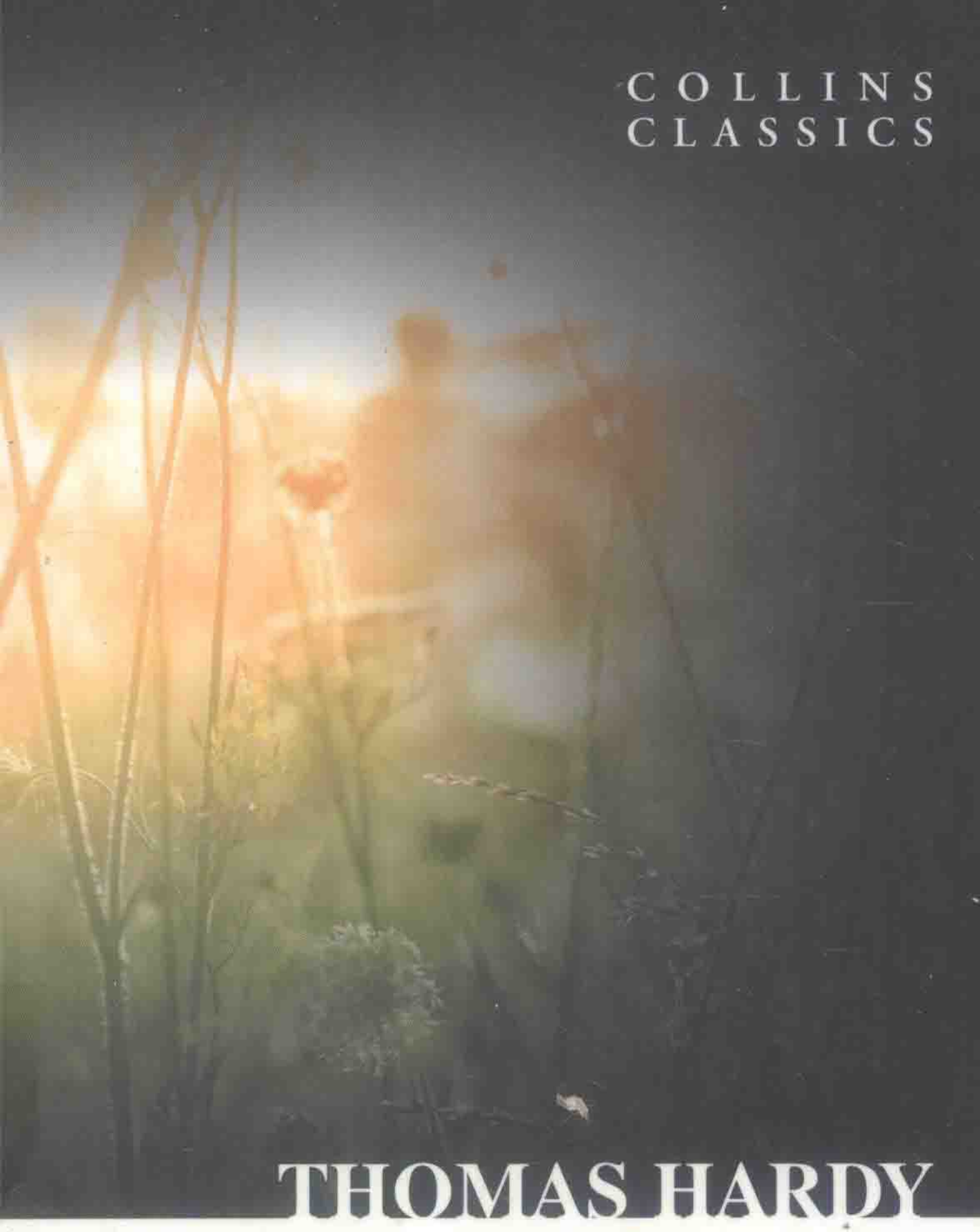
COLLINS
CLASSICS



THOMAS HARDY

Far from the Madding Crowd

FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD

Thomas Hardy

COLLINS
CLASSICS

Harper Press
An imprint of HarperCollins*Publishers*
77–85 Fulham Palace Road
Hammersmith
London W6 8JB

This edition published 2010

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN-13: 978-0-00-739516-3

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

FSC is a non-profit international organisation established
to promote the responsible management of the world's forests.
Products carrying the FSC label are independently certified to assure
consumers that they come from forests that are managed
to meet the social, economic and ecological needs of present
and future generations.

Find out more about HarperCollins and the environment at
www.harpercollins.co.uk/green

Life & Times section © Gerard Cheshire
Classic Literature: Words and Phrases adapted from
Collins English Dictionary
Typesetting in Kalix by Palimpsest Book Production Limited,
Falkirk, Stirlingshire

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

History of Collins

In 1819, millworker William Collins from Glasgow, Scotland, set up a company for printing and publishing pamphlets, sermons, hymn books and prayer books. That company was Collins and was to mark the birth of HarperCollins Publishers as we know it today. The long tradition of Collins dictionary publishing can be traced back to the first dictionary William published in 1824, *Greek and English Lexicon.* Indeed, from 1840 onwards, he began to produce illustrated dictionaries and even obtained a licence to print and publish the Bible.

Soon after, William published the first Collins novel, *Ready Reckoner*, however it was the time of the Long Depression, where harvests were poor, prices were high, potato crops had failed and violence was erupting in Europe. As a result, many factories across the country were forced to close down and William chose to retire in 1846, partly due to the hardships he was facing.

Aged 30, William's son, William II took over the business. A keen humanitarian with a warm heart and a generous spirit, William II was truly 'Victorian' in his outlook. He introduced new, up-to-date steam presses and published affordable editions of Shakespeare's works and *Pilgrim's Progress*, making them available to the masses for the first time. A new demand for educational books meant that success came with the publication of travel books, scientific books, encyclopaedias and dictionaries. This demand to be educated led to the later publication of atlases and Collins also held the monopoly on scripture writing at the time.

In the 1860s Collins began to expand and diversify and the idea of 'books for the millions' was developed. Affordable editions of classical literature were published and in 1903 Collins introduced 10 titles in their Collins Handy Illustrated Pocket Novels. These proved so popular that a few years later this had increased to an output of 50 volumes, selling nearly half a million in their year of publication. In the same year, The Everyman's Library

was also instituted, with the idea of publishing an affordable library of the most important classical works, biographies, religious and philosophical treatments, plays, poems, travel and adventure. This series eclipsed all competition at the time and the introduction of paperback books in the 1950s helped to open that market and marked a high point in the industry.

HarperCollins is and has always been a champion of the classics and the current Collins Classics series follows in this tradition – publishing classical literature that is affordable and available to all. Beautifully packaged, highly collectible and intended to be reread and enjoyed at every opportunity.

Life & Times

About the Author

Thomas Hardy was born in a Dorset village in 1840. Although he had a modest upbringing, Hardy found himself working successfully as an architect in London at the age of 22. He spent five years in London, but was eventually drawn back to Dorset because he did not enjoy the urban environment or the class prejudice he felt, mixing with the well-heeled of England's capital city. Having returned to the countryside, he began to consider an alternative career as a novelist. By 1867 he had already completed a manuscript, but had no luck placing it with a publisher. Despite this, his ambition knew no bounds and he persevered securing his first publication in 1871. His first five novels were well received and Hardy's confidence in pushing the literary envelope grew steadily.

His sixth novel *The Return of the Native* (1878) is widely regarded as the first modern novel, because it dared to examine themes that Victorian society brushed under the carpet – namely sexual desire and obsession. The central female character, Eustacia, is something of a femme fatale. She is distractingly beautiful, but her seductive manipulation of the male characters leads to her death and that of her lover Wildeve. The book caused a stir in polite society, but it raised the bar in terms of what a novel could achieve as a medium for comment on the human condition. Eustacia essentially saw herself as a special individual and her ambitions led her to behave in ways that the local community could not accept. She was vilified for her lack of ability to fit in and accept her lot in life.

Four novels later and Hardy had published his best known novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891). The eponymous Tess starts out as an innocent peasant girl, but embarks on a tragic life tale that ultimately ends in her execution for murder. For Hardy the story was an examination of how the individual can wind up in such desperate and forlorn situations even when their beginnings are much the same as others people's. Again, like Eustacia, Tess is physically attractive and her ambitions lead her into scenarios that make her life ever more complicated and unsettled. This includes a scene

in the first chapter when Tess loses her virginity, but is seemingly too naive to understand whether she consented or was raped.

This loveless sexual encounter is her first step on the long road to the gallows. It was also a revealing read for a Victorian audience who were not used to reading about what went on behind the veneer of social etiquette. The admission that people could be drawn by lust and desire to ignore the rules of society came as a quite a shock, but Hardy was also attempting to show that Tess's fate is what one might expect if those rules are ignored. In essence, Tess is a victim of circumstance, but she is still allowed to make her own decisions about which way to turn next. It is this interplay between the involuntary and voluntary that makes Tess's story so tragic, and it also explains why the book is regarded as a masterpiece of English prose.

Most of Hardy's work is set in a semi-fictional region called Wessex. The name comes from the Anglo-Saxon Kingdom of Wessex, which was eventually fragmented following the invasion of William the Conqueror in 1066. In his imaginary Wessex, Hardy gives many real places alternative names as if it were a kind of parallel universe. This was Hardy's devise, partly to make it abundantly clear that his work was not about real people and places, but also to provide a world into which he could escape as a writer.

Hardy's Literary Legacy

In many respects the literature of Thomas Hardy is quintessentially English in tone and content. His stories are set in the deepest rural and bucolic southwest, where time attempts to stand still, preserving an English idyll that was worlds apart from the industrialization of the 19th century. For this reason his novels are described as belonging to the genre of 'naturalism'.

Hardy was born and bred in Dorsetshire (now known simply as Dorset) and that is the epicentre of his constructed fictional world – one that is half imagined, half real, for he substitutes the actual names for places with alternatives conjured from his own mind. Hardy was primarily concerned with the innate nature of person-

alities in his literature. He ascribed each character with a personality type which largely predetermined their fate. While other authors, such as Charles Dickens, conveyed the idea that people can learn from their mistakes and change, Hardy showed the opposite. For Hardy, people never really learn the error of their ways and fate will deal them their hand in proportion to their level of selfishness, vanity, pride, foolishness, arrogance, unkindness or other failing. In some cases Hardy even resorts to having troublesome characters killed off or removed to prison in order to restore harmony. In this way he gives the more deserving the opportunity to alter their circumstances for the better.

One might think that Hardy was religious, given this moral and ethical filter, but he wasn't particularly interested in religion. He was more taken by the idea of allowing his characters to express superstitions and supernatural beliefs. In this regard he was really adopting the view of the anthropologist, who remains necessarily impartial on matters of belief, so that they can study people with neutrality. His work is also filled with subtle allusions to Classical references, which he used to underpin central characters.

Hardy used to search for events reported in newspapers and often used them in his plots. It wasn't so much that he lacked the imagination to think up ideas, but that he wanted to inject a sense of realism by introducing elements that simply would not have occurred to him. Real life can sometimes be stranger than fiction.

In *Far From the Madding Crowd*, published in serial form in 1874, Bathsheba is his beautiful female protagonist and it is through her character's experiences that Hardy exposes his feelings on romantic love and the inconsistency and destruction that can be caused by relationships. However, the central concern of *Far From the Madding Crowd* highlights Hardy's preoccupation with the modernity and industrialisation of society. Many of his texts are set in rural locations and Hardy details the dialects, landscape and people of the English countryside to try and preserve that history and endangered way of life. Central to Hardy's overall ambition was to show that living people are only ever custodians of the world for future generations. Dorset is filled with ancient sites of human activity and

prehistoric evidence of a past without humanity. Hardy wanted to make it clear that we each have a window of opportunity in life to make our mark. That is why he had little time for people whom he considered to be fatuous or self interested, because he was acutely aware that it is the impression that we make on others and in their memories that counts the most, both during life and after death.

Quite apart from anything else, Hardy had an eye for the tragedy of life. He was a humanist, who cared about the underdog and expressed this by dealing with those who were more privileged in his prose. His own life was not entirely filled with happiness, as he became estranged from his first wife and was then deeply affected by her death. Many of his female characters have a dangerous beauty to them, suggesting that Hardy's view of women was perhaps coloured by his own experience and that he felt men fall for the charm and allure of women, but end up beguiled and unhappy as the result of their infatuation.

FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD

General preface to the Wessex Edition of 1912

In accepting a proposal for a definite edition of these productions in prose and verse I have found an opportunity of classifying the novels under heads that show approximately the author's aim, if not his achievement, in each book of the series at the date of its compositon. Sometimes the aim was lower than at other times; sometimes, where the intention was primarily high, force of circumstances (among which the chief were the necessities of magazine publication) compelled a modification, great or slight, of the original plan. Of a few, however, of the longer novels, and of many of the shorter tales, it may be assumed that they stand to-day much as they would have stood if no accidents had obstructed the channel between the writer and the public. That many of them, if any, stand as they would stand if written *now* is not to be supposed.

In the classification of these fictitious chronicles – for which the name of 'The Wessex Novels' was adopted, and is still retained – the first group is called 'Novels of Character and Environment', and contains those which approach most nearly to uninfluenced works; also one or two which, whatever their quality in some few of their episodes, may claim a verisimilitude in general treatment and detail.

The second group is distinguished as 'Romances and Fantasies', a sufficiently descriptive definition. The third class – 'Novels of

Ingenuity' – show a not infrequent disregard of the probable in the chain of events, and depend for their interest mainly on the incidents themselves. They might also be characterized as 'Experiments', and were written for the nonce simply; though despite the artificiality of their fable some of their scenes are not without fidelity to life.

It will not be supposed that these differences are distinctly perceptible in every page of every volume. It was inevitable that blendings and alternations should occur in all. Moreover, as it was not thought desirable in every instance to change the arrangement of the shorter stories to which readers have grown accustomed, certain of these may be found under headings to which an acute judgement might deny appropriateness.

It has sometimes been conceived of novels that evolve their action on a circumscribed scene – as do many (though not all) of these – that they cannot be so inclusive in their exhibition of human nature as novels wherein the scenes cover large extents of country, in which events figure amid towns and cities, even wander over the four quarters of the globe. I am not concerned to argue this point further than to suggest that the conception is an untrue one in respect of the elementary passions. But I would state that the geographical limits of the stage here trodden were not absolutely forced upon the writer by circumstances; he forced them upon himself from judgement. I considered that our magnificent heritage from the Greeks in dramatic literature found sufficient room for a large proportion of its action in an extent of their country not much larger than the half-dozen counties here reunited under the old name of Wessex, that the domestic emotions have throbbed in Wessex nooks with as much intensity as in the palaces of Europe, and that, anyhow, there was quite enough human nature in Wessex for one man's literary purpose. So far was I possessed by this idea that I kept within the frontiers when it would have been easier to overlap them and give more cosmopolitan features to the narrative.

Thus, though the people in most of the novels (and in much of the shorter verse) are dwellers in a province bounded on the north

by the Thames, on the south by the English Channel, on the east by a line running from Hayling Island to Windsor Forest, and on the west by the Cornish coast, they were meant to be typically and essentially those of any and every place where

Thought's the slave of life, and life time's fool

– beings in whose hearts and minds that which is apparently local should be really universal.

But whatever the success of this intention, and the value of these novels as delineations of humanity, they have at least a humble supplementary quality of which I may be justified in reminding the reader, though it is one that was quite unintentional and unforeseen. At the dates represented in the various narrations things were like that in Wessex: the inhabitants lived in certain ways, engaged in certain occupations, kept alive certain customs, just as they are shown doing in these pages. And in particularizing such I have often been reminded of Boswell's remarks on the trouble to which he was put and the pilgrimages he was obliged to make to authenticate some detail, though the labour was one which would bring him no praise. Unlike his achievement, however, on which an error would as he says have brought discredit, if these country customs and vocations, obsolete and obsolescent, had been detailed wrongly, nobody would have discovered such errors to the end of Time. Yet I have instituted inquiries to correct tricks of memory, and striven against temptations to exaggerate, in order to preserve for my own satisfaction a fairly true record of a vanishing life.

It is advisable also to state here, in response to inquiries from readers interested in landscape, prehistoric antiquities, and especially old English architecture, that the description of these backgrounds has been done from the real – that is to say, has something real for its basis, however illusively treated. Many features of the first two kinds have been given under their existing names; for instance, the Vale of Blackmoor or Blakemore, Hambledon Hill, Bulbarrow, Nettlecombe Tout, Dogbury Hill,

High-Stoy, Bubb-Down Hill, The Devil's Kitchen, Cross-in-Hand, Long-Ash Lane, Benvill Lane, Giant's Hill, Crimmercrock Lane, and Stonehenge. The rivers Froom, or Frome, and Stour, are, of course, well known as such. And the further idea was that large towns and points tending to mark the outline of Wessex – such as Bath, Plymouth, The Start, Portland Bill, Southampton, etc. – should be named clearly. The scheme was not greatly elaborated, but, whatever its value, the names remain still.

In respect of places described under fictitious or ancient names in the novels – for reasons that seemed good at the time of writing them – and kept up in the poems – discerning people have affirmed in print that they clearly recognize the originals: such as Shaftesbury in 'Shaston', Sturminster Newton in 'Stourcastle', Dorchester in 'Casterbridge', Salisbury Plain in 'The Great Plain', Cranborne Chase in 'The Chase', Beaminster in 'Emminster', Bere Regis in 'Kingsbere', Woodbury Hill in 'Greenhill', Wool Bridge in 'Wellbridge', Harfoot or Harput Lane in 'Stagfoot Lane', Hazlebury in 'Nuttlebury', Bridport in 'Port Bredy', Maiden Newton in 'Chalk Newton', a farm near Nettlecombe Tout in 'Flintcombe Ash', Sherborne in 'Sherton Abbas', Milton Abbey in 'Middleton Abbey', Cerne Abbas in 'Abbot's Cernel', Evershot in 'Evershed', Taunton in 'Toneborough', Bournemouth in 'Sandbourne', Winchester in 'Wintoncester', Oxford in 'Christminster', Reading in 'Aldbrickham', Newbury in 'Kennetbridge', Wantage in 'Alfredston', Basingstoke in 'Stoke Barehills', and so on. Subject to the qualifications above given, that no detail is guaranteed – that the portraiture of fictitiously named towns and villages was only suggested by certain real places, and wantonly wanders from inventorial descriptions of them – I do not contradict these keen hunters for the real; I am satisfied with their statements as at least an indication of their interest in the scenes.

Thus much for the novels. Turning now to the verse – to myself the more individual part of my literary fruitage – I would say that, unlike some of the fiction, nothing interfered with the writer's freedom in respect of its form or content. Several of the poems –

indeed many – were produced before novel-writing had been thought of as a pursuit; but few saw the light till all the novels had been published. The limited stage to which the majority of the latter confine their exhibitions has not been adhered to here in the same proportion, the dramatic part especially have a very broad theatre of action. It may thus relieve the circumscribed areas treated in the prose, if such relief be needed. To be sure, one might argue that by surveying Europe from a celestial point of vision – as in *The Dynasts* – that continent becomes virtually a province – a Wessex, an Attica, even a mere garden – and hence is made to conform to the principle of the novels, however far it outmeasures their region. But that may be as it will.

The few volumes filled by the verse cover a producing period of some eighteen years first and last, while the seventeen or more volumes of novels represent correspondingly about four-and-twenty years. One is reminded by this disproportion in time and result how much more concise and quintessential expression becomes when given in rhythmic form than when shaped in the language of prose.

One word on what has been called the present writer's philosophy of life, as exhibited more particularly in this metrical section of his compositions. Positive views on the Whence and the Wherefore of things have never been advanced by this pen as a consistent philosophy. Nor is it likely, indeed, that imaginative writings extending over more than forty years would exhibit a coherent scientific theory of the universe even if it had been attempted – of that universe concerning which Spencer owns to the 'paralyzing thought' that possibly there exists no comprehension of it anywhere. But such objectless consistency never has been attempted, and the sentiments in the following pages have been stated truly to be mere impressions of the moment, and not convictions or arguments.

That these impressions have been condemned as 'pessimistic' – as if that were a very wicked adjective – shows a curious muddle-mindedness. It must be obvious that there is a higher characteristic of philosophy than pessimism, or than meliorism, or even than the optimism of these critics – which is truth. Existence is either ordered

in a certain way, or it is not so ordered, and conjectures which harmonize best with experience are removed above all comparison with other conjectures which do not so harmonize. So that to say one view is worse than other views without proving it erroneous implies the possibility of a false view being better or more expedient than a true view; and no pragmatic proppings can make that *idolum specus* stand on its feet, for it postulates a prescience denied to humanity.

And there is another consideration. Differing natures find their tongue in the presence of differing spectacles. Some natures become vocal at tragedy, some are made vocal by comedy, and it seems to me that to whichever of these aspects of life a writer's instinct for expression the more readily responds, to that he should allow it to respond. That before a contrasting side of things he remains undemonstrative need not be assumed to mean that he remains unperceiving.

It was my hope to add to these volumes of verse as many more as would make a fairly comprehensive cycle of the whole. I had wished that those in dramatic, ballad, and narrative form should include most of the cardinal situations which occur in social and public life, and those in lyric form a round of emotional experiences of some completeness. But

> The petty done, the undone vast!

The more written the more seems to remain to be written; and the night cometh. I realize that these hopes and plans, except possibly to the extent of a volume or two, must remain unfulfilled.

T.H.
October 1911

CONTENTS