

FOLKLORE IN THE WORKS OF THOMAS HARDY

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A Thesis

Presented to  
the Faculty of the Department of English  
University of Houston

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

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by  
Mae Chandler Gates

April 1950

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## FOLKLORE IN THE WORKS OF THOMAS HARDY

A great deal has been written about Thomas Hardy's philosophy and interpretation of life. Lionel Johnson has said the most important word on Hardy's art as a novelist, and it is to be regretted that there is not a similar study of Hardy's poetry from his pen. As one reads and rereads Hardy, the thought comes to him that Hardy's roots go deep into the soil; that he was influenced not only by the physiognomy of Wessex and a familiarity with Wessex peasant life in its more evident, external features, but also by a profound spiritual sympathy with the land and the people. Bits of folklore like the telling of the bees and folk-customs like the dreaded skinmity come to one's mind. Finally, one realizes that, in a very true sense, Hardy had worked with a collaborator -- the folk; that a study of the folklore and the folk-custom of his people might throw light on his subtle art and much mooted reading of life.

Omens and premonitions play an important part in the lives of Thomas Hardy's people. Omens often appear in dreams but are more likely to come about as curious accidents or coincidences. Premonitions, too, are forewarnings or forebodings, such as Elfride had when Knight saved her from the falling tower. She felt that she would relive that scene in the future. She did -- and prevented Knight's death on the

### Cliff-without-a-Name.

The fatalism of Hardy's people ranges from broad rustic comedy to high tragedy. The belief that "What is to be, will be" runs all through the novels and poems. However, Hardy would seem to say that to view the future with awe and a natural touch of fear is not to lack quiet courage and strength.

Hardy's ghosts are interesting in and of themselves. Some of them go their placid ways, following the occupations they knew in life; others, with their eyes opened, look back upon their earthly life as a curious affair; still others utter biting satire on a blind world. The reader feels that the uninhibited Hardy would have given ten years of his life to have seen a ghost.

Hardy understood the Wessex peasant's feeling on the score of witchcraft: the Church of England is all very well for Sunday worship and for tithes, but when the cows are bewitched and the butter will not come, shall I then run to the vicar? When I am "overlooked," it is no time to love my neighbor as myself, but a time to use magic against magic, white witchcraft against black. Failing this, there is only ill luck, sickness, and death.

Those who love fine old games will find an embarrassment of wealth in Hardy. There are children's games which preserve memories of tribal warfare and ancient wooing customs; there

are graceful diversions like bowls or chess; and there is rustic merrymaking where the fun is fast and furious. The scenes unroll before the reader like the painted cloths of the oldtime peep shows.

Hardy presents the folklore of Wessex for what it is worth in the lives of his people. It is surprising to look back over this mass of superstition and to realize that in not a single instance is one moved to scorn or contempt for the folk. With the author, one sometimes smiles at rustic credulity; oftener one is privileged to share a deep understanding and sympathy. If the present study should prove helpful to the student of Hardy here or there, its aim would be accomplished.

"And one was Lord of the Wessex coast and all the  
lands thereby."

-Rudyard Kipling, "The Rhyme  
of the Three Captains"

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## CHAPTER I

### OMENS

Omens and premonitions play a large part in the fortunes of Thomas Hardy's people. Certain times, places, and weather conditions have a fatality of their own. A well-marked streak of ill luck follows Elfride, Tess, and Eustacia Vye; Jude Fawley and Sue Bridehead are victims of a predisposition to failure and unhappiness. Certain families have unmistakable death-warnings; Nelson and the Duke of Brunswick foresee the hour of their death. Omens often occur in premonitory dreams, but are more likely to happen as sets of curious accidents or sheer coincidences which, to the mind of the superstitious, have the force of veritable causes. The attitude of Hardy's folk toward the future is sometimes eager and hopeful, or, as with Henchard, a stubborn determination to know the worst the future has in store. The belief that "What is to be, will be" runs all through the novels and poems; it is one source of the quiet, undemonstrative courage with which many of Hardy's characters face whatever comes to them. The spectacle of human patience and sweetness invariably moves the poet to pity. There are moments in The Dynasts when man seems almost helpless in the tangled web of circumstance that show Hardy's proud conviction that man somehow must triumph over all the violence and cruel irony of senseless things. There is more radiance in this rare mood



of the poet than in volumes of facile optimism. On the whole, however, Hardy's use of omens accentuates the gloomy tinge of his mind, and would be sometimes almost too painful were it not for his abundant sympathy with all that "lives and moves and has its being."

There are few omens of unmixed good fortune in Hardy. Among a large number of sinister omens, these omens of good luck stand out brightly. There is the swarming of the bees just before Dick Dewy's wedding; the "letter in the candle" seen but not heeded by Miller Loveday; and the luck of the caul and of the last comer, in both of which Christian Cantle places his timid dependence.

A very delightful token of good luck is the swarming of the bees just before Dick Dewy's wedding to Fancy Day. Fancy was on the verge of tears as Dick failed to appear, and both Reuben and Grandfather James plied her with tales of bridegrooms who missed their weddings. Just then Nat Callcome, the best man, burst into the room with his story: the new hive of bees Dick's mother had given him had swarmed just as he was starting out; and Dick, vowing that Fancy would not wish him to lose a stock of bees, had stopped to ting to them and shake them. There were expressions of approval at this news, overheard by Dick, who entered, flustered and full of apologies:

'That my bees should have swarmed just then, of all

times and seasons!...And 'tis a fine swarm, too: I haven't seen such a fine swarm for these ten years!"

'A' excellent sign,' said Mrs. Penny....

'Well, bees can't be put off,' observed grandfather James. 'Marrying a woman is a thing you can do at any moment; but a swarm of bees won't come for the asking.'<sup>1</sup>

The belief is widespread that a stolen or stray swarm, that is, any swarm not purchased formally, is lucky.<sup>2</sup> A contradictory opinion is that a stray swarm alighting on a house, hedge, or tree means bad luck -- fire, perhaps,<sup>3</sup> a death in the family within the year,<sup>4</sup> or some undefined disaster. There is an elaborate folklore surrounding bees. Folklore notes the uncanny supernatural knowledge of the future which bees possess, and their deep affection for their masters -- a fact revealed in the custom of "telling the bees" of the death of the bee-master.<sup>5</sup> Bee culture is shrouded in superstition. Some say that bees will not thrive for those who lead an unchaste life, and that they fare best with man and wife;<sup>6</sup> others think that partners in bee-keeping should not be married;<sup>7</sup> all agree that one person alone has no success.<sup>8</sup>

There is another possible reason why the swarming of the bees at Dick's wedding was held lucky; a familiar English rhyme runs:

A swarm of bees in May is worth a load of hay;  
A swarm of bees in June is worth a silver spoon;  
A swarm of bees in July is not worth a fly.<sup>9</sup>

Dick's wedding, as he himself told Maybeld, was set for mid-summer; but the season Hardy describes might be May. However, one hopes what is more probable and more auspicious that the wedding came in June, for no matter how lucky "a swarm of bees in May" is supposed to be, the month has an evil name for everything else from May kittens to May weddings!<sup>10</sup> An old song goes, "May was never the month of love."<sup>11</sup> So, remembering the song of the nightingale and Fancy's resolve to have no secrets from Dick from that day, the reader leaves them jogging happily down the road in their new spring-cart.<sup>12</sup>

Another omen of good fortune is the "letter in the candle" which appeared to Miller Loveday. A letter from his son John had been lying at the post office for three days; when told about it, the miller exclaimed,

'Ah, now I call to mind that there was a letter in the candle three days ago this very night -- a large, red one; but foolish-like I thought nothing o't.'<sup>13</sup>

The "letter" is a bright spark visible within the body of the flame, and is caused by the irregular burning of the wick. The person who sees it must thump the table. If the spark disappears immediately, the letter is in the post; if several thumps are necessary, that number of days must elapse before the letter arrives; a very large spark means a parcel.<sup>14</sup>

The most amusing case of a lucky omen occurs in The Return of the Native, in the scene where Christian Cantle is almost persuaded to dice for the gown-piece which is being

raffled off at the Quiet Woman Inn. The pedlar insinuates,

'I think you might almost be sure...now I look in your face...I can say that I never saw anything look more like winning in my life.'

'You'll anyhow have the same chance as the rest of us,' said Sam.

'And the extra luck of being the last comer,' said another.

'And I was born wi' a caul, and perhaps can be no more ruined than drowned....'<sup>15</sup>

Hardy refers again to the belief in the lucky caul:

Mark Clark, speaking of the discharged bailey in Far from the Madding Crowd, says of him that he is a "queer Christian, like the Devil's head in a cowl." Hardy amends this from the meaningless rustic phrase, "As the Devil said to the Owl." The Devil in a cowl, or caul, would have more than his usual luck at card-play.<sup>16</sup>

The lucky caul is a world superstition. It has its roots in savage custom. It is thought to confer health, immunity from certain dangers, like death by drowning, and success in a chosen career on one born with it. It also endows its possessor with the doubtful gift of second sight.<sup>17</sup> The Scotch term it the sely how or sillyhoo; that is, the blessed or lucky hood.<sup>18</sup> The Pennsylvania Dutch say that one born with it will be a "notable man."<sup>19</sup>

As to the "extra luck of being the last comer" which is used as an inducement to Christian Cantle to try his luck with the dice, there are contradictory opinions. There is

a Worcestershire proverb, "Last has luck; found a penny in the muck."<sup>20</sup> However, the unpopularity of the last bit of edible, "the morsel for manners" left on the dish, which the Chinese call the "poison piece," and the dislike of the last card dealt, all point to a sort of "devil's portion," which may have originated in the old custom of saving the last of the food and drink for the gods.<sup>21</sup>

Omens of general ill luck are as follows: stumbling; the gift of hair; bad weather on a wedding day, changing the date for a wedding, being married on a Friday; cockerow at an unusual hour, especially afternoon cockerow; the belief, "No moon, no man!"; the appearance of a comet; and other omens which are interpreted more commonly as death omens proper.

At the opening of the final part of The Dynasts, Napoleon's horse stumbled and threw him. The Spirit of the Years spoke:

'The portent is an ill one, Emperor;  
An ancient Roman would retire thereat!'

Napoleon demanded:

'Whose voice was that, jarring upon my thought  
so insolently...?'

Haxel and the others replied in haste:

'Sire, we spoke no word.'

Forthwith Napoleon's old spirit asserted itself in the defiant cry:

'Then, whose spake, such portents I defy!'<sup>22</sup>

Every incident attending the beginning of a journey was held significant among the Romans; who thought stumbling an appalling omen; and punished severely the augur who stumbled in the performance of his sacred office.<sup>23</sup> Spenser, Milton, Congreve, and Hall refer to the bad luck of stumbling.<sup>24</sup> When a Sumatran chief stumbles, he abandons his journey; if a Pennsylvania Dutch pallbearer stumbles at a funeral, it is held a sign of someone's speedy death.<sup>25</sup> Strange to say, an actor's stumbling is thought lucky!<sup>26</sup> There is one case in history when stumbling was lucky -- for the stumbler: William the Bastard tripped as he stepped on English soil.<sup>27</sup>

The heroine of Desperate Remedies, Cytherea Graye, has unwillingly set the day for her marriage to Manston on Old Christmas Day. Thinking it is a Friday, she hastily changes it, only to learn that the new date is this unlucky day, but lets it stand in the belief that to change it will be more inauspicious than to be married on a Friday. After a night of broken sleep, she awakes to find Knapwater in the grip of a sleet storm. The whole household feels the ominous threat of the savage weather. The marriage, however, is celebrated with gloomy results -- Manston is a bigamist and a madman; only "desperate remedies" effect Cytherea's release from her terrible situation.<sup>28</sup>

Hardy refers to the prophetic character of wedding-

day weather in the poem, "The Country Wedding." The weather was beautiful but changeful:

Little fogs were gathered in every hollow,  
But the purple hillocks enjoyed fine weather  
As we marched with our fiddles over the heather  
--How it comes back! -to their wedding that day.<sup>29</sup>

The fiddlers insisted on preceding the bridal pair, contrary to village custom, and made so merry that the bride cried in alarm,

'Too gay! Clouds may gather, and sorrow come.'<sup>30</sup>

A year later the band is burying the wedded pair, on a day like the first, half hazy, half bright.<sup>31</sup> The saying, "Blest is the bride the sun shines on," immortalized in the Hesperides, is familiar all over Christendom.<sup>32</sup>

Friday is the most famous of "Egyptian days," as unlucky days have been termed all the way down from late classical through medieval medicine, and as days of witchcraft still are called in Yorkshire.<sup>33</sup> Yet Friday is a day of good repute in modern folk-medicine, however ill-omened for all else.<sup>34</sup> On Friday, witches and fairies are abroad. As spirits dislike iron, it is wise to refrain from plowing and even grave-digging on Friday.<sup>35</sup> Friday is not the day on which to visit a sick friend or begin a journey, especially on sea;<sup>36</sup> to begin any new enterprise or even to cut hay.<sup>37</sup> Its reputation as a wedding day varies: in the Scottish Lowlands, it is a favorite; in the Highlands, unlucky; and a

Northumbrian and Sussex saying runs, "Let not Friday be your wedding day, or you and your wife will lead a cat-and-dog life."<sup>38</sup> Friday's ill repute has been accounted for fancifully as resulting from the fact that it was the day of the Crucifixion, or the day when Eve ate the fatal apple.<sup>39</sup>

There is a charming scene in A Pair of Blue Eyes when Elfride, debating with herself as to what gift she shall make her fastidious betrothed, rejects the romantic idea of a lock of hair, for hair is unlucky. None of Elfride's frailties is more captivating than this bit of superstition -- the reader almost sees the girl at her mirror, looking absently at her own image, her great blue eyes filled with fine feminine calculation and a shadow of worry lest Knight will not approve her choice. Her utterly impulsive and timid nature makes her Knight's natural victim. These little superstitions throw her tragedy into deeper relief, but sometimes light it with a gleam of ironic humor.<sup>40</sup> To send or accept the gift of a lock of hair is fatal to lovers.<sup>41</sup> The belief has a very primitive origin.

The elaborate rules prescribed by Varro, Pliny, and Petronius as to cutting the hair and beard of the Flamen Dialis, for the care of the combings of the Vestal Virgins, and the severe dressing of the Roman bride's hair reveal a powerful taboo -- a taboo in which the fear of offending the spirit in the hair is revealed as well as the bit of sympa-



thetic magic which fears black witchcraft wrought by some enemy who has secured a part of the possessor's external soul.<sup>42</sup> At Tupper Quan in Ireland is a holy well where many sufferers from headache claim to have been cured; the trees nearby are full of hair to which the disease has been transferred.<sup>43</sup> Agnes Sampson was a sixteenth-century witch who was shaved to induce confession.<sup>44</sup> Hair is used to work black magic upon the possessor from the savages of Polynesia to the inhabitants of the Scottish Highlands.<sup>45</sup> Originally, hair was substituted for human sacrifice to the gods,<sup>46</sup> There is the familiar superstition that if combings or cuttings are built into birds' nests, the owner will suffer from headache.<sup>47</sup> To dream of losing one's hair is a sign of the loss of health or friends.<sup>48</sup>

The afternoon Tess was married, the cock crowed three times; all the dairy folk and Tess herself felt that it boded ill. Crick "hooshed" the cock away, then fell to musing:

'Now, to think of that just to-day! I've not heard him crow of an afternoon all the year afore.'<sup>49</sup>

Hours later, Kail brought Tess and Clare the word that Retty had tried to drown herself, and Marian had drunk herself into a stupor. The superstitious old fellow was quick to remind them of the sinister afternoon cockcrow.

Introduced from Persia, the cock was sacrificed to Aesculapius, god of medicine. All through the Middle Ages,

physicians administered drugs by cockcrow.<sup>50</sup> St. Chrysostom rebuked the superstitious man who thought himself "undone by the crowing of the cock."<sup>51</sup> It is likely that the cock acquired his prophetic character from the fact that, as one of the earliest announcers of time, he was expected to be regular. He also plays a part in the world of ghosts: his crow at midnight was a sort of "Get ready!" to wandering spirits of the night, and his crow at daybreak was a command to go.<sup>52</sup> The clever early churchmen put the pagan cock on Christian steeples as a symbol that the clergy must be eternally vigilant, and that they, too, had power to drive out evil spirits.<sup>53</sup> Who but remembers the prophetic cockcrow when Peter had thrice denied his Master? Cockcrow at an unusual time is held ominous almost universally.<sup>54</sup> The Scotch have the most picturesque form of this superstition. They say that the cock presages death only if his legs are cold, and death is coming from the direction in which he faces. To avert the danger, one must make a martyr of the unfortunate prophet.<sup>55</sup>

In The Return of the Native, Christian Cantle was lamenting the fact that he was the man no woman would marry, only the "rames" of a man. He feared this was because he was born at an ill-omened hour when there was no moon:

...'Do ye really think it serious, Mister Fairway, that there was no moon?'

'Yes; "no moon, no man." 'Tis one of the truest sayings ever spit out....A bad job for thee, Christian, that

you should have showed your nose then of all days in the month.'

'I suppose the moon was terrible full when you were born?' asked Christian with a look of helpless admiration at Fairway.

'Well, 'a was not new,' Mr. Fairway replied....<sup>56</sup>

The belief that the moon affects plant and animal life is as old as Aristotle and Galen.<sup>57</sup> The Scotch preserve eggs laid in the wane, saying that hens come from them. They call puny children "birds of the increase."<sup>58</sup> Herbs were gathered formerly at certain set times because under planetary influence.<sup>59</sup> Since anything done on a waxing moon tends to develop and vice versa, many simple practices have evolved. The wane is the time to take pigs from the sow and lambs from the ewe; it is not the time to fatten poultry, or to butcher, for fear the meat will shrink or spoil. It is not, above all, the time to breed.<sup>60</sup> The epithet "moon-calf," that is, "misbegotten," was applied contemptuously alike to an illegitimate child, a monstrosity like Caliban, a credulous fool, and a villain.<sup>61</sup> One is prone to forget how short a time has passed since medical men definitely attributed lunacy and other disorders to the effect of certain phases of the moon.<sup>62</sup>

Rustic superstition seasoned with common sense is seen in Nat Chapman's view of the comet that alarmed Haymoss:

'And what do this comet mean?' asked Haymoss. 'That some great tumult is going to happen, or that we shall

die of a famine?'

'Famine -- no!' said Nat Chapman. 'That only touches such as we, and the Lord only consarns himself with gentlemen. It isn't to be supposed that a strange fiery lantern like that would be lighted up for folks with ten or a dozen shillings a week and their gristing, and a load o' thorn faggots when we can get 'em. If 'tis a token that he's getting hot about the ways of anybody in this parish, 'tis about my Lady Constantine's, since she is the only one of a figure worth a hint.' 63

Chapman's is a pagan god, one the old Romans knew:

When beggars die, there are no comets seen;  
The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of  
princes.... 64

There are numerous omens of death in Hardy's work.

Most frequent and impressive are the following: "the coffin-spehl"; the breaking of a key, ring, or mirror; the falling of a portrait; the sight of one magpie; the screech of owl or raven; a ringing in the left ear; the clock's falling or striking crazily; a gathering of thirteen persons; the limp corpse or the corpse that will not keep its eyes closed; the sound of trotting dogs in a deserted park; the shadow on a sundial pointing to one who is next to die; flies or bees wearing crepe scarves; rats deserting a doomed house or ship; a sudden shiver; the sound of a bell as it "goes heavy"; the familiar whine or howl of dogs in the presence of death -- an indication that dogs, like horses, are ghost-seers; and the appearance of wraiths to the living. Many premonitions are not defined so unmistakably as omens. The premonitory dream will be considered along with premonitions in general.

In somber contrast to Miller Loveday's delight in "the letter in the candle" is the "coffin-spehl," a little column of tallow left standing after most of the candle has been consumed. It looks fantastically like a coffin or winding shroud. Hardy uses the omen with solemn effect in the poem, "Standing by the Mantelpiece": the lover, estranged and utterly out of love with life, sees the candle-wax taking the shape of a shroud, and accepts the omen by moulding it, as he hopes, to his fate.<sup>65</sup> In "She Hears the Storm," the omen occurs again.<sup>66</sup> Primitive Germanic tribes called this phenomenon the "wolf in the candle," perhaps a reference to the myth of Loki, who on some days is in the shape of a wolf to pursue and devour the sun and moon.<sup>67</sup> The "coffin-spehl" has struck terror to many a superstitious heart.<sup>68</sup>

In "Honeymoon Time at an Inn," the joy of the newly wedded pair is disturbed rudely by the fall of a mirror. The bride fears "long years of sorrow"; the Spirits Ironie laugh in glee, but the Spirits of Pity declare that the portent is one they cannot abide.<sup>69</sup> When Marie Louise was almost persuaded to marry Napoleon, her portrait fell suddenly to the floor. The Spirit of the Years questioned, "What mischief's this? The Will must have its way." The sardonic answer came, "Perhaps Earth shivered at the lady's say."<sup>70</sup>

Breaking a mirror is interpreted variously as seven years of bad luck<sup>71</sup> or the death of a friend or a relative.<sup>72</sup>

Napoleon, it is said, in alarm at the breaking of the glass on Josephine's portrait, could not rest until assured that she was well.<sup>73</sup> Old Aubrey is full of tales of falling portraits, scepters, and trees -- all portending death for some royal or noble person. Finely ironic is the legend, taken from Pryme's Diary, of the falling of Laud's portrait the day the Long Parliament first sat.<sup>74</sup> The mirror plays a part in divination and magic. This is one reason why in the house of death mirrors are turned to the wall. It is feared that the soul of the survivor, projected in the mirror, may be seized by the lurking ghost of the departed or by one of the spirits who may be lying in wait for this selfsame ghost. It is a "safety first" device similar to closing the eyes of the corpse.<sup>75</sup>

The night Bathsheba slipped away to meet Troy, the discovery of her absence threw Weatherbury Farm into extravagant alarm, which was increased by Maryann's tale of the unlucky omen which came to her that morning.

'I went to unlock the door and dropped the key, and it fell upon the stone floor and broke into two pieces. Breaking a key is a dreadful bodement....'<sup>76</sup>

The bad luck of breaking a key depends partly upon the metal of which the key is made. Supposedly, iron has magic properties. Horseshoes owe their efficacy not only to their shape and to the fact that they have been worn by horses, the best of all ghost-seers, but also to the fact that they are

made of iron. The remedy for bewitched milk is to plunge a hot poker into it.<sup>77</sup> Bells owe some of their power to the metal in them.<sup>78</sup> Keys still are placed in coffins in England; and it is perhaps too poetic an interpretation to say that they are for the use of the dead at the resurrection.<sup>79</sup>

Closely allied to the belief in the external soul which is revealed in the omens of the broken mirror or falling portrait is the fear of the limp corpse or the corpse which will not keep its eyes decently closed. Hardy refers to the ominous limp corpse in the little poem, "Signs and Tokens," in which the mourners take the uncanny fact as a token of another death within the house before the year is out.<sup>80</sup> The reader of The Mayor of Casterbridge will recall Mrs. Henchard's insistence that the great copper pence she had saved be placed upon her eyes and buried with her.<sup>81</sup> The use of copper coins on the eyes of the dead, like mourning garb, special roads for funerals known as "corpse-ways," turning mirrors to the wall, and shutting up the room of death, originated in the fear that the ghost of the deceased might find his way back and annoy the living. The limp corpse is a common omen.<sup>82</sup>

The omen of the falling portrait calls to mind the clock which falls suddenly or strikes crazily. In the tale of "The Waiting Supper," Christine, thinking herself deserted by her husband, has consented at last to marry her one-time

lover. The table is set for the supper when the news comes that her husband has been seen on his way home. The wedding is off, but the house seems waiting for something. Suddenly, the great family clock slowly inclines forward and falls full length on the floor.

'What does it mean, Mrs. Wake?...Is it ominous?'

'It is a sign of violent death in the family....'<sup>83</sup>

Years pass, but Bellston does not come. The lovers, afraid to marry, are in the habit of meeting at a waterfall. One day they find a watch and other belongings of Bellston's -- he had fallen into the water the night of the "waiting supper."

In the poem "Premonitions," a crazy old clock, which had not run for years, suddenly struck twelve in the dead of night, making the owner wonder who was next to die.<sup>84</sup> This same poem refers to the heavy sound of the church bell, usually interpreted as an omen of death. The listener asks herself moodily who can be meant by the sinister sound.<sup>85</sup> There are tales of experienced ringers who from the dull, muffled, or roaring sound of the bell at services or in tolling can foretell a death. The omen is feared most if it occurs in a wedding-peal.<sup>86</sup> In "A Poor Man and a Lady," the same omen hints at the coming estrangement.<sup>87</sup>

The night Fanny Robin disappeared from Weatherbury Farm, many gloomy conjectures were made as to her fate. Some



would have it that she was drowned; others that she had been murdered. Joseph Poorgrass held to the latter theory:

'What a night of horrors!' murmured Joseph Poorgrass, waving his hands spasmodically. 'I've had the news-bell ringing in my left ear quite bad enough for a murder, and I've seen a magpie all alone!'<sup>88</sup>

The "dead bell" which Joseph heard is a very widespread omen, one of the omens connected with involuntary motions that played so important a part in Greek and Roman divination, and that remain almost unchanged to the present day.<sup>89</sup> The magpie is the meeting for good or ill luck which runs through Teutonic mythology.<sup>90</sup>

The Greeks believed in the "lucky right," but the Roman augur prophesied happy auspices from the flight of birds to the left, or from visions seen over the left shoulder.<sup>91</sup> The ceremonial for cutting sacred plants like henbane also called for the left hand of the priest to be used.<sup>92</sup> By a trick of language, the Latin word "sinister" means "left" in the sense of "inauspicious." In the British Isles, the eminent folklorist Sir Laurence Gomme pointed out certain well-defined areas of survival of the Roman belief in the lucky left, finding this idea to exist chiefly in the Roman Wall district of Northern England, and the Teutonic belief of the lucky right in the South.<sup>93</sup> Holy water was sprinkled over the left shoulder, yet the witch was baptized thus with blood drawn by the devil from her left shoulder, and took her oath with up-

lifted left hand.<sup>94</sup> It is lucky and unlucky to see the new moon over one's left shoulder; which -- depends on the place.<sup>95</sup> The left is a place of special honor and luck among the Hindus and Northern Chinese.<sup>96</sup> Today, the morganatic or clandestine marriage is spoken of as "left-handed." It seems quite impossible to reconcile these conflicting beliefs on the score of Roman influence alone.

The single magpie which frightened Joseph Poorgrass almost out of his wits -- none too secure at any time -- is considered generally ominous. The most familiar rhyme runs:

One for sorrow, Two for mirth,  
Three for a wedding, and Four for a birth.

The variants are too numerous to mention.<sup>97</sup> No doubt some of the magpie's ill fame is due to the fact that, like raven and crow, he has been a bird of dole and death all through Aryan folklore. His appearance, habits, and extraordinary gifts also make him uncanny. The Northumbrian story is that he alone refused to enter the Ark; another says that Noah refused him admittance because he was a cross between a raven and a dove. Consequently, the magpie watched the Flood from an obliging rock and has jabbered about it ever since.<sup>98</sup> A drop of human blood in his tongue is said to give him human speech.<sup>99</sup> In Sussex they say that the tree or house he perches on never falls.<sup>100</sup> Yet he scents lurking disease in lambs, and one he alights on is invariably doomed.<sup>101</sup> He is

as good a judge of weather as of trees, and he still has an extensive cult in Poitou.<sup>102</sup>

To avert the ill luck caused by meeting a magpie, one may make the sign of the cross, bow and lift his hat politely, cross his thumbs, as in meeting a witch, and even spit over them for luck.<sup>103</sup> Or, one may repeat this simple charm:

Magpie, magpie, chatter and flee,  
Turn up thy tail, and good luck fall me.<sup>104</sup>

In the poem "Premonitions," Hardy mentions among birds of evil omen the owl, which hoots from a nearby tree, and the raven, which flies over the house, bringing to the woman within the foreboding that someone dear to her is to die.<sup>105</sup>

Marie Louise, surprised by the secret visit from Napoleon after his disastrous Russian campaign, took the dreadful news with simple, heartfelt grief. To his question, "What do they know about this in Paris?" she replied:

'I cannot say. Black rumors fly and croak  
Like ravens through the streets, but come to me  
Thin in the vague!...'<sup>106</sup>

The raven is considered universally a bird of death.<sup>107</sup> In Sweden, night ravens are thought to be the ghosts of murdered men whose bodies have not been discovered. The hole in the nightjar's wing has been given as proof that he is the ghost of a man buried with a stake through his body, that is, a criminal.<sup>108</sup> The raven's longevity is uncanny; Medea's raven was nine hundred years old.<sup>109</sup>

The screech owl, that is, the brown or tawny owl, is another dole-bird. Rome once underwent a lustration because one strayed into the Capitol.<sup>110</sup> To hear the ghostly hoot of the owl before one sees him is particularly unlucky. He is ghostly rather than malicious.<sup>111</sup> When he frequents a town, however, a plague is not far off.<sup>112</sup>

"The Shiver" is a variation of the old theme, "If you shiver, someone is walking over your future grave." The woman, up early to watch her lover set out on a mysterious journey, shivers with sudden foreknowledge of their approaching estrangement.<sup>113</sup> Another poem, "In the Garden," tells the story of a simple, poignant incident. The sundial, the moment the sun comes out from the clouds, throws a sinister shadow on the woman who is to die first.<sup>114</sup>

Several omens seem to point to a sort of second sight in animals. After his abdication, Napoleon refuses to die on his sword, preferring to poison himself; his attendants, ignorant of his intention, are about to desert him:

'Hark at them leaving me! So politic rats  
Desert the ship that's doomed....'<sup>115</sup>

In "Signs and Tokens," one hears the sound of trotting does in a deserted park, a ghostly reminder that the master is to die. In this poem the slothful flies are seen perched on rotting fruit -- they are wearing crepe scarves!<sup>116</sup> It was believed quite commonly that bees, at the death of a

beloved master, would die unless mourning "Snoos," or hoods, were made for them to display upon each hive.<sup>117</sup>

The night Mr. Aldclyffe died, Cytherea Gray, a new-comer to Knapwater House, was frightened by the moaning of the pet housedog and the mournful howl of the great watchdog in the court. In this chapter, Hardy's distinctive somber note is heard, a note that is echoed again in an episode of Far from the Madding Crowd in which, by irony or circumstance, the dog that helped Fanny Robin to the Union, a kindly creature that seemed the very personification of Night in its solemn and compassionate aspect, was stoned away from the door.<sup>118</sup>

The dog is the sacred animal of death and the guide to the underworld in Aryan mythology. The dogs in the palace of Ithaca and their master Odysseus saw Athena, though she was hidden from the eyes of all else. Upon seeing her, the dogs did not bark but whined lovingly.<sup>119</sup> In West Sussex it is believed that the ghosts of dogs walk abroad, seen only by their kind.<sup>120</sup> The Lowlanders say that a dog will not approach one who is "fey," that is, doomed to die.<sup>121</sup> Hardy's dog, Wessex, once gave an unmistakable death-warning: the dog rushed joyfully to greet a visitor, Mr. William Watkins, but at the sight of him began to whine piteously, and, at intervals during the visit, would paw his friend and then draw back in distress. The next morning came the news of Mr. Watkins' death an hour after leaving Max Gate.<sup>122</sup>

## NOTES

### CHAPTER I

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Hardy, Under the Greenwood Tree, Part V, Chapter I, 225.

<sup>2</sup> G.H. Kinahan, Folk-Lore Record, IV, 97; Walter Gregor, Notes on the Folk-Lore of the North-East of Scotland, 147; John Brand, Popular Antiquities of Great Britain, Sir Henry Ellis, editor, II, 300-301.

<sup>3</sup> Lady Camilla Gurdon, The Folk-Lore of Suffolk, 6.

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Mary Wright, Rustic Speech and Folklore, 216.

<sup>5</sup> Northcote Thomas, Folk-Lore of Northumberland, 12.

<sup>6</sup> Walter Gregor, op. cit., 147.

<sup>7</sup> Northcote Thomas, loc. cit.

<sup>8</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>9</sup> C.J. Billson, Folk-Lore of Leicestershire and Rutland, 146.

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth Mary Wright, op. cit., 218.

<sup>11</sup> Henry Morley's Ballets, 1595, in The Book of English Songs from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century, 16.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Hardy, Under the Greenwood Tree, Part V, Chapter II.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Hardy, The Trumpet-Major, Chapter XII, 107.

<sup>14</sup> G.E. Hadow, Folk-Lore, XXXV, 351; L.M. Eyre, Folk-Lore, XIII, 172.

<sup>15</sup> Book III, Chapter VII, 1021.

<sup>16</sup> Chapter VIII, 70.

<sup>17</sup> W.H. Babcock, Folk-Lore Journal, Volume VI, 93.

<sup>18</sup> John G. Dalyell, The Darker Superstitions of Scotland, 199-200.

<sup>19</sup> Edwin M. Fogel, The Beliefs and Superstitions of the Pennsylvania Germans, Proverbs 70, 141.

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- 29 Thomas Hardy, Late Lyrics, The Collected Poems of  
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- 36 Loc. cit.
- 37 Lady Camilla Gordon, op. cit., 129.
- 38 J.G. Campbell, op. cit., 299.
- 39 William Henderson, op. cit., II, 35.

- 40 Chapter XXX.
- 41 V.S. Lean, op. cit., Volume II, Part I, 80.
- 42 Sir Thomas Browne, Vulgar Errors, Book V, Chapter XXIII, Section 10; W.R. Halliday, Greek and Roman Folklore, 39, 62-63.
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- 45 Charles L. Wimberly, Folklore in English and Scottish Ballads, 71-72.
- 46 John G. Dalyell, op. cit., 181.
- 47 Walter Gregor, op. cit., 26.
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- 49 Thomas Hardy, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Chapter XXXIII, 246.
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- 53 John Brand, op. cit., II, 56-57.
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- 56 Book I, Chapter III, 884.
- 57 Thomas J. Pettigrew, op. cit., 21.
- 58 J.G. Campbell, op. cit., 306.
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62 William G. Black, op. cit., 135.

63 Thomas Hardy, Two on a Tower, Chapter XIII, 95-96.

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65 Thomas Hardy, Winter Words.

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67 Jacob Grimm, Deutsche Mythologie, James Steven Stallybrass, translator, I, 245-246.

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- 90 Jacob Grimm, op. cit., III, 1117, 1119, 1123, 1125, 1126, 1129.
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- 97 C.J. Billson, op. cit., 35.
- 98 William Henderson, op. cit., 126.
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- 100 Carl Latham, Folk-Lore Record, I, 9.
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- 102 Hans Liebrecht, Folk-Lore Record, II, 228.
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112 Carl Latham, Folk-Lore Record, I, 54-55.

113 Thomas Hardy, Human Shows.

114 Thomas Hardy, Moments of Vision.

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117 William Henderson, op. cit., 309.

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122 Florence E. Hardy, The Later Years of Thomas  
Hardy, 241.

## CHAPTER II

### PREMONITIONS

Premonitions abound in Hardy's novels and poems. As Clym Yeobright struck into the path that led to the cottage of Susan Numsuch, on his way to question little Johnny about his meeting with Mrs. Yeobright just before her death, he felt a creeping chilliness which, in after days, he held peculiarly ominous. It was at this interview that he learned of Eustacia's part in the tragedy.<sup>1</sup> Young Somerset was haunted by the fear that the de Stancys would rob him of Paula, and Paula herself at the last moment hastened her wedding to the architect from an inexplicable fear of estrangement.<sup>2</sup> Lady Constantine was alarmed when the curate came prepared for a funeral. Later, when she saw Swithin clad in her former husband's clothes, she felt a strong premonition that Sir Blount was not really dead. She was warned of her approaching maternity by the waking dream of the golden-haired child in the tall fern. In the same story, Granny Martin carefully prepared Swithin's room for him in his absence, knowing that she would be gone at his return; and it was Granny who used to go up into her "old country," where she found mother, father, and all she had known in childhood as natural as when she had left them. The most poignant moment in the book is St. Cleeve's mysterious reluctance to see Viviette after the long absence, foreseeing, as it were, all "Time's

revenges."<sup>3</sup> Bathsheba was justified in her conviction that Troy was alive despite proof to the contrary.<sup>4</sup> Elfride, at the moment when Knight saved her from death on the falling tower, felt a premonition that something similar to this scene was to happen again to them -- a premonition fulfilled when she saved his life on the Cliff-without-a-Name.<sup>5</sup> Tess was troubled by a thorn that pricked her breast after she had parted with Alex D'Urberville and was shocked inexpressibly by the dammatory text, "Thy damnation slumbereth not," 2 Peter 2:3.<sup>6</sup> Lady Penelope's prophetic promise to marry her three lovers, each in his turn, was fulfilled to the letter, and is a matter of Dorset history.<sup>7</sup> A rather melodramatic omen occurs in A Pair of Blue Eyes. Elfride, in her pathetic eagerness to stem Knight's exclamation of bitterness when he learns of her affair with Stephen Smith, says softly, as she looks at the church tower, "Thou hast been my hope, and a strong tower for me against the enemy." A few moments later a flock of birds fly from the tower; suddenly the tower moves and crumbles to earth.<sup>8</sup> Dramatic foreshadowing is used in "A Tragedy of Two Ambitions." The two brothers, ambitious for their sister and themselves, have allowed their drunken father to drown, but secretly they are remorseful. Some time later, as they are passing the sedge where their father died, they see a straight little silver poplar rising from it:

'His walking-stick has grown!' said Cornelius. 'It

was a rough one -- cut from the hedge, I remember.<sup>9</sup> This living reminder of their crime reproaches them and threatens their peace. After the tale is put aside, this simple incident haunts the memory.

"Near Lanivet," a favorite even with Hardy himself, is the tale of an old premonition. The lovers, tired from a long walk, reach the crossways, and she rests her head upon the handpost, stretching out both her arms as if crucified. Both of them are struck with an inexplicable fear which they are unable to laugh away, try as they will.<sup>10</sup>

In "The Lady of Forebodings," a woman is visited by the premonition that she no longer can keep her lover as he is. Some flaw has crept imperceptibly into their hitherto perfect confidence and happiness, some flaw which will destroy the whole.<sup>11</sup> In "Plena Timoris," the heroine, confronted with the body of the lovesick girl who has drowned herself, sees the outcome of her own affair.<sup>12</sup> In "The Announcement," the two brothers who have sat silent throughout a long visit suddenly announce the death of a common friend.<sup>13</sup> One of Hardy's most beautiful lyrics records an incident in the life of his first wife, Emma Lavinia Hardy. One day he heard her playing over her favorite old tunes; some time later, when he returned from town, she was about to finish her little concert. After her death, he pondered the question of her foreknowledge of her death, and his brooding is heard

in "The Last Performance."<sup>14</sup> The speaker in "The Interloper," while watching three friends out of sight, suddenly sees beside them, but apparently unseen by any of them, a ghostly figure, the embodiment, as it were, of that madness which is to befall one of the three. There is an accent and tone as macabre in "The Interloper" as in Poe's best work.<sup>15</sup> In "Before Marching and After," Hardy records the story of a young soldier in World War I who, just as he is about to set out for the front, is strangely quiet at the foreknowledge that this is indeed the end.<sup>16</sup> The wind in "The Wind's Prophecy" keeps telling the lover that he is hastening to meet not his sweetheart but a love he has not yet known.<sup>17</sup>

Particularly poignant is the poem "At a Fashionable Dinner." It is the poet's story of the strange premonition of her own death which came to the first Mrs. Hardy. At a dinner of thirteen guests, seated next to her husband, Lavine, the heroine of the episode, notices a shadow beyond the door — a shadow which looks, she says, like her own body lying there as servants glide in and out. When her husband says it is far more like satin sheen, she gloomily believes that he is thinking of a new bride.<sup>18</sup>

The most terrible of all premonitions of death comes in the form of wraiths. A wraith, or "waif," is usually the shape of some living person whom the beholder knows to be far away. It is sometimes the person's own double, alone or

accompanied by others; it may be the ghost of some person who has met with sudden death.<sup>19</sup> The appearance of wraiths is the result of second-sight, or, as it is called today, thought-transference.

Two poems carry the belief in wraiths to the utmost limits of credence. A poem just twelve lines long tells a haunting tale. While at church, the wife catches sight of her husband whose face shows inexpressible sadness. She returns home to find that he has not left the house, but has been listening to the bell toll. Her involuntary exclamation is that the bell has not tolled at all! "She Saw Him She Said" is an effective short story in verse.<sup>20</sup> Still more ironic is "The Pair He Saw Pass," a poem of a man recently married, who sees the love he had jilted riding with him to their wedding in the parish church. It is with terror he learns that no one has been seen at the church. The news comes that the jilted woman died at the moment he had seen her riding to the wedding. Did her thoughts project themselves into actual reality? Did she ride to her wedding as she had hoped and planned? Was she reclaiming her lost lover? At any rate, he soon sickened and died.<sup>21</sup>

"At the Dinner Table" is a cruel incident in which the poet does not need to heighten the irony of circumstance. The young wife sees in a mirror an old woman strangely like herself. She recalls her husband's shocking and inexplicable malice, when fifty years later, now a widow, she recognizes



herself and the image that had haunted her as one and the same.<sup>22</sup>

The sense of coming disaster is strong in Jude; it infects the reader as it fails to do in Tess. Widow Edlin's ghastly tale of the family curse prevents Jude's marriage to Sue. They are conscious of a tragic doom like that which overhung the house of Atreus or the house of Jeroboam.<sup>23</sup> Jude's prescience of death is a relief to the reader, for death is a release to Jude.<sup>24</sup> The most solemn premonition in all Hardy is perhaps Eustacia Vye's hatred and fear of Egdon Heath. As of some implacable enemy, she says, "'Tis my cross, my misery, and will be my death."<sup>25</sup>

Premonitions bulk large in The Dynasts. On the eve of Austerlitz, Napoleon felt, "As from an unseen monster haunting nigh" England's "hostile breath."<sup>26</sup> All through The Dynasts, Napoleon alone is conscious of the tremendous forces which urge him on. His premonition of the Moscow disaster<sup>27</sup> and the bloody apparition of Marshal Lannes, which appears to him before Waterloo,<sup>28</sup> are other proofs of the rapport between him and destiny.

Hardy's use of the prophetic and premonitory dream is interesting. Stephen Smith's dream of Elfride, in which she fails to appear for her wedding to Lord Luxellian, is vaguely prophetic of the fact that she has come to the end of her tangled romance and is lost to all three of the men who have

loved her,<sup>29</sup> Grace Melbury's dream of three crazed bells on the eve of her marriage to Fitzpiers was confirmed by the ill luck of the match.<sup>30</sup> Elfrida scarcely knew whether to believe that her dream of the Widow Jethway's standing over her was a fact or a dream.<sup>31</sup>

Eustacia Vye's dream, however, is easily the most striking in Hardy's writings. Every reader of The Return of the Native remembers how she danced to wondrous music with a knight in silver armor; how suddenly they "dived into one of the pools of the heath, and came out somewhere beneath an iridescent hollow, arched with rainbows," where, just as he was about to kiss her, "there was a cracking noise, and his figure fell into fragments like a pack of cards"; how she woke crying, "O that I had seen his face!"<sup>32</sup> Taken bit by bit, this dream admits of several interpretations. To dream of dancing is to come into some great happiness; to dream of music is to hear good news; to dream of pleasant places is to be blessed with a devoted husband and children.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, to dream of falling into a pit or pool is to lose one's sweetheart;<sup>34</sup> to dream of green fields is an omen of death, which is still another guess for the commentators on Falstaff's death: "a' babbled of green fields."<sup>35</sup> Those who know Eustacia's story need not consult their dream-books to interpret her dream. The happiness she pictured fell, in truth, to pieces like a pack of cards; the heath she hated was to have at last its will of her.

## NOTES

### CHAPTER II

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native, Book V, Chapter II.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Hardy, A Laodicean, Book IV, Chapter I; Book VI, Chapter III.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Hardy, Two on a Tower, Chapters II, XIX, XXII, XXXVI, XXXIX, XLI.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd, Chapter XLVIII.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Hardy, A Pair of Blue Eyes, Chapters XVIII, XXI.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Hardy, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Chapters VI, XII, 87.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Hardy, "The Lady Penelope," A Group of Noble Dames; R. Thurston Hopkins, Thomas Hardy's Dorset, 95.

<sup>8</sup> Chapter XXXI.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Hardy, Life's Little Ironies, 105.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Hardy, Moments of Vision.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Hardy, Human Shows.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Hardy, Moments of Vision.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Hardy, Human Shows.

<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth Gutch, Folk-Lore of the North Riding of Yorkshire, 211.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Hardy, Human Shows.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

- 22 Thomas Hardy, Late Lyrics.
- 23 Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure, Part V, Chapter IV.
- 24 Ibid., Part VI, Chapter IX.
- 25 Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native, Book I,  
Chapter IX.
- 26 Part First, Act VI, Scene II.
- 27 Ibid., Part Third, Act VII, Scene VIII.
- 28 Ibid., Part Third, Act VII, Scene VI.
- 29 Thomas Hardy, A Pair of Blue Eyes, Chapter XXXIX.
- 30 Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders, Chapters XXIV, XXIX.
- 31 Thomas Hardy, A Pair of Blue Eyes, Chapter XXIX.
- 32 Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native, Book II,  
Chapter III.
- 33 John Brand, Popular Antiquities of Great Britain,  
Sir Henry Ellis, editor, III, 134.
- 34 Ibid., III, 139.
- 35 Vincent S. Loan, Collectanea, Volume II, 552;  
William Shakespeare, Henry V, II, 3, 16.

## CHAPTER III

### FATALITY

The fatality of places and weather plays a part in Hardy's novels. Elfride was uneasy as she and Knight were seated on young Jethway's tomb, and both her lovers noticed her pallor as she came from a glimpse of the Luxellian vault. The most somber meeting of the three, however, is the meeting at the railway station as Elfride's coffin is carried away from the two rivals.<sup>1</sup> Even such a sensible girl as Elizabeth-Jane felt an uncanny fear of Lucetta in Casterbridge churchyard:

Here, in a churchyard as old as civilization, in the worst of weathers, was a young woman of curious fascinations never seen elsewhere; there might be some devilry about her presence.<sup>2</sup>

The sense of impending disaster is strong the night  
Dustacia and Wildeve are drowned in the weir:

The gloom of the night was funereal; all nature seemed clothed in crepe. The spiky points of the fir trees behind the house rose into the sky like the turrets and pinnacles of an abbey. Nothing below the horizon was visible save a light which was still burning in the cottage of Susan Nunsuch....The moon and the stars were closed up by cloud and rain to the degree of extinction. It was a night which led the traveller's thoughts instinctively to dwell on all that is terrible and dark in history and legend -- the last plague of Egypt, the destruction of Sennacherib's host, the agony in Gethsemane.<sup>3</sup>

This is the mien and voice of Egdon Heath in its blackest mood.

The fatalism of Hardy's people ranges from broad rustic

comedy to high tragedy. It is one of the most characteristic qualities of Hardy's clowns. Humphrey is telling Fairway and Grandfer Cattle, for instance, why he is no longer going to church:

'I ha'nt been there these three years; for I'm so dead sleepy of a Sunday, and 'tis so terrible far to get there; and when you do get there 'tis such a mortal poor chance that you'll be chose for up above, that I bide at home and don't go at all.'<sup>4</sup>

They agree, however, that George Yeobright's fate was happier. Was he not "lucky enough to be God A'mighty's own man"?<sup>5</sup> The rustics at the malt-house in Far from the Madding Crowd speculate gloomily as to Charlotte Coggan's fate:

'Poor Charlotte! I wonder if she had the good fortune to get into Heaven when 'a died! But 'a was never much in luck's way, and perhaps 'a went downward after all, poor soul.'<sup>6</sup>

As to the rustic view of Fate, one may use the exception to prove the rule. Geoffrey Day's second wife was a very extraordinary woman; what was true of her might work safely just the other way for common mortals, in which event Geoffrey's comment would not be applicable to them:

'Doom? Doom is nothing beside a elderly woman -- quite a chiel in her hands.'<sup>7</sup>

Through the majority of Hardy's tales runs a darker view of fate. Each of the two Hardcomes is married to the true love of his brother. Death rights the matter, and the two who are left accept their destiny quietly.<sup>8</sup> Sally Hall realizes that her wedding to Darten is put off, not for a

week, nor a month, but forever.<sup>9</sup> Bathsheba's men do not tell her of Troy's reappearance, thinking she will learn all too soon.<sup>10</sup> When the Mellstock band are ousted by Fancy Day, they accept Parson Maybold's decision and attend her coming-out party in a body. It is hard to forgive the parson for not allowing them to "fall glorious with a bit of a flourish at Christmas" instead of being "choked off" and "dwindling away at some nameless paltry Second-Sunday after."<sup>11</sup> The dairy maids at Tabothays bear no feminine malice when Tess carries off their adored Clare: "Such supplanting was to be."<sup>12</sup> There are times when one wearies of Tess's patience.

This fatalism may be poignant and solemn. Farfrae and Henchard feel that they are ruled by mysterious powers.<sup>13</sup> Eustacia, ready to try to make up the misunderstanding with Clym's mother, yields to his dissuasion:

'Let it be as you say then,' she replied in a quiet way of one, who though willing to ward off evil consequences by a mild effort, would let events fall out as they might sooner than wrestle hard to direct them.<sup>14</sup>

Marie Louise, brooding over her lost happiness, muses,

'Methinks that I was born  
Under an evil-coloured star, whose ray  
Darts death at joys!'<sup>15</sup>

And Napoleon, dimly conscious of the forces behind him, cries,

'Some force with me, baffling mine intent,  
Harries me onward, whether I will or no.  
My star, my star is what's to blame -- not I.'<sup>16</sup>

Hardy's use of omens, dreams, premonitions, and

fatality shows the somber tinge of his mind, the saturation of the experiences of a long life in intimate contact with people who still think in a primitive way. His understanding is deep and sympathetic. At rare moments he allows his intelligence and his humor to play over this superstitious way of looking at life; but, on the whole, it is not the comedy, but the tragedy and the irony of life that move him most. Not because he is himself superstitious -- although many people are in some respect -- but because, after all, there is a certain undeniable truth and beauty in this primitive way of thought and feeling does he dwell so constantly on omens and superstitions. He saw, no doubt, that of all dogmatists the man of science is the most terrible because he is the most unconscious; and that the latter in all honesty must end in the confession that the universe is an enigma. Hardy would seem to say that to view the future with awe and a natural touch of fear is not to lack quiet courage and strength. It is possible, in many cases, to give a scientific explanation for these accidental coincidences, these forebodings, but Hardy does not trouble to give it. He gives the reader these omens and premonitions for what they are worth in the lives of the Wessex people. They are worth a great deal to them -- and to the reader. It is surprising to look back over this mass of superstition and to realize that in not a single instance is one moved to



scorn or contempt for the believer in omens. With the author, one sometimes smiles at rustic credulity; oftener, one is privileged to share a deep understanding and sympathy. The fullness of a rich experience and a ripe spirit comes in time to the reader of Hardy.

## NOTES

### CHAPTER III

- <sup>1</sup> Thomas Hardy, A Pair of Blue Eyes, Chapters VIII, XIX, XXVII, XL.
- <sup>2</sup> Thomas Hardy, The Mayor of Casterbridge, Chapter XXI, 185.
- <sup>3</sup> Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native, Book V, Chapter VII, 1111-1112.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid., Book I, Chapter III, 880.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid., Book I, Chapter V, 901.
- <sup>6</sup> Thomas Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd, Chapter VIII, 68.
- <sup>7</sup> Thomas Hardy, Under the Greenwood Tree, Part II, Chapter VI, 111.
- <sup>8</sup> Thomas Hardy, "The History of the Hardcomes," Life's Little Ironies.
- <sup>9</sup> Thomas Hardy, "Interlopers at the Knap," Wessex Tales.
- <sup>10</sup> Thomas Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd, Chapter LIII.
- <sup>11</sup> Thomas Hardy, Under the Greenwood Tree, Part II, Chapter IV; Part IV, Chapter V.
- <sup>12</sup> Thomas Hardy, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Chapters XI, XIV, XII.
- <sup>13</sup> Thomas Hardy, The Mayor of Casterbridge, Chapters XIX, XX, XXXIV.
- <sup>14</sup> Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native, Book IV, Chapter VII, 1069.
- <sup>15</sup> Thomas Hardy, The Dynasts, Part Third, Act V, Scene II, 194.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid., Part Second, Act I, Scene VIII, 60.

## CHAPTER IV

### GHOST AND FAIRY LORE

The works of Thomas Hardy abound in ghost and fairy lore. There are primitive conceptions of the soul as a moth, a bird, a tree, a light, or a name. There are suggested likenesses between ghosts, fairies, and witches. There are ghosts of every variety -- happy, remorseful, malicious, plaintive, and ineffectual. There are times and seasons, notably Christmas, Midsummer, and the autumn feast of All Souls, when ghosts are most likely to appear. There are lonely moors, woodlands, and family mansions which they tend to haunt. Hardy's ghosts are interesting in and of themselves. Some of them go their placid ways, following the pursuits they know in life; others, their eyes opened, look back upon their earthly life as a curious affair; still others utter biting satire on a blind world.

In "The Souls of the Slain," Hardy pictures the spirits of those who have died in battle homing to England. They are night-moths, large and flamelike, moving like a Pentecostal wind, wailing in the storm:

Soon from out 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.<sup>1</sup>

They are met by a "senior soul-flame," who tells them that

they are remembered, not for their glorious death, but for the "little unremembered acts of love" that had endeared them to those at home. The quality of the poem is extremely rare in literature -- it actually bodies forth spirit.

The belief in an external soul capable of assuming a shape and an existence independent of the body runs through all folklore. There are savage tribes today in the Belgian Congo who believe that the soul is a bird, a bee, a moth, a tree, a light, a shadow, a stone, and even a name.<sup>2</sup> The Greeks did not invent the myth of Psyche; they merely gave her an exquisite story. Her Teutonic counterpart, Freyja, had a butterfly avatar.<sup>3</sup> In Yorkshire and Gloucestershire, they still call night-flying moths "souls."<sup>4</sup> When a moth flutters around a candle, Lithuanian peasant women say that someone's soul is going hence.<sup>5</sup>

It is possible that tales of pixies represent an ancient memory of a small folk -- perhaps non-Aryan, perhaps Stone Age men -- who once inhabited England.<sup>6</sup> The Vale of Blackmoor was full of "green-gowned" and "green-spangled" fairies who became angry when their dense woods were invaded by prying human creatures.<sup>7</sup> Pixies, like all fairies, are green in color.<sup>8</sup>

Egdon Heath was full of pixies. Mrs. Yeobright was warned not to lose her way home, for many had been pixie-led on Egdon.<sup>9</sup> Myrtle Petherwin, having torn her gown one night

and found it neatly mended the next morning, was sure that her sister, Ethelberta, was a fairy, but Emmeline thought she was too tall for a fairy, and perhaps merely knew the fairy's godmother.<sup>10</sup> Again, when Picotee, another sister, had been indulged in her desire to see a real dinner party, the country maiden was frightened by the capers the servants were cutting in their quarters:

Her nerves were screwed up to the highest pitch of uneasiness by the grotesque habits of these men and maids who...resembled nothing so much as pixies, elves, or gnomes, peeping upon human beings from their haunts underground, sometimes for good, sometimes for ill -- sometimes doing heavy work, sometimes none; teasing and worrying with impish laughter half-suppressed, and vanishing directly mortal eyes were bent upon them.<sup>11</sup>

The relation between ghosts and witchcraft comes out plainly in the picturesque Dorset phantom, the Ooser. Betty Dornell, grieved at her lover's repugnance when he saw that she was ill with smallpox, exclaimed indignantly that she would not have treated him so, had he been ugly as the Ooser in the church vestry itself!<sup>12</sup> The Ooser seems to have been a sort of grotesque devil-mask with great horns attached, which formerly was worn at the Melbury-Osmond Christmas revel.<sup>13</sup> Witches were said to have worn such masks in order to induce a particularly hollow tone;<sup>14</sup> yet the classical witches, noted for their "stridor," or hollow voices, cannot be proved to have donned masks.<sup>15</sup>

Ghosts are of many kinds. On the whole, ghosts tend

most surely to return who are dissatisfied with the turn things have taken with the living; who are remorseful or reproachful; whose love bridges the gap between flesh and spirit and draws them back to watch over those left behind; who, like family ghosts, return to give definite advice at a crisis in family affairs; and who are deceased recently, especially those just buried or about to be buried. Hardy has a macabre little poem, "A January Night,"<sup>16</sup> in which the wild weather is pictured as the work of the spirit of the dead man, not yet confined to its wooden cell. There are many stories of ghosts who return to reproach the living. "The Harvest Supper"<sup>17</sup> is such a tale. Nell, forgetting the lover she has lost only a month before, is singing and dancing with the gallant Scotch Greys in the barn when the phantom of her lover appears and reproaches her. The girl goes home ill, resolved never to wed. In "The Supplanter,"<sup>18</sup> the lover turns in anger against the woman who had supplanted his true love and broken her heart, thereby causing her ghost to return and plague him. "Something Tapped"<sup>19</sup> is a tale of a reproachful ghost who pleads with her former lover to join her in her lonely bed.

Happy ghosts come also to haunt the places they have loved in life and to be near their loved ones. In "The Phantom,"<sup>20</sup> the spirit of the dead woman is evoked gladly by her bereft lover. In "The Old Neighbour and the New,"<sup>21</sup> in

the chair where the new vicar is seated, the speaker sees only the form of the dead vicar he has loved. "Her Immortality"<sup>22</sup> contains a characteristic Hardy theme. The ghost of the dead girl implores her lover to live for her, telling him that she lives only through him, and that with his surcease ends her lease on life.

Every Hardy reader knows the de Stancy ghosts who take a keen interest in pretty, plebeian Paula. They seem to move when she flippanantly asks them to step down, and their aristocratic faces are distorted by righteous indignation as the old castle burns.<sup>23</sup> The D'Urberville ghosts are far more terrible. They seem to take delight in frightening Tess by their hideous and subtle likeness to her, thus alienating Angel Clare.<sup>24</sup> Tess's fate runs here, as always, in a double pattern of dark and bright threads. In the wedding-coach with Clare, she could laugh away the ominous premonition of family doom, but with Alec the sound of the ghostly carriage terrified her. Hardy touches this familiar theme to grotesque and awesome effects.

The very occupations of Hardy's ghosts bear a satiric implication. The Mellstock fiddlers in "Jubilate" fiddle away in the churchyard even as ghosts; the voices of the dead choir sing carols in "The Choirmaster's Burial" when the living have neglected the office of the waits;<sup>25</sup> and staid old ghosts dance a minuet to "Eden New," or step merrily

through the figures of a country-dance.<sup>27</sup> English sovereigns, awakened by the noise of a new coronation, comment on statecraft wisely and wittily in "The Coronation."<sup>28</sup> Each line shows perfectly the idiosyncrasies of each sovereign: Mary Stuart takes the noise for an execution; Elizabeth for an affair of state; and Henry the Eighth is a little perturbed, hoping it is a wedding, if anything. Hardy's intense imaginative power carries the reader through these tales and poems of the supernatural with a sweep of conviction.



## NOTES

### CHAPTER IV

- 1 Thomas Hardy, Poems of the Past and the Present, 84.
- 2 Sir James G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, 674-675.
- 3 Jacob Grimm, Deutsche Mythologie, James Steven Stallybrass, translator, II, 829-830.
- 4 Elizabeth Mary Wright, Rustic Speech and Folklore, 116.
- 5 Jacob Grimm, op. cit., IV, 1548.
- 6 Ibid., IV, 1409, 1414-1417.
- 7 William Barnes, "The Veairies," Poems of Rural Life in the Dorset Dialect, 72.
- 8 Charles L. Wimberly, Folklore in the English and Scottish Ballads, 176.
- 9 Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native, Book I, Chapter III.
- 10 Thomas Hardy, The Hand of Ethelberta, Chapter XXV.
- 11 Ibid., Chapter XXIX, 244.
- 12 Thomas Hardy, "Betty, the First Countess of Wessex," A Group of Noble Dames.
- 13 D.H.M. Read, Folk-Lore, XXII, 302, Note 13.
- 14 M.A. Murray, Folk-Lore, XXVIII, 236.
- 15 William R. Halliday, Folk-Lore, XXXIII, 227-229.
- 16 Thomas Hardy, Moments of Vision.
- 17 Thomas Hardy, Lunan Shows.
- 18 Thomas Hardy, Poems of the Past and the Present.
- 19 Thomas Hardy, Moments of Vision.
- 20 Thomas Hardy, Time's Laughingstocks.
- 21 Thomas Hardy, Late Lyrics, Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy.
- 22 Thomas Hardy, Wessex Poems.

- 23 Thomas Hardy, A Laodicean, Book III, Chapter II;  
Book VI, Chapter V.
- 24 Thomas Hardy, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Chapters  
XXIII, XXV, LI.
- 25 Thomas Hardy, Moments of Vision.
- 26 Thomas Hardy, "The Dead Quire," Time's Laughing-  
stocks.
- 27 Thomas Hardy, "The Paphian Ball," Human Shows.
- 28 Thomas Hardy, Satires of Circumstance.

## CHAPTER V

### MAGIC AND WITCHCRAFT

The belief in witchcraft has lingered in Wessex. In The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, Mrs. Hardy quotes passages from the poet's journal which show how deeply the subject of witchcraft and magic fascinated him. No incident was too trifling, no belief too obscure to record. Many of these stories had been told Hardy by rustics at the village inn or by family servants who vouched for their truth.

Witchcraft is an underground religion which has been preserved through incredible vicissitudes all the way down from savage sorcery. It has the proverbial nine lives of the cat. Almost every organized religion in its day has warred with witchcraft of a sort and has come out a doubtful victor. The opposition of church and state to witchcraft from the twelfth to the seventeenth century reached a state of frenzy which terrorized the witches and wore out the civil and ecclesiastical courts. However, after the madness had subsided, the fires smouldered on. Witchcraft also has survived a stronger force than persecution -- the subtle undermining of popular education, with its smattering of applied science. In isolated places in England and America, it still retains a hold on the imaginations of the people, who cling to it with instinctive trust in times of crisis. It is to them a deeper and more practical religion than the orthodox faith in

which they have been reared.<sup>1</sup>

Hardy understood the Wessex peasant's feeling on the score of witchcraft, which might be worded something like this: the Church of England is all very well for Sunday worship, for tithes, for testimony to the fitness of the social order; but when the cows are bewitched and the butter will not come, when the horses of a morning are reeking with sweat, shall I then run to the vicar? It is pious and proper to pray for rain, but it will help my crops more to have the weather-wizard try his spells. When I am "overlooked," it is no time to love my neighbor as myself, but a time to use magic against magic, white witchcraft against black. Failing this, there is only ill luck, sickness, and death.

This confession of faith on the part of the peasant reveals the fact that witchcraft is not only primitive, but a desperate faith, an appeal in time of stress to a power that is mightier, or at least more cunning and watchful, than the power employed by one's enemy.

Hardy attempted in his use of witchcraft as a theme to draw the distinction between the white and the black art. Black witchcraft aims to destroy property, to terrorize and even kill its victim; white witchcraft consists of charms and spells to counteract black art, to promote favorable weather, fertility of crops, flocks, and herds, and general good luck. Black magic is anti-social, yet it is not easy to decide who

is the white witch, and who the black. Hardy shows clearly what sort of persons fall naturally under neighborhood suspicion. The heroine of the tale, "The Withered Arm," for instance, got the reputation of a witch only by slow degrees.<sup>2</sup> Long before she was accused of "everlooking" Gertrude Lodge, Rhoda had incurred the suspicions of her companions at the dairy. They feared her because of the apathetic patience with which she accepted Lodge's slights. An ordinary woman in Rhoda's situation would have been wildly jealous for her boy, if not for herself. In her indifference to their sympathy, there was something sinister. They sensed in Rhoda a strong and baleful personality and readily took her for a black witch.

Eustacia Vye was another matter. Eustacia was hated because she openly despised the social and moral standards of Egdon and disdained what seemed to her a stupid and dull outlook on life. That she loved power is evident from the boast she uttered when she brought Wildeve across the heath to her fire. She told him she had done it merely to triumph over him as the Witch of Endor called up Samuel. Eustacia had a religion of her own, but it was not the religion of Egdon. It was rather a passionate epicureanism, in which her extraordinary beauty and her powerful will exercised over the rustic mind a fascination that seemed utterly malevolent.<sup>3</sup>

Mrs. Winter, also suspected of black witchcraft, was not a true witch at all but an unfortunate old woman to

whom the villagers ascribed the misfortunes which fell upon her persecutors.<sup>4</sup> Was it not proud Harriet Palmley who laughed at Jack Winter's crabbed love letters until, beside himself, he broke into her house to steal them and was caught and hanged, when a word from her would have cleared him? So reasoned the villagers. The tall, gaunt old woman, who, on her rare appearances, frightened the children half out of their wits, was a fit subject for dark fancies. Her history and appearance were both against her.<sup>5</sup>

Hardy's description of Elizabeth Endorfield, the white witch of Under the Greenwood Tree, reveals his delight in this creation. Particularly satanic were certain characteristics of hers. She did not attend church; she wore her bonnet indoors and always had on a red cloak; she had a pointed chin; and she was extremely shrewd and gifted in insight. Her friends protested that she was not a witch, merely a "Deep Body"; and they urged in proof that she was not gaunt and ugly, nor unusually odd in her manner.<sup>6</sup> Of such slight things as these were witches made! The reader will recall the whimsical rhyme in which Elizabeth disclaims all magical powers and pretends to use nothing more than common sense:

'This fear of Lizz -- whatever 'tis --  
By great and small;  
She makes pretense to common sense,  
And that's all.'<sup>7</sup>

So saying, she advises Fancy Day to feign sickness and thus win over her obdurate father to the match with Dick Dewy.

Many a Deep Body like Elizabeth Endorfield lacked the wit to plead her own cause effectively and so lost her head. This is Hardy's most delightful comment on witchcraft.

In "The Catching Ballet of the Wedding Clothes,"<sup>8</sup> a village girl consults a white witch as to whether she shall marry the honest sailor to whom she is betrothed, or the rich admirer who has sent her fine wedding clothes and a ring. The witch's advice is a bit of worldly wisdom -- nothing more! take the better match of the two as the world sees it. The girl marries Jack, the sailor, in the clothes and with the ring sent by his rival. That night the rich lover appears to her in a dream and claims her for his bride; for is he not the owner of the ring? The girl believes herself married to him and steals away from Jack to spend a lifetime of regret in penance for her superstition.

The closest approach to popular ideas and practices of witchcraft is the series of incidents in The Return of the Native in which Susan Nunsuch struggles to combat Eustacia Vye's evil spells. Susan's use of the deadly image is the climax of a universal resentment against Eustacia; it is a piece of pure folk magic.

The amazing feature about the image is that it has persisted up to the present day. As late as 1910, it was in use in the Isle of Skye;<sup>9</sup> and among the English people of Prince Edward's Island only a decade ago, there were still

some persons who shaped a potato like an old woman, filled it with pins, and roasted it against witchcraft.<sup>10</sup> Sometimes the image was thrown into a stream of water, a practice that may go back, in fact, to the Stone Age in Scotland.<sup>11</sup> It was said that Satan himself taught the mediaeval witches to make these images and stuck the first thorn or pin in them; the accusation has its roots in savage sorcery.<sup>12</sup>

The dairy is the witch's happy hunting-ground. If skilled, she can keep the butter from coming and even avoid the usually fatal countercharm of the hot poker plunged into the churn. To circumvent dairy witchcraft in many English rural districts, they repeat this charm:

Come, butter, come,  
Come, butter, come,  
Peter stands at the gate,  
Waiting for a butter'd cake,  
Come, butter, come.<sup>13</sup>

Dairy witchcraft is treated in Tess with broad humor. Soon after Tess's arrival at Talbothays, the cows did not give down their milk as usual, and the presence of a newcomer was blamed for the phenomenon. One milker asserted that the milk went straight into the cows' horns at such a time. Crick thought that even witchcraft might be limited by anatomical possibilities. The maids and men then resorted to songs, a favorite device in dairies.<sup>14</sup>

Witches were almost as fond of the stable as of the dairy. Readers of The Woodlanders will recall the consterna-



tion in Melbury's stables the morning that Grace's favorite mare, Darling, was found reeking with sweat from a night's riding. Fitzpiers had ridden her hard to reach home before daybreak, but the man who tended Darling insisted that she had been "hag-rid," thus starting a series of reminiscences about riding witches.<sup>15</sup> When Marian saw Tess's white face after one of her encounters with Alec D'Urberville, she vowed she looked "hag-rode."<sup>16</sup>

The payment of the witch or conjuror is a vexed question: Scotch witches appear to have insisted upon prompt payment for their services,<sup>17</sup> whereas Sussex "wise men" followed the more usual practice of refusing pay.<sup>18</sup> On the whole, the tradition is one of service rendered without set reward; but Hardy's conjurors never are averse to a "trifle" or a "gift."

There are several references in Hardy to books of witchcraft. Tess's mother set great store by her copy of the Compleat Fortune-Teller, by which she read Tess's fortune, and which, in superstitious fear, she insisted on having carried out of the house at night.<sup>19</sup> A certain Universal Fortune-Teller was still very popular in England during the past century;<sup>20</sup> however, it is not known which "witch's book" was used by Mrs. Penny to catch a glimpse of her future husband,<sup>21</sup> nor what the maidens in the Hintocks consulted to divine their future husbands' trades.<sup>22</sup>

It was not Hardy's way to approve or condemn witchcraft or anything else; he recorded and re-created what he saw with heightened effectiveness. In no other field of folklore, however, does the comedy of the human spectacle merge more grotesquely with the tragedy. On the whole, Hardy concerned himself principally with the darker impulses of man's nature; but witchcraft of every sort was interesting to him because it involves a common strain in widely different types of persons. He realized that magic is a primitive religion whose roots go incalculably deep; and, as always, he indicts nothing in the human heart but meets every new discovery with unfailing understanding and sympathy. It is the reader who weeps over *Eustacia Vye*; it is the reader who shudders at *Susan Nunsuck*. Hardy's Olympian calm was born of a great pity, a pity that "doth lie too deep for tears."

## NOTES

### CHAPTER V

1 Jacob Grimm, Deutsche Mythologie, James Steven Stallybrass, translator, III, 1062-1070.

2 Thomas Hardy, Wessex Tales.

3 Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native, Book I, Chapter VI.

4 Thomas Hardy, "The Winters and the Palmleys," "A Few Crusted Characters," Life's Little Ironies.

5 Loc. cit.

6 Thomas Hardy, Under the Greenwood Tree, Part IV, Chapter III.

7 Ibid., 183.

8 Thomas Hardy, Winter Words.

9 M.J. MacCulloch, Folk-Lore, XXXIV, 92.

10 H.J. Rose, Folk-Lore, XXXII, 126.

11 John G. Dalyell, The Darker Superstitions of Scotland, 173.

12 M.A. Murray, The Witch Cult in Western Europe, 116-117, 196.

13 John Brand, Popular Antiquities of Great Britain, Sir Henry Ellis, editor, III, 312-313.

14 Thomas Hardy, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Chapter XVII.

15 Ibid., Chapter XXVIII.

16 Ibid., Chapter XLVII.

17 J.G. Campbell, Witchcraft and Second Sight in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, 4.

18 Lady Camilla Gurdon, Folk-Lore of Suffolk, 13.

19 Thomas Hardy, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Chapters I, III, IV.

20 William Henderson, Notes on the Folk-Lore of the

Northern Counties of England and the Border, 102, 107-109.

21 Thomas Hardy, Under the Greenwood Tree, Part I, Chapter VIII.

22 Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders, Chapter XX.

## CHAPTER VI

### SPORTS AND PASTIMES

One who loves fine old games will find in Hardy an embarrassment of riches. There are children's games which preserve memories of tribal warfare and ancient wooing customs; there are decorous, graceful diversions like bowls or chess; and there is rustic merrymaking where the fun is fast and furious. Scene after scene unrolls before the reader in these Hardy tales like the painted cloths of the oldtime peep shows. Now it is the swish of maidens' skirts in the race for smockfrocks; now some brave buckler-play well carried on; now the kaleidoscopic sights of the country fair; and now the baiting of the gallant bull in the crowded square. It is a rich and passing pageant after which the reader casts a regretful glance, wishing he might detain it a moment longer.

Dick Dewy had denied himself the exquisite pleasure of seeing Fancy Day again until, fortified by the necessity of returning her handkerchief, his head awlirl with eager anticipation, he found himself at her cottage gate. It was locked to keep the children, who were playing Prisoners' Base in the front, from running into the schoolmistress' grounds. Fancy was at the farther end of the garden with spade and gloves trying to root out a bramble; she did not see nor hear him until, after a third attempt, his courage oozed

away, and he retreated to some little distance, trying to look as if he had merely chanced to pass that way. Finally, the third call, shouted with desperate vehemence, had drawn the pretty schoolmistress to the door. In a moment she had taken the handkerchief with dainty thanks and had shut the door, leaving Dick to meditate bitterly on the folly of the conventions.<sup>1</sup> The delightful comedy is over all too soon. The ancient game of Prisoners' Base is a setting for a quite different scene in Far from the Madding Crowd.<sup>2</sup> Bathsheba, after a night's wandering in the fern hollow in terror of Troy and herself, had gone quietly home with Liddy and taken up her residence in the attic. Here she sat trying to read, listlessly taking in the sounds without. A blood-red sun was casting a lustrous glare upon the west front of the church tower; it was six o'clock, the time when the young men of the village were accustomed to gather for their game of Prisoners' Base:

The spot had been consecrated to this ancient diversion from time immemorial, the old stocks conveniently forming a base facing the boundary of the churchyard, in front of which the ground was trodden hard and bare as a pavement by the players. She could see the brown and black heads of the young lads darting about right and left, their white shirt-sleeves gleaming in the sun; whilst occasionally a peal of hearty laughter varied the stillness of the evening. They continued playing for a quarter of an hour or so, when the game concluded abruptly, and the players leapt over the wall and vanished round to the other side behind a yew-tree.<sup>3</sup>

Bathsheba, startled out of her listlessness, was

curious to know why the base-players had broken off so suddenly. Liddy's reply was that they had gone to see the two men from Casterbridge put up a grand carved tombstone. It was the stone to Fanny Robin's memory -- Troy's one sincere gesture.

Prisoners' Base, elsewhere called Biddy-Base or Billy-Base,<sup>4</sup> is mentioned by both Spenser<sup>5</sup> and Shakespeare.<sup>6</sup> In modern London<sup>7</sup> the game varies a good deal from the ancient game described by Strutt<sup>8</sup> on the one hand, and from the Dorsetshire version on the other. At one point in the modern game, however, the struggle proceeds in the fashion described by Strutt, with the players on both sides taking hold of hands, always remembering that one of them must touch the base. Any player is free to leave the line and give an opponent chase; he who is touched first becomes the other's prisoner, and so on until the fixed number agreed on at the start of the game, usually twenty, are safely "in prison."

When Picotee came to peep at the fashionable dinner at which her sister was guest of honor and her father head butler, she was frightened in the servants' quarters by the roughness and abandon with which the maids and men played Cat-after-Mouse. To her, the game was grotesque and terrifying.<sup>9</sup> This favorite game of British and American school-children<sup>10</sup> was played in Dorsetshire by children forming a ring, their arms extended and their hands clasped. The one

playing the Mouse left the circle and pulled at the clothing of another player who straightway became the Cat. It was his duty to follow the Mouse in and out of the ring until caught, at which time he took the place formerly occupied in the ring by the Cat, who, in turn, became the Mouse, and so the game went merrily on.<sup>11</sup> From this game, Drop-the-Handkerchief originated.

When the Widow Edlin learned that Jude and Sue had not carried out their resolve to be married, she scolded them severely and lamented the good old days when folk thought no more of getting married than a game of dibs<sup>12</sup> but kept up the junketing for a week, then borrowed half-a-crown to begin housekeeping with! Dibs, under many different names, has been played the world over from prehistoric times down to our own day. It is the old game of Hucklebones or Cockall and is identical with Fivestones, Checkstones or Chucks, Jackstones or Jacks, Dabs, Snobs, or Gobs in the language of the London cockney.<sup>13</sup> Apparently, it was used once in marriage divinations both by the Druidess and the Roman sorceress. An old picture shows the following scene: the Roman sorceress has cast up the five stones in the first and principal cast of the Irish Purin. All five lie on the back of her hand, and the onlookers are examining the cast intently; the whole seems to indicate one of the divinations so commonly practiced before the Roman marriage ceremony.<sup>14</sup>



In a charming scene in Two on a Tower, the Bishop of Melchester and Lady Constantine's brother begin a game of bowls on the green. Having bowled one in a curve toward the jack, the Bishop turned to his hostess:

'Do you follow us?' he asked gaily.

'I am not skillful,' she said, 'I always bowl narrow.'

The bishop meditatively paused. 'This moment reminds one of the scene in Richard the Second,' he said, 'I mean the Duke of York's garden, where the queen and her two ladies play, and the queen says --

"What sport shall we devise here in this garden,  
To drive away the heavy thought of care?"'

'To which her lady answers,

"Madam, we'll play at bowls."

'That's an unfortunate quotation for you,' said Lady Constantine; 'for if I don't forget, the queen declines, saying,

"'Twill make me think the world is full of rubs, and that my fortune runs against the bias."'<sup>15</sup>

Another great Wessex dame, Lady Penelope, was fond of promenading near the bowling green.<sup>16</sup> The Spirit of the Pities, looking down upon the English Channel, viewed it as a playground for Napoleon's "bowling hands."<sup>17</sup> Even the job of errand-man at the Women's Skittle Alley was not enough to cure Joseph Poorgrass of his bashfulness.<sup>18</sup>

Ninepins was a favorite game with the Teutonic gods and heroes; bowls, as well as the modern games of marbles and billiards, are probably derived from the same source.<sup>19</sup> There

are few bowling greens left in England. From the sixteenth century on these were rapidly displaced by indoor alleys, which soon became the haunts of idle, dissolute youth.<sup>20</sup> Hamlet's cry, "There's the rub!" refers to the slope or bias in the bowling green.<sup>21</sup>

It was at Tony Kytes' wedding randy that the Hardcomes danced with the girls they liked best. All the young folk danced, while the old people played Put or All-fours in the parlor.<sup>22</sup> After Anne's discovery of Bob Loveday's love scrapes, she sent him angrily away, then spent some unhappy hours over her cruelty. Before long Bob came in, owning that he had been playing Put with Festus Derriman at the Duke of York.<sup>23</sup> Put is a rather difficult rooking-game, referred to by various Restoration writers as popular at Christmastide; at first a polite game, by Queen Anne's day it seems to have become the property of the humbler classes.<sup>24</sup> The first player, if blessed with a good hand, may "put it" to his opponent to let him see his hand; if the latter demurs, he takes the trick; if the contrary, they play it out. He must take two tricks to win the game, and is in high luck if he holds the best possible hand with three treys in it.<sup>25</sup> All-fours takes its name from its four chances, each of which scores a point: high, the best trump out; low, the lowest trump dealt; jack, the knave of trumps; and pips, in which certain other cards of fixed value are counted in the scores of the players

holding them. On the whole, the cards rank as at whist.<sup>26</sup> Like Put and Cribbage, All-fours was popular among the lower orders in Queen Anne's day.<sup>27</sup>

The fascination of gaming and gamblers plays a large part in A Laodicean.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the conception of life as a game in which men are forced to accept the cast of "Doomsters" beyond their understanding is a favorite with Hardy, even in so early a poem as "Hap."<sup>29</sup> The most memorable gambling scene is the grotesque dice-play on Egdon Heath in which Diggory Venn recovers the money Christian Cantle has gambled away. Poor Christian, to whom the mysterious little cubes seem indeed "the devil's playthings," has gone off scolding Wildeve as a "regular sharper"; and Diggory Venn, who has been watching the play, challenges Wildeve to continue.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps Hardy's intention was to suggest the ancient association of the Evil One with gaming.

There is a memorable game of chess in A Pair of Blue Eyes, in which Elfride, a skillful player, quick to detect Stephen Smith's unfamiliarity with the pieces, tenderly allows him to win two games; then, forgetting herself in a fascinating move, checkmates him. How different was her game with Henry Knight a few months later -- the game for which Elfride had sat up half the night studying the Praxis. Elfride's little tragedy is foreshadowed clearly in this, her first serious defeat; Knight took possession of her

heart as easily as he demolished her false moves.<sup>31</sup>

Chess is an extremely ancient game, some say Oriental in origin; certainly, Arabs are adept in the game.<sup>32</sup> It was a favorite game with the Greeks and Romans.<sup>33</sup> It also occurs in the tales of the Gaelic Red Branch Cycle<sup>34</sup> and in the English and Scottish ballads.<sup>35</sup> Many an English king since Canute has been a devotee of chess.<sup>36</sup>

Hardy is out of sympathy with the English fox-hunting tradition. It is said that he would not allow the hunt to cross his property, and his heart is plainly with the fleeing fox.<sup>37</sup> However, he is too much the artist to miss the fox-hunter's picturesque quality and point of view. The irate farmer, who had missed the scent, scolded Grace Melbury for not crying "Halloa!" when she had seen the tired fox slip quietly into the dead fern. All of the contempt of the sportsman for the hind who does not play the royal game is in this little scene.<sup>38</sup>

Hardy describes a "ratting" scene in Tess. The harvesters inexorably drive the hidden hares, rabbits, snakes, and fieldmice into the last clump of uncut grain, there to be slaughtered by their knives, sticks, and stones.<sup>39</sup> Crab-catching, a favorite rustic diversion, is mentioned in the poem, "Aquatic Sports."<sup>40</sup>

There is something at the fair for every taste, something to mar melancholy, something mad and merry for every

Jack and Joan. It is foolish to try to find one's way about in any methodical fashion, but best to take the sights and sounds, the smells and savors as they come. On the last statute day of the fair, Pack-and-Penny Day, the sober tradesmen and farmers have sold their horses, sheep, or cattle, have bought their earthenware, hardware, and drygoods, and gone home. The gentry are nowhere to be seen. However, there are plenty of journeymen and apprentices, soldiers and sailors on furlough, and shopkeepers out to get a pretty bargain or two. On the whole, it is a holiday crowd out for all the "jolly fun of the fair." Country boys and girls are present in little groups, all eyes and ears for the "humors of the fair." The nicknack vender is crying his toys and gimcracks.<sup>41</sup> Here Cheap Jack is about to sell a blooming country girl a brilliant shawl; her eyes shine with happiness, and her lover pays the price asked. As they turn away, the hawker again begins his harangue, pretissimo e fortissimo. Visitors walk and look all day, and, as they leave the fair, they find that their pockets have been picked. Their pockets are picked, indeed! But what is an empty pocket to the jolly fun of the fair?

## NOTES

### CHAPTER VI

- 1 Thomas Hardy, Under the Greenwood Tree, Part I, Chapter IX.
- 2 Thomas Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd, Chapter XLIV.
- 3 Ibid., 353.
- 4 Alice B. Gomme, The Traditional Games of England, Scotland, and Ireland, I, 28-29, 34; II, 80-87.
- 5 "October," The Shepheardes Calender, line 5.
- 6 Cymbeline, V, 3, 20.
- 7 Alice B. Gomme, op. cit., II, 481-482.
- 8 Joseph Strutt, Sports and Pastimes of the People of England, William Hone, editor, 78-80.
- 9 Thomas Hardy, The Hand of Ethelberta, Chapter XXIX.
- 10 Alice B. Gomme, op. cit., I, 64.
- 11 J.S. Udal, Folk-Lore Journal, VII, 212-214.
- 12 Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure, Part V, Chapter IV; Part VI, Chapter V.
- 13 Alice B. Gomme, op. cit., I, 96-97, 127, 152.
- 14 W. Carew Hazlitt, Faiths and Folklore, II, 344.
- 15 Thomas Hardy, Two on a Tower, Chapter XXVII, 195-196; William Shakespeare, Richard the Second, III, 4, 1-3.
- 16 Thomas Hardy, "The Lady Penelope," A Group of Noble Dames.
- 17 Thomas Hardy, The Dynasts, Part Second, Act I, Scene II.
- 18 Thomas Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd, Chapter VIII.
- 19 Alice B. Gomme, op. cit., II, 115-117.
- 20 Joseph Strutt, op. cit., 268-269.
- 21 William Shakespeare, Hamlet, III, 1, 65.

- 22 Thomas Hardy, "The History of the Hardcomes," "A Few Crusted Characters," Life's Little Ironies.
- 23 Thomas Hardy, The Trumpet-Major, Chapter XL.
- 24 W.C. Hazlitt, op. cit., II, 502.
- 25 Henry George Bohn, A Handbook of Games, 322-323.
- 26 Ibid., 323-324.
- 27 Ibid., 326.
- 28 Book IV, Chapter IV.
- 29 Thomas Hardy, Wessex Poems.
- 30 Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native, Book Three, Chapter VIII.
- 31 Thomas Hardy, A Pair of Blue Eyes, Chapters VII, XVII, XVIII.
- 32 Joseph Strutt, op. cit., 304-306.
- 33 William R. Halliday, Greek and Roman Folklore, 433.
- 34 W.C. Hazlitt, op. cit., I, 110.
- 35 Charles L. Wimberly, Folklore in the English and Scottish Ballads, 194.
- 36 Joseph Strutt, op. cit., 309.
- 37 Thomas Hardy, "Lady Vi," "Winter Night in Woodland," Human Shows; "She to Him," Wessex Poems.
- 38 Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders, Chapter XII.
- 39 Thomas Hardy, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Chapter XIV.
- 40 Thomas Hardy, Wessex Poems.
- 41 Thomas Hardy, The Mayor of Casterbridge, Chapter I.

## CHAPTER VII

### HARDY'S USE OF FOLKLORE AND FOLK-CUSTOM

As a folklorist, Thomas Hardy has complete mastery of his material. The highest praise has been accorded him by the London Folk-Lore Society for his accurate, vivid, and unadulterated recording of Wessex folklore.<sup>1</sup> He is, however, so much more than the folklorist that the reader's chief interest lies in the use he makes of this material. Hardy has been thought unduly somber and ironic. This profound melancholy and deep-seated irony, like Browning's obscurity, lies partly in the poet's temperament and partly in the heart of his subject. Certainly, Hardy, like Aeschylus, had a temperamental leaning towards the use of premonitions, omens, and prophecies. He was born and spent the impressionable years of boyhood and young manhood among a people who still thought in a primitive way, upon whose lips an ancient dialect still lived, and in whose hearts lingered the dark, inexplicable fears of prehistoric man. Hardy grew up in this atmosphere. Though always above it by reason of a cultivated mother, the forces of a formal education, and a widening acquaintance with the world outside Wessex, he was none the less a part of his own community and gloried in the fact. Hardy's intimate knowledge of folklore and folk-custom had an almost incalculable influence upon his art. It deepened a temperament already melancholy; it profoundly affected his



philosophy of life; it fed his imagination with rich and varied stuff; and it gave his readers his most precious quality -- a brooding pity for all living things.

Hardy found food for curious study, for contemplation and musing upon the ultimate realities, in many folk-beliefs. It was evident to him that magic, which is only a rude and undeveloped science, sees the world from a point of view exactly opposite to that of religion; in this respect it is like legitimate science. In both magic and science the element of caprice is eliminated from the workings of natural laws; religion, on the other hand, conceives nature as variable, elastic, and subject to a conscious personal power who may be conciliated. Even when magic employs spirits, personal agents of the kind assumed by religion on a far greater scale, the believer in magic treats these agents as impersonal, inanimate, absolute forces, coercing and constraining them by setting them to work out some given effect from a fixed sequence of given causes. Magic fails, not because of its logic -- which is admirable -- but because it misconceives the natural laws it seeks to use, and, like all primitive science, reasons on too narrow a set of facts. Modern science, however, owes to magic the fundamental assumption that there are certain invariable and necessary sequences of cause and effect, independent of personal will or caprice. Alchemy, for instance, prepared the way for chemis-

try, not by its faulty methods of investigation, but by its insistence upon the possibility of chemical changes. To the truly devout, the forces that govern the world are conscious and personal and may be invoked and conciliated so as to render at least some of the evil that all admit innocuous to the chosen people. To the scientist -- and in a much lesser way to the superstitious man -- no supreme Will manifests itself as in control of the general scheme of things. There are only tremendous, inexplicable forces; the duality of the world and the existence of disease, hatred, and death are insoluble problems.

Hardy must have viewed the long vista of witchcraft and magic with fascination. One seems to overhear in certain poems of Hardy the ironic suggestion that the fruition of human effort is an actual miracle and that faith is a sublime magic in a "God-forgotten world." The poet deals so constantly with the chance happening, the coincidence apparently trifling, yet in reality fraught with momentous consequences, that he seems to imply the realization of the difficulty with which the human will ever gets its own way, lost as it is in a world of vast forces, working with machine-like precision, careless of man's happiness, but, with superb irony, occasionally allowing the line of natural forces to coincide with the bent of human desires. It has been said that the proud motto of the Roman Catholic Church might with

more truth be applied to this underground faith in magic, this deep-seated superstition, of which so few are completely rid: Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus. Hardy's sympathy with folk deeply imbued with folklore undoubtedly affected his philosophy of life profoundly and gave him a finer tolerance.

Equally important is the consideration that much of Hardy's material owes its most distinctive quality -- epic, picturesque, or dramatic -- to folklore and folk-custom. His people are what they are because of their environment and ancestry. Hardy felt that America was a tragic country;<sup>2</sup> that its tragedy was reflected in the countenances and in the manners of American visitors to England; and he consistently refused to visit the United States.<sup>3</sup> The reader will admit that in Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure he has overstressed the note of tragic irony, he has made his people too completely the victims of an unjust destiny, and has violated the laws of artistic probability. This objection, however, cannot be made to the tragic action of the great books -- The Woodlanders, The Mayor of Casterbridge, and The Return of the Native. It is necessary to understand the little obscure things of daily life which exert so powerful an influence on character. Is not superstition one of them? These believers in charms and spells, in witchcraft and magic, in omens, in premonitions, and in fatality are the sort of

people to whom the most commonplace happening seems fraught with hidden significance. One may expect to see them do unusual things, and to accept extraordinary events, on the other hand, as quite in the order of things. Superstition is one of the subtle, obscure things that reaches the secret springs of emotion. A study of the folk-beliefs of Hardy's peasants serves to convince the reader that the tragic irony which pursues a man like Henchard or Giles Wintergarne is an irony that the peasant himself would be the first to accept. It is possible to look too long at this sadder side of Hardy's work, but it will not do to ignore nor deny it.

The stuff of folklore and folk-custom also enormously enlarges the narrative field, permitting the use of highly striking, yet natural, situations, and widening the epic sweep of story. This dangerous liberty Hardy uses like a master. He is seldom melodramatic; his effects, though striking, are not cheap or easy. He carries his story along quietly enough for many chapters, then, much in the technique of Thackeray, suddenly throws a great scene, for which he has been making careful preparation, into high relief. How much must happen before Susan Munslow melts the ghastly image and Eustacia Vye is lost in the weir! However, when time for the scene comes, the poet does it full justice, and it stands out forever in the reader's imagination as does a brilliantly lighted room viewed from an outer darkness. Without the stuff of witch-

craft, there would not be the material for this subtle story and this somberly splendid scene. The most casual reader will admit the part played by superstition in Henchard's downfall; not all at once, however, does he sink, but slowly and inevitably. How much must take place before the scene of the skimmity! Yet all that happens leads up to this catastrophe with a naturalness which has been the admiration and despair of Hardy's brother novelists. Moreover, the conception of places as full of mysterious sentience -- of the heath as a great protagonist -- gives The Return of the Native an epic flavor that is altogether lacking in most modern fiction. The peasant's almost fetishistic, pantheistic feeling for Nature and inanimate things serves to intensify this atmosphere.

Hardy uses folklore in two distinct ways, each of them founded on a long, fine literary tradition. One is the way of Peele in The Old Wives' Tale, of Greene in Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, and of Shakespeare in A Midsummer Night's Dream; the other is the way of Marlowe in Dr. Faustus and of Shakespeare in Macbeth. The former is the way of fancy, full of incidental charm, a somewhat decorative, scenic, and atmospheric use of folklore. The latter goes to the heart of the matter in hand, seeks to interpret it through deep and strong imaginative insight, and aims at nothing less than conviction. Willing suspension of unbelief may do for fancy;

it will not serve the purposes of this higher poetry. The Senecan convention had a foundation of folklore upon which to build. Certainly, Elizabethan ghosts were convincing to the Elizabethan audience! In his treatment of character, Hardy uses folklore motifs in this deeply imaginative way; he aims at and he secures absolute conviction. The reader shudders at Susan's dreadful image, but he believes her capable of it, and he half-believes that she is conspiring with Eustacia's ancient enemy, Egdon Heath, to bewitch the Queen of Night to death. The very weather seems hostile to Henchard; things go damnably wrong with him. However, the reader sympathizes with his superstitious fear that someone may be mixing some evil brew or wasting away some image to confound him. When assisting at the Hintock maidens' love rites, the reader almost expects to see their lovers come out of the misty woods.

The poet also uses folklore and folk-custom to sketch scenes of pastoral beauty; he paints canvas after canvas of rustic gaiety. Now it is a "picture of the Dutch School," now the many-mooded Hintock woods, now the fairs with their characteristic sports and pastimes, now a farmhouse kitchen overflowing with dancing folk. He paints the life of a whole countryside in every aspect; he gives the line and color, the sounds and movement of the scene. Best of all, he shows the other side of the picture -- the zest the Wessex folk have for life. They are not too melancholy a folk; though

they may brood and muse, and seem at times too stolid and patient, they have a deep-veined characteristic English gaiety, a gusto which takes the grave with the gay. Hardy knows his province supremely well, and, through it, the whole world. It is because his roots go so deep into the soil that one cannot conceive of his falling into serious neglect.

Manners change; human nature remains essentially unchanged. These Wessex folk are persons the reader has known, people he seeks instinctively to identify with actual places, and to assign a niche in time. Like the de Stancy portraits, they seem ever about to step out of their frames as if eager to walk and talk with him. Much of their reality lies, not only in Hardy's skill in characterization, but in the vividness and naturalness of the background, in this elusive spirit of place which he has caught and preserved.

To speak of lesser matters seems almost unnecessary; yet it may be remarked in passing that much of Hardy's phraseology is borrowed directly from folklore and folk-custom. The phrase "to work like a Diggory" means to work with dogged persistence;<sup>4</sup> the name is highly appropriate to Thomasin's devoted knight. When the poet describes Marshal Hey's horse magnificently decked in bright blue, red, and green, the reader instantly recalls that it was only a lingering on into modern times of the old barbaric trick to strike terror to the heart of the foe.<sup>5</sup> A mist across the

moon, casting a weird green light upon the earth, is like a witch's incantation scene.<sup>6</sup> Life is a play, a harlequinade, a puppetry which the Showman Years unveils scene after scene.<sup>7</sup> A chance mishap is like an uncovered play at chess.<sup>8</sup> The wife-weaving daughter of high Zeus, who seems to be punishing Pierston, the sculptor, for his sins against her in his art, is for every man the Unattainable -- all things to all men, and no man's to possess. The poet says it thus:

She, proudly, thinning in the gloom:  
 'Though, since troth-plight began,  
 I have ever stood as bride to groom,  
 I wed no mortal man!<sup>9</sup>

Hardy said of himself that he was quick to bloom, slow to ripen.<sup>10</sup> There was no modern poet whose heart was so ripe as Hardy's: he grew slowly, but he grew to the day of his death. There are some who may think that the stuff of folklore is essentially ugly, but from this stuff he weaves a pattern of wonderful beauty. There are some who find him unduly somber. There are some who are offended at his hard sayings -- and, for those, there is always another poet. This man has not set his wits against the gods to cast them from their seats. There is not an iota of intellectual arrogance in him. He is on the side of the angels. Whatever he thought of the world and its systems, he loved his fellow men. He had not fiddled and danced at village randies for nothing; he had not listened to numberless good things at the



inn so soon to forget them. He had not mused upon the melancholy mystery of life alone. He had heard it voiced time and again by country folk, and voiced with sweetness, patience, and the saving grace of humor. It is not the Olympian of The Dynasts that his readers honor most; it is the modest, almost shrinking man who would fain be remembered thus:

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 out-  
rollings,  
Till they rise again, as they were a new bell's boom,  
'He hears it not now, but used to notice such  
things'?

## NOTES

### CHAPTER VII

- 1 Wallace Crooke, Folk-Lore, XXIII, 32.
- 2 Ernest Brennecke, Jr., The Life of Thomas Hardy, 4.
- 3 "On an Invitation to the United States," Poems of the Past and the Present; Florence E. Hardy, The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 120, 135, 185-186.
- 4 Elizabeth M. Wright, Rustic Speech and Folklore, 16.
- 5 Thomas Hardy, The Dynasts, Part Third, Act VII, Scene IV.
- 6 Thomas Hardy, "Once at Swanage," Human Shows.
- 7 Thomas Hardy, The Dynasts, Forescene; Part First, Act I, Scene VI; Act V, Scene V; Part Second, Act I, Scene III; Act V, Scene VII; Act VI, Scene VIII; Part Third, Act I, Scene X; Act VI, Scene VIII; Act VII, Scene VIII; Afterscene.
- 8 Ibid., Part Second, Act I, Scene II.
- 9 Thomas Hardy, "The Well-Beloved," Poems of the Past and the Present, 84-86.
- 10 Florence E. Hardy, op. cit., 178.
- 11 Thomas Hardy, "Afterwards," Moments of Vision, 21-22.

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