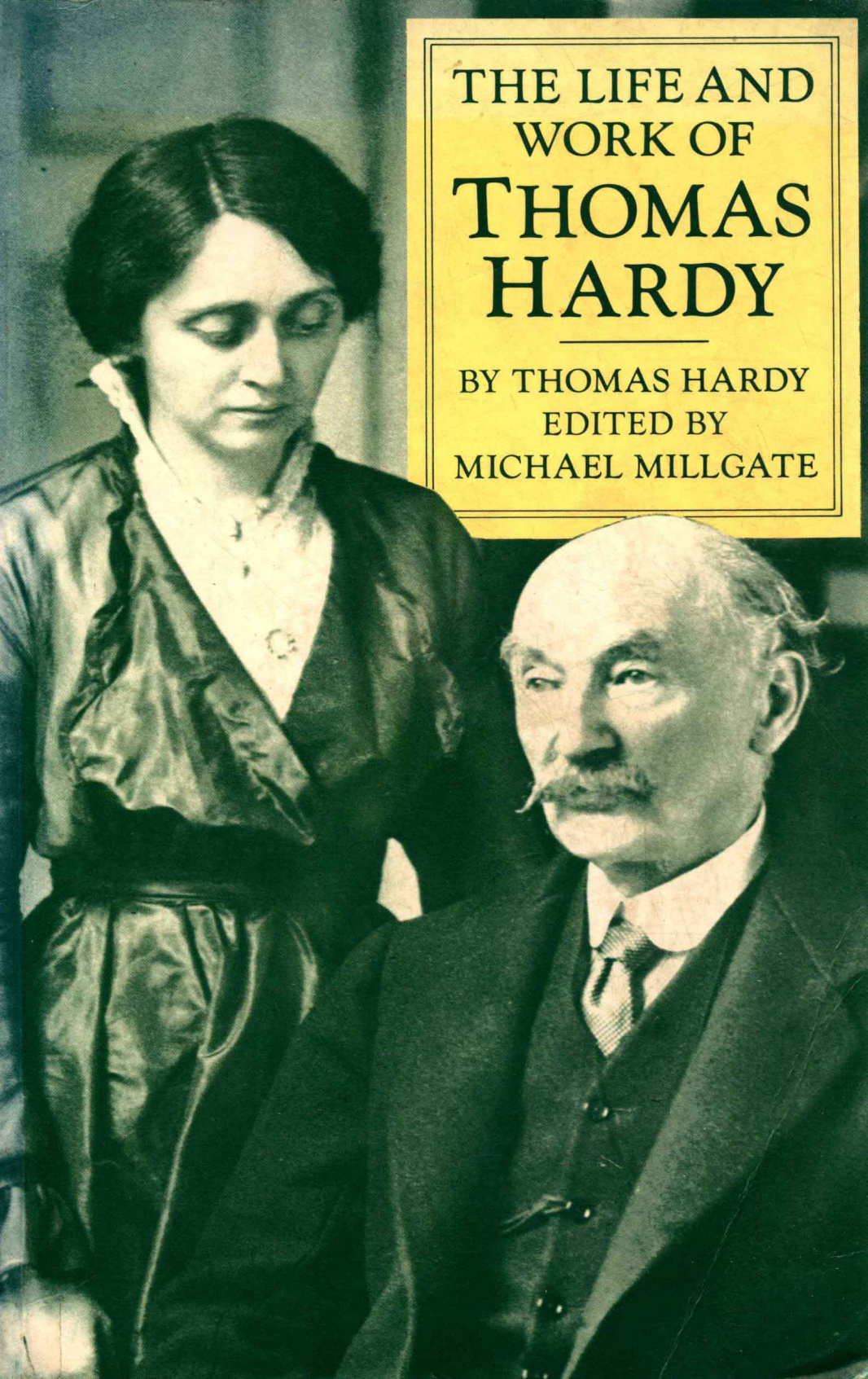
THE LIFE AND WORK OF THOMAS HARDY

BY THOMAS HARDY
EDITED BY
MICHAEL MILLGATE



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An edition on new principles of the materials previously drawn upon for *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy 1840–1891* and *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy 1892–1928* published over the name of Florence Emily Hardy

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Toronto M.M.

Introduction

On 30 November 1919 Florence Emily Hardy, Thomas Hardy's second wife, wrote to Sir Frederick Macmillan about a "manuscript" in three copies, one of which Sir Frederick had offered to keep in his safe. She explained that she was anxious to complete final revision of the work, since her health was poor and she feared that, should anything happen to her, the copies of the manuscript at Max Gate "might possibly be destroyed" and the labour of "nearly four years" irrecoverably lost.[1] It seems safe to assume that the manuscript in question was in fact the typescript of the work which the Macmillan firm subsequently published over Mrs Hardy's name as *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy 1840–1891* (London, 1928) and *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy 1892–1928* (London, 1930) and which has come to be generally referred to as the "Life". Presumably, too, this is the typescript of which three copies are still extant, in complete or fragmentary form, in the Dorset County Museum, Dorchester: any deposit in Sir Frederick's safe can only have been temporary. Describing this material in his *Thomas Hardy: A Bibliographical Study*, first published in 1954, Richard L. Purdy made it abundantly clear—as, indeed, he had already done in a paper delivered in 1940–that although the two volumes were published as the work of Florence Hardy they had been very largely written by Hardy himself.[2]

In the years since the revelation of the true circumstances surrounding the composition of the "Life" there has been an understandable interest in the question of just how extensive Florence Hardy's participation actually was. And that question has assumed a new importance with the growing tendency among Hardy critics and biographers to speak of the work as an autobiography—a straightforward, unmediated presentation of the image of himself and his work that Hardy wished to project into the future, on beyond the moment of his death. Obviously such an image is presented, but neither straightforwardly nor without mediation. If the "Life" is to be read as autobiography it begins to

matter a great deal whether particular passages were written by Hardy or not; even anecdotes often told by him do not have full autobiographical status if they were not included by Hardy himself, or upon his express instructions. It is for these reasons that the present edition sets out to reconstruct, as nearly as is now possible, the text of what was then—and is now again—called *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy* as it stood at the time of Hardy's death, after receiving its last reading and revision at his hands.

The roots of the "Life" can perhaps be traced back to the winter of 1912–13 and the mood of intense introspection into which Hardy was thrown by the death of his first wife, Emma Lavinia Hardy, and the discovery of the memoirs and diaries, often hostile to himself, which she had composed in secret during her last years. By August 1914 Hardy had asked his friend Sydney Cockerell to act as his literary executor and promised to send him "some dates, &c." which could be used to refute erroneous stories that might circulate after his death.[3] There seems little doubt, however, that it was in late 1915—the date implied in Florence Hardy's letter to Sir Frederick Macmillan—that the idea of writing about his own childhood first began to take practical shape. Hardy, at the age of seventy-five, was oppressed that winter by the sense of personal mortality aroused by the death of his sister Mary in November 1915, just three years after that of his first wife, by his brother's serious illness, and by distressing illnesses of his own which impaired his activity and kept him indoors for several weeks. He had recently been alarmed at the possibility that his friend Edward Clodd would write indiscreetly about him in a forthcoming volume of reminiscences, and he was still exercised over the publication in 1911 of F. A. Hedgcock's *Thomas Hardy: penseur et artiste*, a work whose biographical chapters had seemed to him both offensive and impertinent.[4] But the deciding factors seem clearly to have been pressure from Cockerell—who pleaded with Hardy "to write down something about yourself—& especially about that youthful figure whose photograph I have got, & of whom you told me that you could think with almost complete detachment"—and the availability of an enthusiastic and competent collaborator in the person of his second wife, who was thirty-nine years younger than her husband, an efficient typist, and an author and journalist in her own right. With Florence's help, Cockerell told Hardy in that same letter

of 7 December 1915, it should be possible for him to leave, like Jean-Paul Richter, a rich account of his childhood experiences, "even if, as you have intended, only landmarks and special episodes of the later years are recorded".[5] Cockerell and Florence, indeed, seem to have been at one—perhaps in league—in this matter, and the Prefatory Note to *Early Life** may well have been correct in insisting that it was at Mrs Hardy's initiative and "strong request" that the entire work was first undertaken. If she saw it chiefly as a means of serving her husband and protecting his posthumous reputation, she also cherished the prospect of directing her own literary energies into an undertaking of such obvious importance and scope.

Among the books in Hardy's library was the *Memoir of Thomas Hardy*, an autobiographical account of the public life of a namesake of Hardy's who had figured largely in certain religious controversies at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The work is written in the third person, and in a Preface that earlier Thomas Hardy explains: "I have chosen to write in the third, rather than in the first person, merely, to obviate the necessity of calling the great *I* so repeatedly to my assistance."[6] The third-person autobiographical work is not, of course, an especially unusual phenomenon, but it is pleasant to think that this particular example, which came as a gift from Sydney Cockerell in 1913, might have had a special significance for Hardy. Given the circumstances in which the chronicle of his own life was written—above all the presence of a collaborator who had already written and published books of her own—it would have been an easy step from the idea of a third-person autobiography to that of an authorized biography written by the subject himself but intended for publication after his death over the collaborator's name.

The progress and gradual expansion of the project can be approximately traced through the extensive correspondence with Cockerell which Florence Hardy maintained throughout her husband's last years. "I have been taking notes," she wrote on 23 July 1917, "but find them very difficult to do without constantly appealing to T. H. for verification, and he is now almost at the end of his present job—revising his note-books (they are practically diaries)—and we are going to work together. At least that is what we propose doing. Man proposes—."[7] In the late summer of that

* See p. 3; subsequent numbers within parentheses refer to the pages of the present edition.

year there was an interval largely occupied by Hardy's correction of the proofs of *Moments of Vision*: "After this job is finished [Florence told Cockerell on 9 September 1917] he wants to go on giving me facts about his life. I have got as far as the time he started work in London, but a lot can be filled in. He seems quite enthusiastic now about the idea, and of course I love doing it." What had been accomplished by this date seems to be represented by the eighteen-page typescript (now in the Dorset County Museum) which is headed "NOTES OF THOMAS HARDY'S LIFE./ by Florence Hardy./ (taken down in conversation, etc.)" and roughly corresponds to pages 7–49 of the present edition, breaking off in the middle of some anecdotes about Hardy's experiences as an architectural assistant in London in the early 1860s. The phrase "taken down in conversation, etc." tends to suggest, as do some of Florence's comments to Cockerell, that these pages were typed up by her from notes she had jotted down by hand while Hardy talked, and such a procedure would certainly help to explain some of the typescript's curious errors—notably "Thomas Hardy, the third child" for "Thomas Hardy the Third".

By early 1918, however, it is clear that Hardy and his wife had adopted the methods which seem to have prevailed throughout the writing of the "Life" proper: "I am in the midst of reading Colvins 'Keats' to *Him*," Florence told Cockerell on 2 February, "& working hard at notes, which he corrects & adds to daily, as I go along". Hardy, in the privacy of his study, was now doing the writing himself, in longhand, accumulating day by day a manuscript that he was subsequently to destroy. As he wrote he passed the holograph pages on to Florence to be typed up in three copies—the ribbon or "top" copy, eventually destined for the printer; the first carbon, intended to serve as a file copy or "copy of record" for the Hardys themselves; and the second carbon, designated as the "rough" or working copy. Once the typing was done, the basic procedure was for Hardy to make his corrections, revisions, and additions on the rough copy and then pass it to his wife for her to transfer the changes into the file copy; when Hardy had considered the changes further and given them his final approval, it would again be Mrs Hardy who transferred them into the top copy. Sometimes, it appears, changes would be inscribed into the file copy in pencil, to be inked in or erased once Hardy's final decision had been made. Admirably systematic though the procedure was, and specifically designed to prevent any betraying trace of Hardy's holograph from appearing

on the printer's copy, Hardy himself seems to have grown impatient with its restrictions, making numerous changes and additions to the file copy in an elaborately calligraphic (hence disguised) hand which he had learned in his architectural days and even allowing that same hand to appear on the top copy from time to time. Very occasionally an item seems to have been transferred directly from the rough copy to the top copy without being entered into the file copy at all and Hardy may even have made one or two insertions into the top copy only. Uncertainty in these matters is compounded by the intrusion of other hands into the typescripts and especially by Florence's customary use of calligraphic formations closely based on Hardy's own.

Work on "the notes", as Florence continued to call them in her letters to Cockerell, persisted throughout the spring and early summer of 1918. By 11 June the year 1895 had been reached; by 22 June Hardy was "busy revising the notes. It seems a great labour, more difficult than actually writing them. I almost wish he would not do it, but the thing is so nearly completed that it would be a pity to stop now." Five days later Florence reported that there had been a bonfire in the garden of Max Gate: "first draft of the notes—1840 to 1892. T. H. insisted." Much of 1918 and 1919, in fact, seems to have been taken up with the sorting out and, more often than not, the destruction of old letters, reviews, proofs, and newspaper cuttings: as Hardy told his friend Sir George Douglas in May 1919, he had been "mainly destroying papers of the last 30 or 40 years, & they raise ghosts".[8] Such housecleaning may in certain respects have constituted a necessary preparation for the continuation of the "Life" up to the date at which Hardy was now writing. A comment within the text itself (346) speaks of the increasing meagreness of Hardy's "memoranda" from the early years of the twentieth century onwards, and in searching through the documents of the past Hardy seized upon those most likely to provide him with at least a minimal narrative framework for those more recent years when his abandonment of fiction had involved a corresponding falling-off from his old habits of notetaking.

In seizing upon such sources, or indeed upon usable passages from his own notebooks and diaries, Hardy did not hesitate to "improve" upon them whenever it seemed necessary or desirable to do so. His references to public events and his datings of private events are for the most part accurate enough, the occasional errors seeming to be the results of carelessness rather than of any deliberate (and

pointless) attempt to deceive: thus, two letters received in November 1885 are wrongly assigned to November 1884 (175); a letter said to have been written to Gosse at "about the same time" as a letter arrived from Leslie Stephen was in fact sent a year earlier (231); the death of "the Tranter" (94–5), roughly assigned to the closing months of 1872 or the early months of 1873, actually occurred in August 1870. And one of the rewards of compiling the biographical index for the present volume has been the identification of several—though by no means all—of the local people, often referred to only by their initials or their occupations, who figure in anecdotes originating with Hardy himself or with the gossip and tale-telling of his parents. Much that Hardy included in the "Life", however, simply cannot be verified. Indubitably his are the many extracts from notebooks and diaries ascribed to specific dates, but since the originals of those notebooks and diaries were destroyed[9] after they had been cannibalised in this way it has become impossible to check the accuracy either of the dates or of the transcriptions themselves—impossible to be confident that the proffered text of a note dated, say, 1885, corresponds at all precisely to what Hardy actually wrote in 1885.

It is self-evident that some of the notes must have been reworked, among them the "Life's" one (indirect) allusion to Tryphena Sparks:

> In the train on the way to London. Wrote the first four or six lines of "Not a line of her writing have I". It was a curious instance of sympathetic telepathy. The woman whom I was thinking of—a cousin—was dying at the time, and I quite in ignorance of it. She died six days later. The remainder of the piece was not written till after her death. (234)

Although this entire passage is assigned to a single date, it is obvious that the last four or even five sentences cannot have been written on the same day as the first. Even some of the more public documents in the "Life" show signs of alteration: the text of Hardy's March 1902 letter to H. Rider Haggard (335–7) shows minor differences from both the version published in Haggard's *Rural England* (London, 1902) and Hardy's draft in the Dorset County Museum. It is true that some of the many discrepancies between the texts of Hardy's letters and the versions of those same letters that appear in the "Life" may be the consequence of his working from the drafts he had retained and hence failing to incorporate changes that appeared in

the letters as actually sent, but he clearly had no compunction about revising notes or letters that no longer struck him as happily phrased or refurbishing diary entries in the light of subsequent events. Florence Hardy acknowledged as much (489n) once she had had pointed out to her the discrepancies between Hardy's letter of 2 February 1915 to Caleb Saleeby as included, on the basis of a transcript supplied by Saleeby himself, in the second Appendix to *Later Years* and the portion of that same letter, as revised by Hardy from the draft he had found in his files, printed earlier in the same volume (399–400)—although one or two of the discrepancies in fact derived from errors made in working from Saleeby's handwriting.

Richard H. Taylor has noted that such changes were sometimes made after the passages in question had been inserted into the "Life" typescripts,[10] and Florence's remark to Cockerell of 22 June 1918 already noted (xiv) does suggest a fairly systematic process of revision; often, however, the alteration seems to have occurred—in Hardy's head, as it were—at the actual moment of transferring the item from its original draft or notebook form to its new biographical context. One of the very few surviving leaves from Hardy's working notebooks happens to contain—heavily overscored, in his usual manner, to indicate that it had been used in some way—the original version of one of the earliest notes that he chose for transcription and, hence, preservation. Though the thought of the "Life" version does not differ, considerable verbal revision has taken place—"minute & microscopic vision required to trace out"[11] becoming "microscopic vision demanded for tracing" (56). It was, perhaps, on a similar basis of fidelity to essentials rather than to details that Hardy allowed himself to minimize in the "Life" the struggles and deprivations of his youth and early manhood and to pass over other important episodes—personal and professional, early and late—without a single word.

By the spring of 1919 work on the "Life" was again in full swing. Florence told Cockerell on 18 April and again on 27 April that she was working on "the notes" several hours a day and it was not until 14 September that she could report that she had been correcting them for what she hoped was the last time. By 30 November, the date of her letter to Sir Frederick Macmillan, the narrative had evidently been completed up to May 1918—that is, to the end of chapter 34 of the present edition. The file-copy typescript in the Dorset County

Museum originally ended at this point and it was here that Hardy inserted a slip in his own hand: "The MS. is in approximately printable condition to here (p. 545)". On 24 June 1920 Cockerell, visiting Max Gate, noted that Florence had showed him "the volume of biographical notes which she has compiled with T.H's assistance. It has been done and redone, and is now finished, a very good thing".[12] Since Cockerell speaks of "volume", in the singular, it was perhaps after this date that the typescripts were divided following the conclusion of chapter 19 and bound up (by Hardy and Florence themselves) into separate volumes that were eventually to correspond to *Early Life* and the first fifteen chapters of *Later Years*.

Although Hardy seems never to have composed a fully fleshed-out narrative for the years subsequent to 1918, he continued to supply his wife with the raw materials from which a continuation of the narrative, up to the time of his death, could eventually be written. A forty-one page typescript, "T.H./Memoranda & Notes towards completing/the remainder of Vol. II (to end of book)", provided an essentially documentary framework—a loose sequence of letters sent and received, succinct summaries of events, and, as the single most extended item, the speech which Hardy delivered at the opening of the "Mellstock Club"—for the period from May 1918 to the end of 1920; it was later repaginated to follow on from the end of the original "Life" typescript and was used almost verbatim in the preparation of *Later Years*. A note in Hardy's hand on the last page of the top copy of the "Memoranda & Notes" typescript—"Refer to Note-Book of Memoranda beginning 1921, for continuation"—points clearly to the importance and function of the second of the two "Memoranda" notebooks which have recently been edited by Richard H. Taylor in *The Personal Notebooks of Thomas Hardy*. Its entries, the first dated 1 January 1921, constitute a fragmentary diary for the years up to and including 1927, intermixed with miscellaneous notes and newspaper cuttings.

It is clear, however, that the working notes and documents for the final stages of the "Life"—an assemblage which both Hardy and Florence came to refer to as the "Materials"—also included notes on separate sheets, drafts of letters that Hardy had picked out as being of particular interest or importance, and even segments of text fully prepared for inclusion. In the Dorset County Museum there survive a series of notes written by Hardy on odd scraps of paper grouped together under the general heading "*Insert in Materials*"; similarly marked for possible inclusion are one or two letter drafts and what is

apparently a very late note, headed "(*Materials for Life of T.*)", in which Hardy suggests the possibility of adding a final chapter to the "Life" as a catch-all for anecdotes which seemed worth preserving but had not been fitted into the basic chronological scheme. In the Frederick B. Adams collection are a note on Hardy's attitude to life as compared with Browning's which is marked "For insertion in Life of T. H. if necessary" and pencilled drafts of two *Later Years* segments which also appear (as carbon typescript cut into strips) in "Memoranda II". Clearly Hardy continued to be active in supplying additional materials for the "Life" well beyond the original cut-off date of 1918.

He also went back again and again to those sections of the work that his wife had allowed herself to think of as finished and done with. There was talk of publishing the first part of the "Life" as early as July 1925—partly in response to the appearance in the United States of another unauthorized biography[13]—and in the following spring a suggestion that it should at least be set up in type (presumably to await Hardy's death) was opposed by Hardy himself on the grounds that "knowledge of [t]he contents would leak out, through the printers". In that same letter of 18 April 1926 to Maurice Macmillan Florence Hardy added that her husband was "going over the MS. & correcting it very carefully. This may be wise, or the reverse. However he is greatly interested." Since the "Life" had now been a major preoccupation of Hardy's for something like ten years, the hint of weariness in Florence's words is perhaps understandable. Later, on 14 July 1926, she wrote to Daniel Macmillan, Maurice's son, to explain that although she had hoped to be able to send the typescript, "my husband has found so many fresh notes that he wishes put in, & then most of them have to be taken out again, so there seems no prospect of the work being completed". It was Hardy's death, on 11 January 1928, which brought finally to an end the long process of revision and reconsideration: Florence spoke of her husband as "going through his biography with me a few days before he went to bed with this last illness".[14]

Florence's phrase, "his biography", incorporated a nice, though no doubt unintentional, ambiguity. The book she was shortly to publish was at once a biography of Hardy and a biography by Hardy, a life of himself. Her avoidance of the term "autobiography" was, of course, necessary if the fiction of her own authorship of the work was to be kept up, but it was at the same time an avoidance in which she had long been instructed. As early as 1918 she told

Cockerell that they must never use the word "autobiography" or Hardy, who had so often declared that he would never write such a work, would destroy all the "notes" that he had already completed.[15] The "Life" itself contains a reference to Hardy's "absolute refusal at all times to write his reminiscences" (346; see also 377) and the phrase "autobiographical recollections" that once stood in the typescript of the Prefatory Note (signed "F. E. H." but as much Hardy's own work, in fact, as any other part of the text) was subsequently revised to read "recollections" only (3). This was something more than mere disingenuousness on Hardy's part. He had voiced to Cockerell his belief that he could write objectively and dispassionately about his own younger self, and that conviction, taken together with the largely documentary character of the work he in fact produced, constitutes in itself a challenge to any assumption that the "Life" can or should be read, directly and without qualification, as an autobiography. And the two-volume text that made its appearance as *Early Life* and *Later Years* possesses a still more equivocal claim to be so categorized, not so much because of the practical assistance Hardy received from his wife throughout the process of composition as because of the many changes that she made, on her own initiative and on the advice of others, after her husband's death.

It is of course true that all such changes had been formally authorized by Hardy in advance. In an undated "Private Memorandum./Information for Mrs Hardy in the preparation of a biography" he had specifically declared that the facts to which his wife had had access "are not enjoined to be included every one in the volume, if any should seem to be indiscreet, belittling, monotonous, trivial, provocative, or in other ways unadvisable; neither are they enjoined to be exclusive of other details that may be deemed necessary".[16] Florence was thus empowered to make deletions from and additions to the text that her husband had left, and while it is not always possible to distinguish the changes she made on her own responsibility from those she made while her husband was still alive and in conformity with his directly expressed wishes, it is certainly clear that she exercised her mandate with some freedom, and in ways that combined unyielding devotion to Hardy's memory with frequent disregard of his authorial intentions.

During the weeks and months following Hardy's death his widow saw the publication of the "Life" as the most urgent of her many responsibilities. Before the end of January the entire typescript

(presumably the ribbon copy) was sent up to Daniel Macmillan, who acknowledged its receipt on 31 January, read through it himself, and then passed it on a week later to Charles Whibley, part-scholar, part-journalist, who was one of the firm's most trusted readers of manuscripts.[17] Macmillan, returning the typescript to Max Gate on 21 February, seems to have suggested that Whibley might assist in making the book ready for publication, but Florence replied with some firmness that while she would be glad to receive advice she did not need a collaborator, as she could see for herself "a great deal that must be altered". The biography, she added, "is just as it left my husband's hands after a lengthy revision and correction. I should not like it to be pulled to pieces and rewritten, which is what he warned me would happen if I had a too-eminent literary man to help me."[18] In March it was decided to publish the book in two parts; shortly thereafter the typescript was returned to Florence with pencil markings by Whibley to indicate where deletions might be made.[19] As Macmillan reported to the firm's New York office on 3 April 1928, Whibley's main objections had been to the excessive use of Hardy's diaries and especially to the long catalogues of London social engagements.[20]

In her uncertainty and distress Florence had meanwhile been seeking advice from those men whose company and friendship Hardy himself had particularly valued during his last years. Siegfried Sassoon had had to be told of the existence of the "Life" some time previously, a publisher having suggested that he undertake a biography of Hardy himself; he and Florence quarrelled, however, almost immediately after Hardy's death and he seems not to have been involved in any of the book's final stages. T. E. Lawrence, too, had known something of the composition of the "Life" and was apparently approached by Florence early in 1926 with the request that he undertake to prepare the entire work for publication; he had declined the task then, however, and was now in India and simply unavailable for consultation. E. M. Forster, on the other hand, does appear to have read the "Life" through and to have given Florence a certain amount of help and advice: in a letter of 17 April 1928[21] she thanks him for taking trouble over the wheelbarrow episode in the *Graphic*'s serialization of *Tess of the d' Urbervilles*—perhaps an indication that Forster had looked up the relevant issue of the magazine and so assisted in the composition of the three paragraphs that were added to the final page of *Early Life*. Cockerell, too, had read through the "memoir", as he calls it in his