

B A N T A M C L A S S I C

THOMAS HARDY

Far from
the Madding
Crowd



FAR FROM THE



THOMAS HARDY



BANTAM CLASSIC

FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD
A Bantam Book

PUBLISHING HISTORY

Far from the Madding Crowd was first published in 1874

First Bantam edition published October 1967

Bantam Classic edition published February 1982

Bantam Classic reissue / September 2008

Published by Bantam Dell
A Division of Random House, Inc.
New York, New York

All rights reserved
Cover design by Elizabeth Shapiro
Cover art by Robert Hunt

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 67-27222

If you purchased this book without a cover, you should be aware that this book is stolen property. It was reported as "unsold and destroyed" to the publisher, and neither the author nor the publisher has received any payment for this "stripped book."

Bantam Books and the rooster colophon are registered trademarks of
Random House, Inc.

ISBN 978-0-553-21331-7

Printed in the United States of America
Published simultaneously in Canada

www.bantamdell.com

OPM 30 29 28 27 26 25 24 23 22 21

THOMAS HARDY, whose writings immortalized the Wessex countryside and dramatized his sense of the inevitable tragedy of life, was born at Upper Bockhampton, near Stinsford in Dorset in 1840, the eldest child of a prosperous stonemason. As a youth he trained as an architect and in 1862 obtained a post in London. During this time he began seriously to write poetry, which remained his first literary love and his last. In 1867–68, his first novel was refused publication, but *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872), his first Wessex novel, did well enough to convince him to continue writing. In 1874, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, published serially and anonymously in the *Cornhill Magazine*, became a great success. Hardy married Emma Gifford in 1874, and in 1885 they settled at Max Gate in Dorchester, where he lived the rest of his life. There he wrote *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), and *Jude the Obscure* (1895).

With *Tess*, Hardy clashed with the expectations of his audience; a storm of abuse broke over the “infidelity” and “obscenity” of this great novel he had subtitled “A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented.” *Jude the Obscure* aroused even greater indignation and was denounced as pornography. Hardy’s disgust at the reaction to *Jude* led him to announce in 1896 that he would never write fiction again. He published *Wessex Poems* in 1898, *Poems of the Past and Present* in 1901, and from 1903 to 1908, *The Dynasts*, a huge drama in which Hardy’s conception of the Immanent Will, implicit in the tragic novels, is most clearly stated.

In 1912 Hardy’s wife, Emma, died. The marriage was childless and had long been a troubled one, but in the years after her death, Hardy memorialized her in several poems. At seventy-four he married his longtime secretary, Florence Dugdale, herself a writer of children’s books and articles, with whom he lived happily until his death in 1928. His heart was buried in the Wessex countryside; his ashes were placed next to Charles Dickens’s in the Poet’s Corner of Westminster Abbey.

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 outside 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 intact¹ 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

¹ This is no longer the case (1912).

most of the thatched and dormered cottages that were once life-holds. 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.

FAR FROM THE
MADDING CROWD

CONTENTS

Preface	xi
---------------	----

CHAPTER I

Description of Farmer Oak—An Incident.	1
---	---

CHAPTER II

Night—The Flock—An Interior—Another Interior	7
--	---

CHAPTER III

A Girl on Horseback—Conversation	16
--	----

CHAPTER IV

Gabriel's Resolve—The Visit—The Mistake	25
---	----

CHAPTER V

Departure of Bathsheba—A Pastoral Tragedy	36
---	----

CHAPTER VI

The Fair—The Journey—The Fire	42
-------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER VII

Recognition—A Timid Girl	53
--------------------------------	----

CHAPTER VIII

The Malthouse—The Chat—News	57
-----------------------------------	----

CHAPTER IX

The Homestead—A Visitor—Half-Confidences.	79
--	----

CHAPTER X

Mistress and Men	86
------------------------	----

CHAPTER XI

Outside the Barracks—Snow—A Meeting 93

CHAPTER XII

Farmers—A Rule—An Exception 99

CHAPTER XIII

Sortes Sanctorum—The Valentine 105

CHAPTER XIV

Effect of the Letter—Sunrise 110

CHAPTER XV

A Morning Meeting—The Letter Again 115

CHAPTER XVI

All Saints' and All Souls' 127

CHAPTER XVII

In the Market-Place 130

CHAPTER XVIII

Boldwood in Meditation—Regret 133

CHAPTER XIX

The Sheep-Washing—The Offer 139

CHAPTER XX

Perplexity—Grinding the Shears—A Quarrel 145

CHAPTER XXI

Troubles in the Fold—A Message 152

CHAPTER XXII

The Great Barn and the Sheep-Shearers 160

CHAPTER XXIII

Eventide—A Second Declaration 172

CHAPTER XXIV

The Same Night—The Fir Plantation 180

CHAPTER XXV

The New Acquaintance Described 187

CHAPTER XXVI

Scene on the Verge of the Hay-Mead 191

CHAPTER XXVII

Hiving the Bees 202

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Hollow Amid the Ferns 206

CHAPTER XXIX

Particulars of a Twilight Walk 212

CHAPTER XXX

Hot Cheeks and Tearful Eyes 220

CHAPTER XXXI

Blame—Fury 226

CHAPTER XXXII

Night—Horses Tramping 236

CHAPTER XXXIII

In the Sun—A Harbinger 245

CHAPTER XXXIV

Home Again—A Trickster 254

CHAPTER XXXV

At an Upper Window 266

CHAPTER XXXVI

Wealth in Jeopardy—The Revel 271

CHAPTER XXXVII

The Storm—The Two Together 280

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Rain—One Solitary Meets Another 288

CHAPTER XXXIX

Coming Home—A Cry 292

CHAPTER XL

On Casterbridge Highway 297

CHAPTER XLI

Suspicion—Fanny Is Sent For 305

CHAPTER XLII

Joseph and His Burden—Buck's Head 317

CHAPTER XLIII

Fanny's Revenge 330

CHAPTER XLIV

Under a Tree—Reaction 341

CHAPTER XLV

Troy's Romanticism 350

CHAPTER XLVI

The Gurgyle: Its Doings 355

CHAPTER XLVII

Adventures by the Shore 364

CHAPTER XLVIII

Doubts Arise—Doubts Linger 367

CHAPTER XLIX

Oak's Advancement—A Great Hope 373

CHAPTER L

The Sheep Fair—Troy Touches His Wife's Hand 380

CHAPTER LI

Bathsheba Talks with Her Outrider 396

CHAPTER LII

Converging Courses 405

CHAPTER LIII

Concurritur—Horae Memento 418

CHAPTER LIV

After the Shock 431

CHAPTER LV

The March Following—‘Bathsheba Boldwood’ 436

CHAPTER LVI

Beauty in Loneliness—After All 441

CHAPTER LVII

A Foggy Night and Morning—Conclusion 452

CHAPTER I

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