That made them what they were!

Thomas Hardy

Under The Waterfall

'Whenever I plunge my arm, like this,
In a basin of water, I never miss
The sweet sharp sense of a fugitive day
Fetched back from its thickening shroud of gray.
Hence the only prime
And real love-rhyme
That I know by heart,
And that leaves no smart,
Is the purl of a little valley fall
About three spans wide and two spans tall
Over a table of solid rock,
And into a scoop of the self-same block;
The purl of a runlet that never ceases
In stir of kingdoms, in wars, in peaces;
With a hollow boiling voice it speaks
And has spoken since hills were turfless peaks.'

'And why gives this the only prime
Idea to you of a real love-rhyme?
And why does plunging your arm in a bowl
Full of spring water, bring throbs to your soul?'

'Well, under the fall, in a crease of the stone,
Though precisely where none ever has known,
Jammed darkly, nothing to show how prized,
And by now with its smoothness opalized,
Is a grinking glass:
For, down that pass
My lover and I
Walked under a sky
Of blue with a leaf-wove awning of green,
In the burn of August, to paint the scene,
And we placed our basket of fruit and wine
By the runlet's rim, where we sat to dine;
And when we had drunk from the glass together,
Arched by the oak-copse from the weather,
I held the vessel to rinse in the fall,
Where it slipped, and it sank, and was past recall,
Though we stooped and plumbed the little abyss

With long bared arms. There the glass still is.
And, as said, if I thrust my arm below
Cold water in a basin or bowl, a throe
From the past awakens a sense of that time,
And the glass we used, and the cascade's rhyme.
The basin seems the pool, and its edge
The hard smooth face of the brook-side ledge,
And the leafy pattern of china-ware
The hanging plants that were bathing there.

'By night, by day, when it shines or lours,
There lies intact that chalice of ours,
And its presence adds to the rhyme of love
Persistently sung by the fall above.
No lip has touched it since his and mine
In turns therefrom sipped lovers' wine.'

Thomas Hardy

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!

Thomas Hardy

V.R. 1819-1901 (A Reverie.)

Moments the mightiest pass calendared,
And when the Absolute
In backward Time outgave the deedful word
Whereby all life is stirred:
"Let one be born and throned whose mould shall constitute
The norm of every royal-reckoned attribute,"
No mortal knew or heard.
But in due days the purposed Life outshone -
Serene, sagacious, free;
--Her waxing seasons bloomed with deeds well done,
And the world's heart was won . . .
Yet may the deed of hers most bright in eyes to be
Lie hid from ours--as in the All-One's thought lay she -
Till ripening years have run.

Thomas Hardy

Valenciennes

By Corporal Tullidge. See "The Trumpet-Major"
In Memory of S. C. (Pensioner). Died 184-

WE trenched, we trumpeted and drummed,
And from our mortars tons of iron hummed
Ath'art the ditch, the month we bombed
The Town o' Valencieën.

'Twas in the June o' Ninety-dree
(The Duke o' Yark our then Commander beën)
The German Legion, Guards, and we
Laid siege to Valencieën.

This was the first time in the war
That French and English spilled each other's gore;
--God knows what year will end the roar
Begun at Valencieën!

'Twas said that we'd no business there
A-topperèn the French for disagreeën;
However, that's not my affair--
We were at Valencieën.

Such snocks and slats, since war began
Never knew raw recruit or veteràn:
Stone-deaf therence went many a man
Who served at Valencieën.

Into the streets, ath'art the sky,
A hundred thousand balls and bombs were fleën;
And harmless townsfolk fell to die
Each hour at Valencieën!

And, sweatèn wi' the bombardiers,
A shell was slent to shards anightst my ears:
--'Twas night the end of hopes and fears
For me at Valencieën!

They bore my wovnded frame to camp,

And shut my gapèn skull, and washed en cleän,
And jined en wi' a zilver clamp
Thik night at Valencieën.

"We've fetched en back to quick from dead;
But never more on earth while rose is red
Will drum rouse Corpel!" Doctor said
O' me at Valencieën.

'Twer true. No voice o' friend or foe
Can reach me now, or any liveèn beën;
And little have I power to know
Since then at Valencieën!

I never hear the zummer hums
O' bees; and don't know when the cuckoo comes;
But night and day I hear the bombs
We threw at Valencieën....

As for the Duke o' Yark in war,
There be some volk whose judgment o' en is meän;
But this I say--'a was not far
From great at Valencieën.

O' wild wet nights, when all seems sad,
My wownds come back, as though new wownds I'd had;
But yet--at times I'm sort o' glad
I fout at Valencieën.

Well: Heaven wi' its jasper halls
Is now the on'y Town I care to be in....
Good Lord, if Nick should bomb the walls
As we did Valencieën!

Thomas Hardy

We Are Getting To The End

We are getting to the end of visioning
The impossible within this universe,
Such as that better whiles may follow worse,
And that our race may mend by reasoning.

We know that even as larks in cages sing
Unthoughtful of deliverance from the curse
That holds them lifelong in a latticed hearse,
We ply spasmodically our pleasuring.

And that when nations set them to lay waste
Their neighbours' heritage by foot and horse,
And hack their pleasant plains in festering seams,
They may again, - not warily, or from taste,
But tickled mad by some demonic force. -
Yes. We are getting to the end of dreams!

Thomas Hardy

Weathers

This is the weather the cuckoo likes,
And so do I;
When showers betumble the chestnut spikes,
And nestlings fly;
And the little brown nightingale bills his best,
And they sit outside at 'The Traveller's Rest,'
And maids come forth sprig-muslin drest,
And citizens dream of the south and west,
And so do I.

This is the weather the shepherd shuns,
And so do I;
When beeches drip in browns and duns,
And thresh and ply;
And hill-hid tides throb, throe on throe,
And meadow rivulets overflow,
And drops on gate bars hang in a row,
And rooks in families homeward go,
And so do I.

Thomas Hardy

Welcome Home

To my native place
Bent upon returning,
Bosom all day burning
To be where my race
Well were known, 'twas much with me
There to dwell in amity.

Folk had sought their beds,
But I hailed: to view me
Under the moon, out to me
Several pushed their heads,
And to each I told my name,
Plans, and that therefrom I came.

'Did you? . . . Ah, 'tis true
I once heard, back a long time,
Here had spent his young time,
Some such man as you . . .
Good-night.' The casement closed again,
And I was left in the frosty lane.

Thomas Hardy

When I Set Out For Lyonesse

When I set out for Lyonesse,
A hundred miles away,
The rime was on the spray,
And starlight lit my lonesomeness
When I set out for Lyonesse
A hundred miles away.

What would bechance at Lyonesse
While I should sojourn there
No prophet durst declare,
Nor did the wisest wizard guess
What would bechance at Lyonesse
While I should sojourn there.

When I came back from Lyonesse
With magic in my eyes,
All marked with mute surmise
My radiance rare and fathomless,
When I came back from Lyonesse
With magic in my eyes!

Thomas Hardy

Without Ceremony

It was your way, my dear,
To be gone without a word
When callers, friends, or kin
Had left, and I hastened in
To rejoin you, as I inferred.

And when you'd a mind to career
Off anywhere - say to town -
You were all on a sudden gone
Before I had thought thereon,
Or noticed your trunks were down.

So, now that you disappear
For ever in that swift style,
Your meaning seems to me
Just as it used to be:
'Good-bye is not worth while!'

Thomas Hardy

Your Last Drive

Here by the moorway you returned,
And saw the borough lights ahead
That lit your face - all undiscerned
To be in a week the face of the dead,
And you told of the charm of that haloed view
That never again would beam on you.

And on your left you passed the spot
Where eight days later you were to lie,
And be spoken of as one who was not;
Beholding it with a cursory eye
As alien from you, though under its tree
You soon would halt everlastingly.

I drove not with you.... Yet had I sat
At your side that eve I should not have seen
That the countenance I was glancing at
Had a last-time look in the flickering sheen,
Nor have read the writing upon your face,
'I go hence soon to my resting-place;

'You may miss me then. But I shall not know
How many times you visit me there,
Or what your thoughts are, or if you go
There never at all. And I shall not care.
Should you censure me I shall take no heed
And even your praises I shall not need.'

True: never you'll know. And you will not mind.
But shall I then slight you because of such?
Dear ghost, in the past did you ever find
Me one whom consequence influenced much?
Yet the fact indeed remains the same,
You are past love, praise, indifference, blame.

Zermat: To The Matterhorn (June-July, 1897)

Thirty-two years since, up against the sun,
Seven shapes, thin atomies to lower sight,
Labouringly leapt and gained thy gabled height,
And four lives paid for what the seven had won.

They were the first by whom the deed was done,
And when I look at thee, my mind takes flight
To that day's tragic feat of manly might,
As though, till then, of history thou hadst none.

Yet ages ere men topped thee, late and soon
Thou watch'dst each night the planets lift and lower;
Thou gleam'dst to Joshua's pausing sun and moon,
And brav'dst the tokening sky when Caesar's power
Approached its bloody end: yea, saw'st that Noon
When darkness filled the earth till the ninth hour.

Thomas Hardy

Zermatt To The Matterhorn.

Thirty-two years since, up against the sun,
Seven shapes, thin atomies to lower sight,
Labouringly leapt and gained thy gabled height,
And four lives paid for what the seven had won.

They were the first by whom the deed was done,
And when I look at thee, my mind takes flight
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Thomas Hardy