

THOMAS HARDY

*Far From
The Madding Crowd*



FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD

THOMAS HARDY



AIRMONT PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.
22 EAST 60TH STREET • NEW YORK 10022

An Airmont Classic

*specially selected for the Airmont Library
from the immortal literature of the world*

THE SPECIAL CONTENTS OF THIS EDITION

© Copyright, 1967, by
Airmont Publishing Company, Inc.

CONTENTS

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
1 DESCRIPTION OF FARMER OAK—AN INCIDENT	13
2 NIGHT—THE FLOCK—AN INTERIOR—ANOTHER INTERIOR	17
3 A GIRL ON HORSEBACK—CONVERSATION	23
4 GABRIEL'S RESOLVE—THE VISIT—THE MISTAKE	29
5 DEPARTURE OF BATHSHEBA—A PASTORAL TRAGEDY	36
6 THE FAIR—THE JOURNEY—THE FIRE	40
7 RECOGNITION—A TIMID GIRL	48
8 THE MALTHOUSE—THE CHAT—NEWS	51
9 THE HOMESTEAD—A VISITOR—HALF-CONFIDENCES	65
10 MISTRESS AND MEN	69
11 OUTSIDE THE BARRACKS—SNOW—A MEETING	74
12 FARMERS—A RULE—AN EXCEPTION	78
13 SORTES SCANCTORUM—THE VALENTINE	82
14 EFFECT OF THE LETTER—SUNRISE	85
15 A MORNING MEETING—THE LETTER AGAIN	88
16 ALL SAINTS' AND ALL SOULS'	96
17 IN THE MARKET-PLACE	98
18 BOLDWOOD IN MEDITATION—REGRET	100
19 THE SHEEP-WASHING—THE OFFER	104
20 PERPLEXITY—GRINDING THE SHEARS—A QUARREL	108
21 TROUBLES IN THE FOLD—A MESSAGE	113
22 THE GREAT BARN AND THE SHEEP-SHEARERS	118
23 EVENTIDE—A SECOND DECLARATION	126
24 THE SAME NIGHT—THE FIR PLANTATION	131
25 THE NEW ACQUAINTANCE DESCRIBED	136
26 SCENE ON THE VERGE OF THE HAY-MEAD	139
27 HIVING THE BEES	146
28 THE HOLLOW AMID THE FERNS	148
29 PARTICULARS OF A TWILIGHT WALK	152
30 HOT CHEEKS AND TEARFUL EYES	158
31 BLAME—FURY	162

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
32 NIGHT—HORSES TRAMPING	169
33 IN THE SUN—A HARBINGER	175
34 HOME AGAIN—A TRICKSTER	181
35 AT AN UPPER WINDOW	189
36 WEALTH IN JEOPARDY—THE REVEL	192
37 THE STORM—THE TWO TOGETHER	199
38 RAIN—ONE SOLITARY MEETS ANOTHER	204
39 COMING HOME—A CRY	207
40 ON CASTERBRIDGE HIGHWAY	210
41 SUSPICION—FANNY IS SENT FOR	215
42 JOSEPH AND HIS BURDEN—BUCK'S HEAD	224
43 FANNY'S REVENGE	232
44 UNDER A TREE—REACTION	240
45 TROY'S ROMANTICISM	246
46 THE GURGOYLE: ITS DOINGS	249
47 ADVENTURES BY THE SHORE	256
48 DOUBTS ARISE—DOUBTS LINGER	258
49 OAK'S ADVANCEMENT—A GREAT HOPE	262
50 THE SHEEP FAIR—TROY TOUCHES HIS WIFE'S HAND	266
51 BATHSHEBA TALKS WITH HER OUTFRIDER	277
52 CONVERGING COURSES	283
53 CONCURRITUR—HORAE MOMENTO	292
54 AFTER THE SHOCK	300
55 THE MARCH FOLLOWING—'BATHSHEBA BOLD- WOOD'	304
56—BEAUTY IN LONELINESS—AFTER ALL	307
57 A FOGGY NIGHT AND MORNING—CONCLUSION	315

FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD



THOMAS HARDY

Introduction

A literary critic once described his reaction to reading one of Thomas Hardy's early novels in the following way: "No reader can imagine an ending more shatteringly tragic than the one provided. When I came to that last page, I threw the volume across the room; I vowed I would never read another novel by Thomas Hardy; I went to bed and stayed there one week . . . within a year I had read everyone of his books." While biblioclasm or dormancy are extreme reactions to any novel, Thomas Hardy's great fictional works are of that breed which evoke strong emotional responses from the reader. Hardy was a master at involving the reader; his literary craftsmanship makes the sympathetic reader as much a puppet of the novel as Hardy's characters are puppets of an indifferent or malevolent fate. Fortunately, in a few novels the author treats his reader more kindly than his characters; this is true in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, which concludes on a positive note with the pastoral wedding of Gabriel Oak and Bathsheba Everdene. While the tone of the novel is more pastoral than elegiac, the source of the title is a line from Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Coun-

try Churchyard"—"Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife."

The wedding of the two main characters at the end of the story brings the plot full circle. The heroine is "rejuvenated" despite her "damp, disagreeable" wedding day and the hardships and destruction caused by her vanity and fickleness during the course of the story. This balancing of plot is a hallmark of all Hardy's better novels and a characteristic for which he was often criticized. Too much coincidence will easily snap the elasticity of reality. By the end of the novel, the reader has followed Gabriel's courtship of the young and spirited Bathsheba in the opening chapters, he has suffered with Gabriel's DeBergerac-like devotion during Bathsheba's capricious antics with the dashing and rakish Sergeant Troy and her manipulation of the honorable Mr. Boldwood, and finally he has cheered Gabriel's moment of vindication when he says to his future wife, "I've danced at your skittish heels, my beautiful Bathsheba, for many a long mile, and many a long day; and it is hard to begrudge me this one visit." Because of her past indiscretions, Bathsheba humbly desires only "the most private, secret, plainest wedding that is possible to have." Her acquiescence to true love restores her to that initial state of innocence and vitality in which she was first presented to the reader. Hardy describes the bride with a simile from John Keats's "The Eve of St. Agnes"—"As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again."

Far from the Madding Crowd (1874) was significant in the career of Thomas Hardy for several reasons. The novel gave the author literary and financial success, achievements unrealized by his four earlier efforts. Also the characterization of Bathsheba Everdene anticipated later heroines who appear in Hardy's greatest novels—e.g., Eustacia Vye in *The Return of the Native* (1878), Tess in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), Arabella Donn and Sue Bridehead in *Jude the Obscure*. Bathsheba is as

complete a feminine characterization as can be found in the Hardy canon. On the other hand, Gabriel Oak, as sturdy a characterization as his name, is not one of Hardy's great heroes. He is more representative of the enduring folk, the eternal shepherd—"his special power, morally, physically, and mentally, was static, owing little or nothing to momentum as a rule." The author's great heroes are his tragic creations: Michael Henchard, the mayor of Casterbridge, and obscure Jude Fawley, both of whom appear in later novels. A final reason for the significance of this novel in Hardy's career was his decision to use the name "Wessex" to describe the locale of the story. Wessex (which included Dorset) and Casterbridge (Dorchester) became as well known at the end of the last century as William Faulkner's fictional Jefferson and Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi, are known in this century.

Thomas Hardy was born near Dorchester, in Dorset, an area in southern England famous since the Roman occupation, on June 2, 1840. Because of delicate health, Hardy did not attend school until he was eight years old; the responsibility for the boy's early education was assumed by his mother, an avowed bibliophile. During the next several years, young Hardy attended various grammar schools in the district and managed to study French at King's College. His formal education was obviously lacking in many areas, but the future author soon began to rectify any shortcomings. At sixteen, Hardy was apprenticed to an architect, specializing in ecclesiastical building and restoration. However, the young apprentice spent most of his time translating Greek classics. Hardy also read widely the *Bible*, standard literary classics, and the recent publications in science. He continued an interest, developed much earlier, in the antiquities and folkways of Wessex. He also wrote poetry during this period, none of which was published until much later in his career. The importance of these influences—ecclesiastical

architecture, knowledge of the folkways of the area, and classical theme, style, and allusions—are readily visible in most of his novels. In 1863, Hardy won a prize in a national essay contest for his paper on the subject of bricks and architecture. In all, his career as an architect includes the years 1856-1874: the apprenticeship in Dorchester, another in London, and a few years of actual practice. It was while he was working on a church in Cornwall that he met Emma Lavinia Gifford, the woman he would marry in 1872. Mrs. Hardy was a great asset to her husband's early career; during an extended illness, he dictated nearly an entire novel to her.

As early as 1867, Hardy wrote his first novel, *The Poor Man and the Lady*. The book was rejected by George Meredith; his major criticism was the work's lack of plot. Embarrassed, Hardy destroyed the manuscript and there is no copy extant. However, he never lacked plot in another novel. In 1871, Hardy published his first novel, *Desperate Remedies*, anonymously and at his own expense. While he lost money on this first venture in print, he did break even on his second book, *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872), and even made a little profit on *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873). It was upon reading this novel that William Lyon Phelps made the remarks quoted at the beginning of this introduction. During the next twenty-two years, Hardy published nine more novels and over forty tales. It was his novels of the 1890's, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude, the Obscure* (1895)—considered by many readers as his finest works of fiction—which brought about Hardy's voluntary resignation as a novelist. Hardy's realism, pessimism, and negation of the accepted standards of sexual morality in the latter two novels raised a storm of protest from the pious and genteel Victorian public. Hardy's last novel was nicknamed *Jude, the Obscene*. Of course the same passages which vexed many readers of the 1890's will seem quite tame to the contemporary reader. Distressed

at the reception of *Tess* and *Jude*, Hardy resolved to devote the remainder of his artistic career to the writing of poetry.

Over the next two decades Hardy published several volumes of poetry and a major verse drama, *The Dynasts* (1904-1908). The play used the Napoleonic Wars as a background. As a result of his poetic efforts, Hardy spans the centuries in two different genre; he is considered a Nineteenth Century novelist and a Twentieth Century poet. Shortly after his first wife died in 1912, Hardy married his secretary, Florence Emily Dugdale. Florence Hardy became her husband's official biographer. In the waning years of his life, Hardy received many honorary degrees and ever widened his circle of literary acquaintances. He died on January 11, 1928, at the age of eighty-seven. At the author's request, his heart was buried in his first wife's grave in Dorchester; his ashes were placed in the poet's corner of Westminster Abbey. To complete his country's final honor to the novelist so vehemently criticized only thirty years before but now placed beside other great English poets, the pallbearers were his literary contemporaries: Sir James Barrie, Bernard Shaw, Rudyard Kipling, Alfred E. Housman, John Galsworthy, and Sir Edmund Gosse.

FRANCIS R. GEMME

Northampton, Massachusetts
September, 1966

Preface

In reprinting this story for a new edition I am reminded that it was in the chapters of "Far from the Madding Crowd," as they appeared month by month in a popular magazine, that I first ventured to adopt the word "Wessex" from the pages of early English history, and give it a fictitious significance as the existing name of the district once included in that extinct kingdom. The series of novels I projected being mainly of the kind called local, they seemed to require a territorial definition of some sort to lend unity to their scene. Finding that the area of a single county did not afford a canvas large enough for this purpose, and that there were objections to an invented name, I disinterred the old one. The region designated was known but vaguely, and I was often asked even by educated people where it lay. However, the press and the public were kind enough to welcome the fanciful plan, and willingly joined me in the anachronism of imagining a Wessex population living under Queen Victoria;—a modern Wessex of railways, the penny post, mowing and reaping machines, union workhouses, lucifer matches, labourers who could read and write, and National school children. But I believe I am correct in stating that, until the existence of this contemporaneous Wessex in place of the usual counties was announced in the present story, in 1874, it had never been heard of in fiction and current speech, if at all, and that the expression, "a Wessex peasant," or "a Wessex custom," would theretofore have been taken to refer to nothing later in date than the Norman Conquest.

I did not anticipate that this application of the word to modern story would extend outside the chapters of these particular chronicles. But it was soon taken up elsewhere, the first to adopt it being the now defunct *Examiner*, which, in the impression bearing date July 15, 1876, entitled one of its articles "The Wessex Labourer," the article turning out to be no dissertation on farming during the Heptarchy, but on the modern peasant of the south-west counties.

Since then the appellation which I had thought to reserve to the horizons and landscapes of a partly real, partly dream-country, has become more and more popular as a practical provincial definition; and the dream-country has, by degrees, solidified into a utilitarian region which people can go to, take a house in, and write to the papers from. But I ask all good and idealistic readers to forget this, and to refuse steadfastly to believe that there are any inhabitants of a Victorian Wessex out-

side these volumes in which their lives and conversations are detailed.

Moreover, the village called Weatherbury, wherein the scenes of the present story of the series are for the most part laid, would perhaps be hardly discernible by the explorer, without help, in any existing place nowadays; though at the time, comparatively recent, at which the tale was written, a sufficient reality to meet the descriptions, both of backgrounds and personages, might have been traced easily enough. The church remains, by great good fortune, unrestored and intact and a few of the old houses; but the ancient malt-house, which was formerly so characteristic of the parish, has been pulled down these twenty years; also most of the thatched and dormered cottages that were once lifeholds. The heroine's fine old Jacobean house would be found in the story to have taken a witch's ride of a mile or more from its actual position; though with that difference its features are described as they still show themselves to the sun and moonlight. The game of prisoner's-base, which not so long ago seemed to enjoy a perennial vitality in front of the worn-out stocks, may, so far as I can say, be entirely unknown to the rising generation of schoolboys there. The practice of divination by Bible and key, the regarding of valentines as things of serious import, the shearing-supper, the long smock-frocks, and the harvest-home, have, too, nearly disappeared in the wake of the old houses; and with them has gone, it is said, much of that love of fuddling to which the village at one time was notoriously prone. The change at the root of this has been the recent supplanting of the class of stationary cottagers, who carried on the local traditions and humours, by a population of more or less migratory labourers, which has led to a break of continuity in local history, more fatal than any other thing to the preservation of legend, folk-lore, close inter-social relations, and eccentric individualities. For these the indispensable conditions of existence are attachment to the soil of one particular spot by generation after generation.

1895-1902.

T. H.

Chapter 1 ‡ *Description of Farmer Oak—An Incident*

When Farmer Oak smiled, the corners of his mouth spread till they were within an unimportant distance of his ears, his eyes were reduced to chinks, and diverging wrinkles appeared round them, extending upon his countenance like the rays in a rudimentary sketch of the rising sun.

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

Since he lived six times as many working-days as Sundays, Oak's appearance in his old clothes was most peculiarly his own—the mental picture formed by his neighbours in imagining him being always dressed in that way. He wore a low-crowned felt hat, spread out at the base by tight jamming upon the head for security in high winds, and a coat like Dr. Johnson's; his lower extremities being encased in ordinary leather leggings and boots emphatically large, affording to each foot a roomy apartment so constructed that any wearer might stand in a river all day long and know nothing of damp—their maker being a conscientious man who endeavoured to compensate for any weakness in his cut by unstinted dimension and solidity.

Mr. Oak carried about him, by way of watch, what may be called a small silver clock; in other words, it was a watch as to shape and intention, and a small clock as to size. This instrument being several years older than Oak's grandfather, had the peculiarity of going either too fast or not at all. The smaller

of its hands, too, occasionally slipped round on the pivot, and thus, though the minutes were told with precision, nobody could be quite certain of the hour they belonged to. The stopping peculiarity of his watch Oak remedied by thumps and shakes, and he escaped any evil consequences from the other two defects by constant comparisons with and observations of the sun and stars, and by pressing his face close to the glass of his neighbours' windows, till he could discern the hour marked by the green-faced timekeepers within. It may be mentioned that Oak's fob being difficult of access, by reason of its somewhat high situation in the waistband of his trousers (which also lay at a remote height under his waistcoat), the watch was as a necessity pulled out by throwing the body to one side, compressing the mouth and face to a mere mass of ruddy flesh on account of the exertion, and drawing up the watch by its chain, like a bucket from a well.

But some thoughtful persons, who had seen him walking across one of his fields on a certain December morning—sunny and exceedingly mild—might have regarded Gabriel Oak in other aspects than these. In his face one might notice that many of the hues and curves of youth had tarried on to manhood: there even remained in his remoter crannies some relics of the boy. His height and breadth would have been sufficient to make his presence imposing, had they been exhibited with due consideration. But there is a way some men have, rural and urban alike, for which the mind is more responsible than flesh and sinew: it is a way of curtailing their dimensions by their manner of showing them. And from a quiet modesty that would have become a vestal, which seemed continually to impress upon him that he had no great claim on the world's room, Oak walked unassumingly, and with a faintly perceptible bend, yet distinct from a bowing of the shoulders. This may be said to be a defect in an individual if he depends for his valuation more upon his appearance than upon his capacity to wear well, which Oak did not.

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

The field he was in this morning sloped to a ridge called Norcombe Hill. Through a spur of this hill ran the highway between Emminster and Chalk-Newton. Casually glancing over the hedge, Oak saw coming down the incline before him an

ornamental spring waggon, painted yellow and gaily marked, drawn by two horses, a waggoner walking alongside bearing a whip perpendicularly. The waggon was laden with household goods and window plants, and on the apex of the whole sat a woman, young and attractive. Gabriel had not beheld the sight for more than half a minute, when the vehicle was brought to a standstill just beneath his eyes.

'The tailboard of the waggon is gone, Miss,' said the waggoner.

'Then I heard it fall,' said the girl, in a soft, though not particularly low voice. 'I heard a noise I could not account for when we were coming up the hill.'

'I'll run back.'

'Do,' she answered.

The sensible horses stood perfectly still, and the waggoner's steps sank fainter and fainter in the distance.

The girl on the summit of the load sat motionless, surrounded by tables and chairs with their legs upwards, backed by an oak settle, and ornamented in front by pots of geraniums, myrtles, and cactuses, together with a caged canary—all probably from the windows of the house just vacated. There was also a cat in a willow basket, from the partly-opened lid of which she gazed with half-closed eyes, and affectionately surveyed the small birds around.

The handsome girl waited for some time idly in her place, and the only sound heard in the stillness was the hopping of the canary up and down the perches of its prison. Then she looked attentively downwards. It was not at the bird, nor at the cat; it was at an oblong package tied in paper, and lying between them. She turned her head to learn if the waggoner were coming. He was not yet in sight; and her eyes crept back to the package, her thoughts seeming to run upon what was inside it. At length she drew the article into her lap, and untied the paper covering; a small swing looking-glass was disclosed, in which she proceeded to survey herself attentively. She parted her lips and smiled.

It was a fine morning, and the sun lighted up to a scarlet glow the crimson jacket she wore, and painted a soft lustre upon her bright face and dark hair. The myrtles, geraniums, and cactuses packed around her were fresh and green, and at such a leafless season they invested the whole concern of horses, waggon, furniture, and girl with a peculiar vernal charm. What possessed her to indulge in such a performance in the sight of the sparrows, blackbirds, and unperceived farmer who were alone its spectators,—whether the smile began as a factitious one, to test her capacity in that art,—nobody knows; it ended certainly in a real smile. She blushed at herself, and seeing her reflection blush, blushed the more.

The change from the customary spot and necessary occasion of such an act—from the dressing hour in a bedroom to a time of travelling out of doors—lent to the idle deed a novelty it did not intrinsically possess. The picture was a delicate one. Woman's prescriptive infirmity had stalked into the sunlight, which had clothed it in the freshness of an originality. A cynical inference was irresistible by Gabriel Oak as he regarded the scene, generous though he fain would have been. There was no necessity whatever for her looking in the glass. She did not adjust her hat, or pat her hair, or press a dimple into shape, or do one thing to signify that any such intention had been her motive in taking up the glass. She simply observed herself as a fair product of Nature in the feminine kind, her thoughts seeming to glide into far-off though likely dramas in which men would play a part—vistas of probable triumphs—the smiles being of a phase suggesting that hearts were imagined as lost and won. Still, this was but conjecture, and the whole series of actions was so idly put forth as to make it rash to assert that intention had any part in them at all.

The waggoner's steps were heard returning. She put the glass in the paper, and the whole again into its place.

When the waggon had passed on, Gabriel withdrew from his point of espial, and descending into the road, followed the vehicle to the turnpike-gate some way beyond the bottom of the hill, where the object of his contemplation now halted for the payment of toll. About twenty steps still remained between him and the gate, when he heard a dispute. It was a difference concerning twopence between the persons with the waggon and the man at the toll-bar.

'Mis'ess's niece is upon the top of the things, and she says that's enough that I've offered ye, you great miser, and she won't pay any more.' These were the waggoner's words.

'Very well; then mis'ess's niece can't pass,' said the turnpike-keeper, closing the gate.

Oak looked from one to the other of the disputants, and fell into a reverie. There was something in the tone of twopence remarkably insignificant. Threepence had a definite value as money—it was an appreciable infringement on a day's wages, and, as such, a higgling matter; but twopence—'Here,' he said, stepping forward and handing twopence to the gate-keeper; 'let the young woman pass.' He looked up at her then; she heard his words, and looked down.

Gabriel's features adhered throughout their form so exactly to the middle line between the beauty of St. John and the ugliness of Judas Iscariot, as represented in a window of the church he attended, that not a single lineament could be se-