THOMAS HARDY'S DORSET

J. THURSTON HOPKINS

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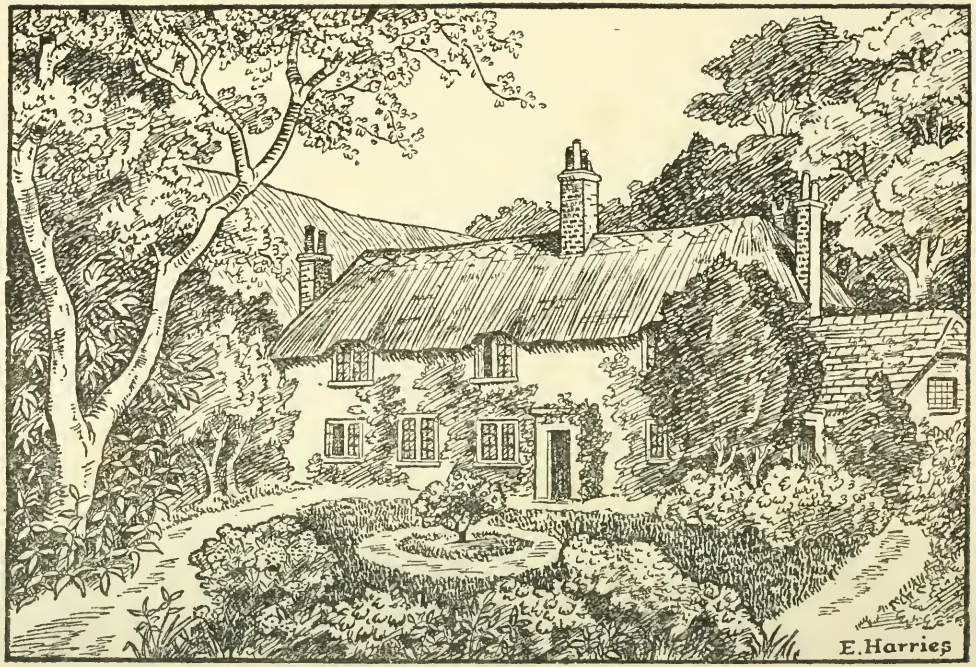
GEORGE BORROW: LORD OF THE OPEN ROAD

WAR AND THE WEIRD

THE AMBER GIRL

KIPLING'S SUSSEX

FRIENDLY SUSSEX. (*In the Press*)



Birthplace of Thomas Hardy, Upper Bockhampton

THOMAS HARDY'S DORSET

BY

R. THURSTON HOPKINS

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY E. HARRIES
AND FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

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THOMAS HARDY'S DORSET

CHAPTER I

DORSET FOLK AND DORSET WAYS

So to the land our hearts we give
  Till the sure magic strike,
And Memory, Use, and Love make live
  Us and our fields alike—
That deeper than our speech and thought
  Beyond our reason's sway,
Clay of the pit whence we were wrought
  Yearns to its fellow-clay.

RUDYARD KIPLING.

TO the traveller who takes an interest in the place he visits, Dorset will prove one of the most highly attractive counties in the kingdom. To the book-lover it is a land of grand adventure, for here is the centre of the Hardy Country, the home of the Wessex Novels. It is in Dorset that ancient superstitions and curious old customs yet linger, and strange beliefs from ages long ago still survive. It is good to find that the kindly hospitality, the shrewd wisdom and dry wit, for which the peasantry in Thomas Hardy's novels are famous, have not been weakened by foolish folk who seek to be "up to date." Old drinks and dishes that represent those of our forefathers,

and the mellow sound of the speech that was so dear to Raleigh and Drake, are things that are now giving way to the new order of life, alas! but they are dying hard, as behoves things which are immemorial and sacramental. The rustics are perhaps not quite so witty as they are in Hardy's *The Return of the Native* and other novels, but they possess the robust forms and simple manners of a fine old agricultural people, while they show their spirit by the proverb, "I will not want when I have, nor, by Gor, when I ha'n't, too!"

Heavy of gait, stolid of mien, and of indomitable courage, the true Wessex man is a staunch friend and a very mild enemy. He is a genial fellow and, like Danton, seems to find no use for hate. He knows that all things done in *hate* have to be done over again. Imperturbable to the last ditch, he is rarely shaken into any exclamation of surprise or wrath. When he is, "Dang-my-ole-wig!" "Dallee!" with a strong accent on the "ee," or "Aw! dallybuttons!" are the kind of mild swear-words one hears. But when he gets into the towns he forgets these strange phrases and his dialect becomes less broad.

Heavy and stolid the Dorset rustic may be, though there is no reason to suppose that he is slower than any other rustic, but one is inclined

to think that the "stupidity" of the countryman covers a deep, if only half-realised, philosophy. Nevertheless we must admit that Hodge often wins through in his slow way. There is a good deal of humour in the Dorset rustic, but perhaps most of his wit is unconscious. That reminds me of the story of a Dorset crier who kept the officials of the Town Hall waiting for two hours on a certain morning. They were about to open the proceedings without him when a boy rushed in and handed the Mayor a message. He read the message and seemed deeply affected. Then he announced:

"I have just received a message from our crier, saying, 'Wife's mother passed away last night. Will not be able to cry to-day.'"

That story may be a very ancient "chestnut," but here is a true instance of Hodge's unconscious humour. The wife of a blacksmith at an isolated forge in Dorset had died rather suddenly, and it happened that during one of my rambles I applied to the forge for food and lodging for the night. The old fellow opened the door to me, and I guessed that he was in trouble by the fresh crape band round his soft felt hat, which is weekday mourning of the rustic. However, the old fellow was quite pleased to have me for company, and I stayed at his forge for some days.

"Her was a clever woman; her kept my things straight," he said to me one night at supper, as he looked wistfully at his old jacket full of simple rents from hedgerow briars. "But it's no manner of use grumbling—I never was a *bull-sowerlugs* [a morose fellow]. And thank the Lord she was took quick. I went off for the doctor four miles away, and when I gets there he was gone off somewhere else; so I turned, and in tramping back along remembered I had a bottle of medicine which he did give me last year, so says I, 'That will do for the ol' woman'; so I gave it to her and she died."

The old blacksmith drank his beer and dealt with his ham and bread for ten minutes in silence. Then he looked into the amber depths of his ale and said: "*Say, mister—wasn't it a good job I didn't take that bottle of physic myself?*"

Dorset is only one of the several cider-making counties in Wessex. The good round cider is a warming and invigorating drink that is in every way equal to a good ale, and sometimes—especially if it has been doctored with a little spirit and kept in a spirit cask—is considerably stronger, and is by no means to be consumed regardless of quantity. And one must be cautious in mixing drinks when taking cider. But the cider which is consumed by the Dorset rustic is, to use a local

word, rather "ramy" or "ropy" to the palate of a person unaccustomed to it. That is to say that it is sour and often rather thick. Of course the rustic knows nothing, and would care nothing, for the so-called cider sold in London which resembles champagne in the way it sparkles. Such stuff is only manufactured for folk out of Wessex.

A Dorset rustic, on being reproved by a magistrate for being drunk and disorderly, explained that his sad plight was the result of taking his liquor the wrong way up; for, said he,

"Cyder upon beer is very good cheer,
Beer 'pon cyder is a dalled bad rider!"

The worthy magistrate, not to be vanquished by the poetic tippler, told him to remember—

"When the cyder's in the can
The sense is in the man!
When the cyder's in the man
The sense is in the can."

"I wish," said an old shepherd to me, with regret in his voice, "that you might taste such beer as my mother brewed when I was a boy. Bread, cheese and ingyens [onions] with a drop of beer was parfuse [ample] for a meal in those days, 'ess fay! But this beer they sell now is drefful wishee-washee stuff. I'll be dalled if I'll drink it; 'tez water bewitched and malt begridged [begrudged]." In Hodge's uncouth speech are found

many words and usages of the Anglo-Saxon tongue, though it is not now relished by fastidious palates. William Barnes, the Dorset poet, enumerates the chief peculiarities of the Dorset dialect in his books on speech lore. He loved the odd phrases of children, and it is easy to see why. For a child, not knowing the correct method of describing a thing and seeking to express its meaning, will often go back to the strong old Anglo-Saxon definitions. The child can often coin very apt phrases. As, for instance, the Dorset child who spoke of honey as "bee-jam." Barnes was delighted, too, with the boy "who scrope out the 'p' in 'psalm' 'cose it didn't spell nothen."

Many of the humours of Arcady have been moulded into enigmatical sayings and metaphors which may still be heard on the lips of the Dorset rustic:

Tea with a dash of rum is called "milk from the brown cow"; the dead are "put to bed with a shovel"; a noisy old man is a "blaze wig"; a fat and pompous fellow is a "blow-poke"; the thoughts of the flighty girl go a-"bell-wavering"; the gallows is the "black horse foaled by an acorn." The Dorset rustic has devised many names for the dullard: "billy-buttons," "billy-whiffler," "lablolly," "ninnyhammer," and "bluffle-head"

are some of them. The very sound of such names suggests folly.

"Leer" is a curious word still heard in Dorset and Devon. It is used to express the sense of craving produced by weakness and long fasting. Perhaps Shakespeare used *Lear* in a metaphorical sense. I remember once hearing a Sussex labourer speak of taking his "coager" (cold cheer?), a meal of cold victuals taken at noon, but I am told the mouthful of bread and cheese taken at starting in the morning by the Dorset rustic rejoices in the still more delightful name of "dew-bit."

"Crowder" (a fiddler) is a genuine British word, used up to a few years ago, but I was unable to trace anyone using it in Dorset this year. In Cornwall the proverb, "If I can't crowdy, they won't dance" (meaning, "They will pass me by when I have no money to feast and entertain my friends"), was commonly quoted fifty years ago.

Another tale regarding unconscious humour is told of by a Dorset rector who was holding a Confirmation class. He was one of the old-fashioned parsons and made it his solemn duty to call at the village inn and drink a pint of ale with his flock every evening. One of the candidates for Confirmation was the buxom daughter of the innkeeper, and when he came to ask her the usual fixed question, "What is your name?" the girl, holding

her head on one side, glanced at him roguishly, and said:

"Now dawntee tell me you don't know. As if you diddent come into our place every night and say, 'Now, Rubina, my dear, give me a half-pint of your best ale in a pint pewter!'"

The story of village sports and the way in which the rustic was wont to enjoy himself is always interesting. One of the most singular forms of contest once in common practice in the west of England was *whiplegs*. The procedure of this pastime consisted of the men standing a yard or so apart and lashing each other's legs with long cart whips till one cried "Holt!" The one who begged for quarter of course paid for the ale. The rude leather gaiters worn by tranters or carters fifty years ago would, of course, take much of the sting out of the whip cuts.

Thatch survives in nearly every village, and one of the favoured building materials is stone from the Dorset quarries. At Corfe the houses are built of stone from foundation to roof, and stone slabs of immense size are made to take the place of tiles and slates. We find "cob" cottages here and there, and this perhaps is the most ancient of all materials, being a mixture of clay or mud and chopped straw. It is piled into walls of immense thickness and strength, and then plastered and

white-washed. The natives in Egypt and Palestine construct their village homes with the same materials, and the result is not only wonderfully picturesque, but satisfactory in the more important respect of utility. But now the Dorset people seldom build their walls of "cob" as of yore, and yet such work is very enduring. As an old Devonshire proverb has it: "Good cob, a good hat, and a good heart last for ever."

. . . . . .

The beautiful tract of coast-line between Seaton on the west and West Bay on the east is a region of great charm; for here will be found all the most pleasing features of the sister counties, Dorset and Devon. The gracious greenery and combes of Devon trespass over the border at Lyme Regis and so bestow on this nook the wooded charm of the true West Country, which is lacking on the chalky grass hills of other parts of Dorset. If the coast is followed from Lyme Regis we soon thread our way into the wild tangles of Devon. Things have changed somewhat in these days, but still the true son of Devon carries his country with him wherever he goes; he does not forget that every little boy and girl born in the West is breathed over by the "piskies." But modern education has just about killed the "piskies," and there are no more ghosts in the old churchyards.

There is a reason for the non-appearance of spirits at the present day. They have ceased to come out of their graves, said an old rustic, "ever since there was some alteration made in the burial service." A firm belief in "*the very old 'un*" is still, however, a most distinctive article of the rustic creed. "There was never a good hand at cards if the four of clubs was in it," said a rooted son of the soil to me. "Why?" I asked. "Because it's an unlucky card; it's the devil's own card." "In what way?" I urged. "It's the *old 'un's* four-post bedstead," was the reply.

Another rustic remarked in all seriousness that he did think wizards "ought to be encouraged, for they could tell a man many things he didn't know as would be useful to 'un." The belief in witchcraft is almost dead, but it is not so many years ago that it was firmly held. Thomas Hardy's tale, *The Withered Arm*, it will be recalled, is a story of witchcraft. Farmer Lodge brought home a young wife, Gertrude. A woman who worked on Lodge's farm, Rhoda Brook by name, had a son of which the farmer was the father. Rhoda naturally resented the marriage, and had a remarkable dream in which Gertrude, wrinkled and old, had sat on her chest and mocked her. She seized the apparition by the left arm and hurled it away from her. So life-like was the phantom of her

brain that it was difficult for her to believe that she had not actually struggled with Gertrude Lodge in the flesh. Some time afterwards the farmer's wife complained that her left arm pained her, and the doctors were unable to give her any relief. In the end someone suggested that she had been "overlooked," and that it was the result of a witch's evil influence. She was told to ask the advice of a wise man named Conjurer Trendle who lived on Egdon Heath. In the days of our forefathers the conjurer was an important character in the village. He was resorted to by despairing lovers; he helped those who were under the evil eye to throw off the curse, and disclosed the whereabouts of stolen goods. His answers, too, were given with a somewhat mystic ambiguity. "Own horn eat own corn" would be the kind of reply a person would receive on consulting him about the disappearance of, say, a few little household articles. Well, to continue the story, Rhoda Brook accompanied Gertrude to the hut of Conjurer Trendle, who informed the farmer's wife that Rhoda had "overlooked" her. Trendle told her that the evil spell might be dissolved and a cure effected by laying the diseased arm on the neck of a newly hanged man. During the absence of her husband she arranged with the Casterbridge hangman to try this remedy. On the appointed

day she arrived at the gaol, and the hangman placed her hand upon the neck of the body after the execution, and she drew away half fainting with the shock. As she turned she saw her husband and Rhoda Brook. The dead man was their son, who had been hanged for stealing sheep, and they harshly accused her of coming to gloat over their misfortune. At this the farmer's wife entirely collapsed, and only lived for a week or so after.

Thomas Q. Couch, writing in *Notes and Queries*, 26th May 1855, gives a pleasant and light-hearted article on the prevailing belief in the existence of the piskies in the West Country:

"Our piskies are little beings standing midway between the purely spiritual, and the material, suffering a few at least of the ills incident to humanity. They have the power of making themselves seen, heard, and felt. They interest themselves in man's affairs, now doing him a good turn, and anon taking offence at a trifle, and leading him into all manner of mischief. The rude gratitude of the husbandman is construed into an insult, and the capricious sprites mislead him on the first opportunity, and laugh heartily at his misadventures. They are great enemies of sluttery, and great encouragers of good husbandry. When not singing and dancing, their chief nightly amusement is in riding the colts, and plaiting their manes,

or tangling them with the seed-vessels of the burdock. Of a particular field in this neighbourhood it is reported that the farmer never puts his horses in it but he finds them in the morning in a state of great terror, panting, and covered with foam. Their form of government is monarchical, as frequent mention is made of the 'king of the piskies.' We have a few stories of pisky changelings, the only proof of whose parentage was that 'they didn't goody' [thrive]. It would seem that fairy children of some growth are occasionally entrusted to human care for a time, and recalled; and that mortals are now and then kidnapped, and carried off to fairyland; such, according to the nursery rhyme, was the end of Margery Daw:

"'See-saw, Margery Daw
Sold her bed, and lay upon straw;
She sold her straw, and lay upon hay,
Piskies came and carri'd her away.'

"A disposition to laughter is a striking trait in their character. I have been able to gather little about the personalities of these creatures. My old friend before mentioned used to describe them as about the height of a span, clad in green, and having straw hats or little red caps on their heads. Two only are known by name, and I have heard them addressed in the following rhyme:—

"'Jack o' the lantern! Joan the wad!
Who tickled the maid and made her mad,
Light me home, the weather's bad.'

"But times have greatly changed. The old-world stories in which our forefathers implicitly believed will not stand the light of modern education. The pixies have been banished from the West, and since their departure the wayward farmer can no longer plead being 'pisky-led' on market nights.

"'Pisky-led!' exclaimed an old Devon lady to her bibulous husband, who had returned home very late, pleading he had been led astray by the piskies. 'Now, dawntee say nort more about it'—and with a solemn voice and a shake of her bony finger she added: 'Pisky-led is whisky-led. That's how it is with you!'"

. . . . . .

May with its wealth of resurrecting life, its birds' songs, its flowers uplifting glad heads, is a beautiful month in Dorset; but cider-making time, when the trees put on a blaze of yellow and red and the spirit of serenity and peace broods over everything, is the period that the true son of Dorset loves best. Cider-makin' time—what a phrase! What memories! Why, then, time does indeed blot and blur the golden days of youth! I had almost forgotten the sweet smell of pomace and the cider mill—things which loomed large in the days when I was

a boy down Devon way. It is middle age, which Stevenson likened to the "bear's hug of custom squeezing the life out of a man's soul," that has robbed me of the power to conjure up those happy days from the depths of my consciousness. Certainly some virtue within me has departed—what? Well, I do not know, but I cannot recapture the delirious joy of the apple harvest in the West. It is only a memory. Perhaps it is one of those things which will return unexpectedly, and by which I shall remember the world at the last.

Well, then, when I was a boy, cider brewing in Hovey's barn was one of the joys of life. A steam-engine on four wheels arrived from Exeter, and pulleys and beltings were fixed up to work the old-fashioned press. Within the barn a rumbling machine crushed the apples (which had been growing mellow in the loft for a fortnight), and the press noisily descended on the racks of pulp and sent the liquid into the tubs with a swish like the fall of tropical rain. Outside the still October air was broken only by the chug—chug—chug of the stationary engine and the mellow voices and laughter of the farmers who delivered their apples and received in exchange barrels of cider. The marc from the cider-press was sometimes fed to cattle combined with bran, hay and chaff. But I suppose that was an old-fashioned idea, and farmers

to-day would ridicule such a thing. But Farmer Hovey was a keen-eyed man of business—a man who could farm his acres successfully in the face of any disaster. How I wish that, now grown up, I could re-open those records, the book of his memory! But it has long been closed, laid away in the tree-shaded churchyard in Fore Street, near a flat stone commemorating John Starre:

JOHN STARRE.

Starre on Hie
Where should a Starre be
But on Hie?
Tho underneath
He now doth lie
Sleeping in Dust
Yet shall he rise
More glorious than
The Starres in skies.
1633.

Making "marc bricks" at Farmer Hovey's was the highest pinnacle of my desire. It was one of those peculiarly "plashy" jobs in which any child would delight. One could get thoroughly coated from head to foot with the apple pulp in about half-an-hour. The "marc" was made into bricks (about a pound in weight) to preserve it. It was first pressed as dry as possible, made into cubes with wooden moulds, and stacked in an airy place to dry. Hovey liked these bricks for fuel in the

winter months, and I remember they made a wonderfully clear fire. It was while making up the apple pulp into bricks that my brothers and their friends caught the idea of the game of "hunting." The apple pulp was first made up into a score of heavy, wet balls. Having drawn lots as to who should be the hunter, the winner would take charge of the ammunition and retire to the barn, which was known as the "hunters' shack," while the other boys would shin up the orchard trees, or conceal themselves behind walls, ricks and bushes. A short start was allowed, and then the hunter sallied forth with unrestricted powers to bombard with shot and shell anyone within sight. The first one who made his way home to the "shack" became the next hunter. Many a satisfying flap on the back of the neck have I "got home" with those balls of apple pulp. It was a very primitive game, sometimes a very painful one, and not infrequently it ended in a general hand-to-hand fight. The game was certainly an excellent exercise in the art of encountering the hard knocks of life with a sunny fortitude. In 1916 it was my fortune to suffer rather a sharp period of shell-fire in Palestine with one of the players of this game. My old playmate turned to me and yelled: "Hi, there, Bob! Look out! These coming over are *not* made of apple pulp!"

Then the smell of the cider-press came full and strong on the night air of the desert, and England and the West Country came back to me in the foolishness of dreams, as the Garden of Hesperides or any other Valley of Bliss my erring feet had trodden in heedless mood.

There is a story of a Dorset vicar who was explaining to his flock the meaning of miracles. He saw that his hearers were dull and inattentive, and did not seem to grasp what he was saying, so he pointed to an old rascal of a villager who always lived riotously yet never toiled, and said in a loud voice: "I will tell you what a miracle is. Look at old Jan Domeny, he hasn't an apple-tree in his garden, and yet he made a barrelful of cider this October. There's a miracle for you."

While cycling out of Swanage to Corfe—a back-breaking and tortuous succession of hills—I had the misfortune to meet a wasp at full speed and receive a nasty sting. I asked a little girl if her mother lived near, as I wished to get some ammonia for it, and was delighted to hear the child call to her mother through an open window: "Lukee, mother, a wapsy 'ath a stinged this maister 'pon 'is feace." Which reminded me of a story in Akerman's *Wiltshire Glossary* of a woman who wished to show off her lubberly boy to some old dames, and accordingly called him to say his alphabet. She pointed

to the letter "A" and asked Tommy to name it. "Dang-my-ole-hat, I dwon't know 'un," said the child, scratching his head. His mother passed this letter by and moved the point of her scissors to the next letter. "What be thuck one, Tommy?" "I knows 'un by *zite*, but I can't call 'un by's neame," replied the boy. "What is that thing as goes buzzing about the gearden, Tommy?" The boy put his head on one side and considered a moment, then replied, with a sly grin: "Wapsy!"

William Barnes told a good tale of a West Country parson who preached in the rudest vernacular. A rich and selfish dairyman of his flock died, and in place of the customary eulogy at the graveside, he said: "Here lies old ——. He never did no good to nobody, and nobody spake no good o' he; put him to bed and let's prache to the living."

And here is a good story related to me by a West Country vicar. A lively old lady in his parish was very ill, and likely, as it seemed, to die. The vicar called on her and talked with professional eloquence of the splendours and joys of heaven. But the bright old creature had no fears for the future, and indeed was not so ill as they supposed. "Yes, sir," she said, "what you say may be very true, and heaven may be a bobby-

dazzling place; but I never was one to go a-bell-wavering—old Dorset's good enough for me!"

Inside the old Dorset farm-houses there is much that belongs to other days than these. Many old homes have deep porches, with stone seats on each side, which lead to the large kitchen. It is large because it was built in the days when the farmer had labourers to help in the fields, and the mistress of the house had women servants to help with the spinning and the poultry, and all who lived under the same roof had their meals together in this room.

Many of the doors are as large and solid as church doors, and one that I saw was studded with nails and secured by a great rough wooden bar drawn right across it into an iron loop on the opposite side at night, and in the day-time thrust back into a hole in the thickness of the wall. But the majority are more homely than this and have only a latch inside raised from outside by a leather thong, or by "tirling at the pin," as in the old ballad.

CHAPTER II

BARFORD ST MARTIN TO TISBURY AND SHAFTESBURY

> And she is very small and very green
> And full of little lanes all dense with flowers
> That wind along and lose themselves between
> Mossed farms, and parks, and fields of quiet sheep.
> And in the hamlets, where her stalwarts sleep,
> Low bells chime out from old elm-hidden towers.
>
> GEOFFREY HOWARD.

STARTING from Salisbury, the pilgrim of the Hardy country, when he has passed through Barford St Martin and Burcome, might think it worth while to take the road to Tisbury when he arrives at Swalloweliff. The large village of Tisbury is situated on the north side of the River Nadder, on rising ground, and is about twelve miles west of Salisbury. There is much of interest to be seen, and the spacious church, in the flat land at the bottom of the hill and close to the river, is well worth a visit. It contains several monuments to the Arundels, and on an iron bracket near the easternmost window is a good sixteenth-century helmet, which has been gilded in places and is ornamented with a small band of scroll-work round the edges; there is an added spike for a crest. It is a real helmet, not a funeral

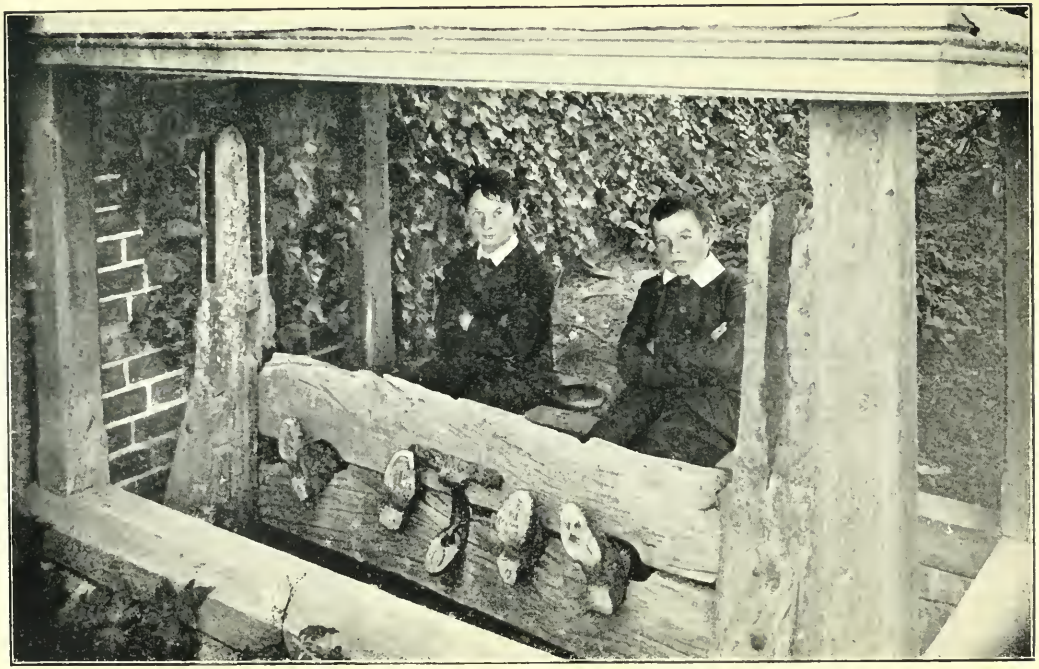
one; the rivets for the lining remain inside. Tradition says it belonged to the first Lord Arundel of Wardour, who died in 1639. All the seats are of oak and modern, but against the walls is some good linen-fold panelling of the seventeenth century or very late sixteenth century. In the sacrarium is a fine brass to Lawrence Hyde of West Hatch. He was the great-grandfather of Queen Mary, 1689, and Queen Anne, 1702. He is represented standing in a church in front of his six sons, facing his wife and four daughters. The inscription is :

> "Here lyeth Lawrence Hyde of West Hatch Esqr. who had issue by Anne his wife six sons and four daughters and died in the year of the incarnation of Our Lord God 1590. Beati qui moriuntur in domino."

The churchyard is a very large one, and the old causeway which was used in times of flood is most picturesque. Two massive black grave slabs at once arrest the eye. In plain, square lead lettering one reads :

JOHN LOCKWOOD KIPLING
C.I.E.
1837–1911.

ALICE MACDONALD
WIFE OF
JOHN LOCKWOOD KIPLING
1910



STOCKS AT TOLLARD ROYAL

(Seven miles south of Tisbury)

The village of Tisbury existed in the seventh century, the earliest extant spelling of the name being "Tissebiri" or "Dysseburg," and there was a monastery over which an abbot named Wintra ruled about 647. Mr Paley Baildon, F.S.A., who has devoted considerable time to the investigation of the origin of place names, thinks that without doubt Tisbury is derived from Tissa's-burgh, Tissa or Tyssa being a personal name and owner of the estate; hence it came to be known as Tissa's-burgh.

It was at Tisbury that Rudyard Kipling wrote some of his stories after leaving India, and there can be little doubt that after some years of absence in the East the return to things desperately dear and familiar and intimate exercised a strong effect upon his thoughts and writing, and prepared a way for his delicately fashioned pictures of the Old Country in *Puck of Pook's Hill* and *Rewards and Fairies.*

At Barford St Martin I had the misfortune to burst the back tube and tyre of my motor cycle, and that is the real reason I arrived at Tisbury. I wheeled my machine to the Green Dragon, hoping for a lift to a place where I could get fixed up with a new tyre. A large wagon was standing outside the inn, and as it bore the name, Stephen Weekes, Tisbury, upon it, I penetrated

to the bar-parlour, thinking that I might induce the driver to take me with the machine into that village.

The owner of the wagon was sitting inside with two large bottles of stout before him. He was a burly fellow in shirt-sleeves and a broad straw hat. I saw he was fifty or thereabouts—not a mere wagoner, but a small farmer who would have answered to the description of Farmer Oak by Thomas Hardy in his opening to *Far from the Madding Crowd.* He was of a more jovial type than most Dorset men I have met, and after submitting to his fire of questions I asked him gently, in jest, if he would require any assistance with his two bottles.

"Aye," he answered, quizzing at me with his merry eyes. "I shall require another bottle to assist me, I think."

He looked at me a moment with seriousness and then he laughed to the point of holding his sides. He slapped his knees, shouted, roared and almost rolled with merriment. I looked at the farmer, not without a feeling of admiration. It was perhaps a very poor jest, you will say. But how well a simple jest became the fellow; how gloriously he laughed. Down in my heart I knew that no man could laugh as he did and at the same time possess a mean mind. He was as

broad as the earth, and his laughter was just as limitless. Talk of good things: there may be something finer than a hearty laugh—there may be—perhaps . . .

At this moment he called for two glasses, and explained to the landlord that now he would drink out of a glass, seeing that he was in company.

"Then tell me," I said, "why do you drink out of the bottle when you are alone?"

"Why, you don't get no virtue out of the beer 'thout you drink it out of the bottle. No, fay! Half of the strength is gone like winky when you pour it into a glass."

"I believe you are right," I said, "and I especially commend you for drinking beer. Ale is a great and generous creature; it contains all health, induces sleep o' nights, titillates the digestion and imparts freshness to the palate."

"'Tis the only drink that will go with bread and cheese and pickling cabbage," dashed in the farmer.

"'Tis a pity," I said, "that so many workers in London take bread and cheese with tea and coffee, for there is no staying power in such a mixture."

"It can't be good," he shouted. "It can't be healthy."

The farmer's name was Mr Weekes—the same as it was painted on the wagon outside—and he said that he would be very glad to take me with my machine into Tisbury, where there was a motor garage. He made an extraordinarily shrill noise with his mouth and a fine greyhound that had been sleeping beneath the table bounded up.

"This long-dog," said Mr Weekes, "is a wonderfully good dog—the best dog of his kind in the world."

Mr Weekes is never half-hearted about things. His enthusiasm is prodigious. He is like a human hurricane when he launches upon any of his pet subjects. At once he fell to explaining the points and final perfection of a perfect greyhound. I remember a quaint rhyme he quoted, which is perhaps worth repetition here :

"The shape of a good greyhound is :—
A head like a snake, a neck like a drake ;
A back like a beam, a belly like a bream ;
A foot like a cat, a tail like a rat."

The farmer, then, I say, was not the kind of man to qualify any of his remarks, and he re-asserted his claim that, in the concrete, in the existent state of things, his dog was the best that breathed.

This he said for the sixth time, drank up his

THE GREEN DRAGON AT BARFORD ST MARTIN IN 1860

This inn is one of the few remaining places in England where the landlord brews his own ale
The adjoining barns have been regularly used for brewing since 1750

stout, and after helping me to lift my machine into the wagon, climbed up on to his seat, I by his side. He then flicked his horses gently with his whip and they began to amble along with the wagon. On the way to Tisbury the farmer talked with the greatest friendliness, and when we arrived at his farm he insisted on bringing me in to supper. He showed me his orchard, barns and a very fine apple-tree of which he was enormously proud, and pulled me an armful of the finest apples he could find.

"Take these apples home," he said, watching me with his merry eyes; "they make the best apple pies in the world."

An armful of apples of prodigious size is not exactly the kind of thing one welcomes with a broken-down motor cycle two hundred miles from home, but I dared not refuse them, and so I stuffed them into all my pockets. Finally my good friend insisted on keeping me under his roof for the night.

After my machine had been repaired next morning I went on my way, thinking what a fine, merry, hospitable fellow the Dorset yeoman is—if you only approach him with a little caution.

. . . . . .

I left my friend the yeoman farmer with regret, regained the main road and soon came into

Shaftesbury, or *Shaston*, as it is commonly called. This town is very curiously placed, on the narrow ridge of a chalk hill which projects into the lower country, and rises from it with abruptness. Hence an extensive landscape is seen through the openings between the houses, and from commanding points the eye ranges over the greater part of Dorset and Somerset. To add to the beauty of the position, the scarped slope of the hill is curved on its southern side. Shaftesbury is one of the oldest towns in the kingdom. Its traditions go back to the time of King Lud, who, according to Holinshed, founded it about 1000 B.C. A more moderate writer refers its origin to Cassivellaunus. However, it is certain that Alfred, in the year 880, founded here a nunnery, which in aftertimes became the richest in England, and, as the shrine of St Edward the Martyr—whose body was removed to this town from Wareham—the favourite resort of pilgrims. Asser, who wrote the *Life of Alfred*, has described Shaftesbury as consisting of one street in his time. In that of Edward the Confessor it possessed three mints, sure evidence of its importance ; and shortly after the Conquest it had no less than twelve churches, besides chapels and chantries, and a Hospital of St John.

The view from the Castle Hill at the west end

of the ridge is very extensive, and from all parts of the town you come unexpectedly upon narrow ravines which go tumbling down to the plain below in the most headlong fashion. The chief trouble in the olden days was the water supply. On this elevated chalk ridge the town was obviously far removed from the sources of spring water, and the supply of this necessary article had been from time out of mind brought on horses' backs from the parish of Gillingham. Hence arose a curious custom which was annually observed here for a great number of years. On the Monday before Holy Thursday the mayor proceeded to Enmore Green, near Motcombe, with a large, fanciful broom, or *byzant*, as it was called, which he presented as an acknowledgment for the water to the steward of the manor, together with a calf's head, a pair of gloves, a gallon of ale and two penny loaves of wheaten bread. This ceremony being concluded, the byzant—which was usually hung with jewels and other costly ornaments—was returned to the mayor and carried back to the town in procession.

About 1816 the Mayor of Shaftesbury refused to carry out the custom, and the people of Enmore were so put out by his omission in this respect that they filled up the wells. The Shastonians paid twopence for a horse-load of water and a

halfpenny for a pail "if fetched upon the head." I heard a rather amusing story of the water-carrying days. A rustic who had been working on the land all day in the rain came "slewching" up Gold Hill, feeling very unhappy and out of temper. At the summit of the hill he passed by the crumbling church of St Peter's, but did *not* pass the Sun and Moon Inn. Here he cheered his drooping spirits with a measure of old-fashioned Shaftesbury XXX stingo, and, thus strengthened, he went on his way home, expecting to be welcomed with a warm, savoury supper. But the news of his call at the inn had reached his wife before he arrived home, and being rather an ill-natured person, she decided to punish him for loitering on his way. "Oh," she said to him, "as you are so wet already, just you take this steyan [earthenware pot] and fill it with water at Toute Hill spring, and don't go loafing at the Sun and Moon again." The rustic took up the pitcher without a word, filled it and returned to his sour housewife; but instead of putting the pitcher down, he hurled the contents over her, saying: "Now *you* are wet too, so you can go to the spring and fetch the water."

Bimport is a wide and comfortable street which skirts the north crest of Castle Hill. It is a street of honest stone houses, and readers of *Jude the*

Obscure will look here for Phillotson's school and the "little low drab house in which the wayward Sue wrought the wrecking of her life." Their house, "old Grove's Place"—now called "Ox House"—is not difficult to find. As you come up from the Town Hall and Market House to the fork of the roads which run to Motcombe and East Stower, Bimport turns off to the left, and a hundred or so yards down is Grove's Place, with a projecting porch and mullioned windows. It was here that Sue in a momentary panic jumped out of the window to avoid Phillotson. The name of the house derives from that of a former inhabitant mentioned in an old plan of Shaftesbury. Poor, highly strung Sue Bridehead, with her neurotic temperament, could not throw off the oppressiveness of the old house. "We don't live in the school, you know," said she, "but in that ancient dwelling across the way, called old Grove's Place. It is so antique and dismal that it depresses me dreadfully. Such houses are very well to visit, but not to live in. I feel crushed into the earth by the weight of so many previous lives there spent. In a new place like these schools there is only your own life to support."

The village of Marnhull is situated in the Vale of Blackmoor, six miles from Shaftesbury. It is

the " Marlott " of Hardy's novel *Tess*, the village home of the Durbeyfield family. It contains little of interest. The Pure Drop Inn, where " there's a very pretty brew in tap," may be the " Crown." Here John Durbeyfield kept up Tess's wedding day " as well as he could, and stood treat to everybody in the parish, and John's wife sung songs till past eleven o'clock." There is a Pure Drop Inn at Wooten Glanville and another at Wareham ; one of these most probably suggested the name. The fine church is of the eighteenth-century Gothic (1718), and it has often been regarded by strangers as being three hundred years earlier. The font bowl, late Norman, was unearthed in 1898, also the rood staircase and squint and the piscina. Some ancient alabaster effigies, ascribed to the middle of the fifteenth century and representing a man in armour and two female figures, are placed on a cenotaph in the north aisle. Some authorities claim that they represent Thomas Howard, Lord Bindon, and his wives, and are of a later date. Nash Court, a little to the north, is a fine Elizabethan mansion, formerly the seat of the Husseys.

CHAPTER III

THE VALE OF BLACKMOOR

MY motor cycle had carried me without a hitch from London to Melbury Abbas—then Fortune scowled on me. With ridiculous ease I had rolled along the roads all day, and I had been tempted to ride through the warm autumnal darkness till I came to the Half Moon Inn at Shaftesbury, where the roads fork away to Melbury Hill, Blandford and Salisbury. But a few hundred yards out of Melbury Abbas, and then Fortune's derisive frown. From a deceptive twist in the road I dashed into a gully, and my machine bumped and rattled and groaned like a demon caught in a trap. It performed other antics with which this chronicle has no concern, and then refused to move an inch farther.

But the song of a nightingale in a grove of elms near the road made full amends for my ill luck! It is beautiful to hear his sobbing, lulling notes when one is alone on a dark night, and Shelley was not far wrong in styling it voluptuous.

"I heard the raptured nightingale
Tell from yon elmy grove his tale
Of jealousy and love,
In thronging notes that seem'd to fall
As faultless and as musical
As angels' strains above.
So sweet, they cast on all things round
A spell of melody profound:
They charm'd the river in his flowing,
They stay'd the night-wind in its blowing."

I lit a pipe and made myself comfortable on the green bank of the roadside. It was simply a matter of waiting for a carter to give me a lift. Soon I heard footsteps approaching me. "Good-evening," said a friendly, quavering voice, and a little, round-faced gentleman in a grey overcoat and straw hat emerged from the shadows. I questioned him as to the distance of the nearest inn or cottage where I could get a shelter for the night, and explained how my machine had failed me.

"The nearest inn is two miles away. I'm afraid they do not accommodate travellers," he replied.

"Is this your home?" I asked.

"Oh yes! Woolpit House is just beyond those elms. I live there. I am not a native of these parts. I have only lived there for the last six months. I am sorry I came here, for the place

does not suit me. Do you care to leave your motor cycle? You are most welcome to a bed in my house," he added with cheerful simplicity.

"I should be greatly indebted to you. But shan't I be a bother to your family at this time of the night?"

"I have none."

I wheeled my machine through a gate and left it the other side of the hedge, where I hoped it would be safe till morning. We came to the house across a footpath—a small stone-gabled sixteenth-century building. A whisp of mist from a bubbling stream circled the place and gave it an air of isolation. We entered a lit room, which was of solemn aspect, and my friend gave me a deep-seated chair.

"Are you serious in saying that you do not like Dorset?" I questioned.

The little man smiled quietly, sadly.

"It is not Dorset exactly. But since I came to live here I have become a bundle of nerves. It is nothing—I think it's nothing."

"What do you mean?"

"I only think—I only wonder——"

"Yes?"

"This is such an old house. All sorts of things must have happened here. And from the first moment I came into the place I had a sudden

sensation of there being something unseen and unheard near me. There is an essence in this house—an influence which stifles all laughter and joy. I wonder if you will feel it as I do ! "

" Bit creepy," I said, and at the same time I came to the conclusion that the old fellow was a little eccentric, and this idea of the house being on the left side of the sun was merely a foolish weakness.

" Yes, yes," he said, musing; " queer, isn't it? But you don't know the queerest."

He pondered a moment, then suddenly he wagged his crooked fore-finger at me and said: " It is something more than an essence—it is stronger. The other evening when it was getting dusk I got up from my chair to light the candles, and I saw, as I thought, someone about six yards from that window—outside on the flagstones. It was more than a shadowy shape. So without waiting I ran out into the hall and opened the front door, feeling sure I should see a tramp or someone there. But the drive was quite empty—I only looked out into the dusk. But as I looked out something that I could not see slipped through and passed into the house. The same kind of thing has happened a dozen times."

The little old man passed his hand over his brow.

" Here," I said rather brusquely, " you're not

well; you're just a bundle of nerves. Look here, sir, you want a holiday."

"Yes," he said, wiping his brow. "I try to tell myself that it is all rot . . . all my fancy. But what would *you* do?"

"See a doctor," I replied.

"Doctors? . . . Bah! I'll tell you," he whispered. "I want a ghost-doctor to rid me of this invisible, pushing thing. It gets stronger every time! At first it just slipped through; just a bit more than a gust of wind. But now it's getting compact. To-night it drove me out of the house: that was how I came to be wandering out on the highroad like a lost soul."

"But . . . goodness, sir, such a thing outrages reason."

"You can say what you will, but *it* is there, and it is growing tangible. Last night I could distinguish his features as he came up close to the window. He smiled at me, but the smile was one of inscrutable evil. He resents me being in this house. I shall have to abandon it."

"This little man is either off his head, or worse," I said to myself.

In spite of the warmth of the room, I felt myself shiver.

At that moment I heard the sound of a stealthy footstep outside the door.

The little old man jumped up.

"I say," he said in an odd voice, "did you hear?"

I pretended I had not heard.

"Ah, you didn't . . . and, of course, you didn't feel anything. It must have been my imagination."

A wave of shame ran over me. I knew that I had not the courage to listen to the old fellow's story any longer. I finished my whisky-and-soda and stood up.

"It is very kind of you, sir, to offer me a lodging for the night. I am feeling rather weary and would like to go to bed now, if it is convenient to you."

"Come then, sir," he said, with his old-fashioned politeness, and he walked towards the door.

Then I saw the *thing*. There wasn't a shadow of doubt about it. I saw the little old man open the door. The next moment he started back. Then he thrust forward with his body, and I could see him bearing against something. He swayed, physically, as a man sways when he is wrestling. A second after he was free.

"Well, you've seen it—what do you think of it?" he said presently, as I followed him into the hall. His face had turned cloudy whitish grey.

I laughed, but the full horror of it had soaked into me.

I followed my host up a series of stairs. He carried a candlestick, with his arm extended, so as to give me a guiding light. The old house was dim and chilly in its barrenness. He stopped at a door in a long, narrow corridor and set the candlestick down.

"This is your room."

With a gentle bow and a kindly smile he opened the door for me.

"Good-night, sir. Can you see your way down?" I asked.

"I have a candle in my pocket."

He lit it at mine. Another quiet, friendly smile, and I watched him out of sight along the corridor.

I stood perfectly still for a moment just inside. Then a curious feeling of something dreadful being close at hand was present in my mind. Of course it was all humbug, and my nerves were deceiving me. But I could not shake myself free from the notion that I was *not* alone.

There is an essence in all these old dwellings that comes out to meet one on a first visit. I recognise the truth of that—for how often have I noticed how, under one roof, one breathes a friendly air, and under another queerness runs across the spine like the feet of hurrying mice.

In this house there was something sinister and unwholesome. I cursed my luck for driving me into such a place. A night spent under a hedge would have been more desirable. However, I turned into bed and passed rather a broken night, with stretches of dream-haunted sleep interspersed with startled awakenings. The old house seemed to be full of muffled movements, and once (timid fool that I was) I could have sworn that the handle of my door turned. It was with a considerable qualm, I must confess, I lit my candle and opened the door. But the gallery was quite empty. I went back to bed and slept again, and when next I woke the sun was streaming into my room, and the sense of trouble that had been with me ever since entering the house last evening had gone.

When I arrived at the breakfast-table the little old man was seated behind the coffee-pot, and his face was quite glowing and wreathed in smiles. Morning had brought a flood of hard common sense to him, as clear as the crisp sunshine that filled the room. He had already begun and was consuming a plateful of eggs and bacon with the most prosaic and healthy appetite.

"Slept well?" he asked.

"Moderately," I said, feeling ashamed of my timidity in the morning light.

"I am afraid I talked rather wildly last night," remarked the little man, in a voice pregnant with reason.

"Yes—an amazing quantity of nonsense," I consented. "Where did you learn hypnotism?"

My host's brow clouded slightly.

"You see," I continued, "you must have thrown a spell over me, for I really believed in your ghost story, and now I have come to the conclusion that you were joking."

"Never mind. It doesn't matter."

But the little man didn't look up from his plate. He only shook his head.

Well (to get on), we finished breakfast. After smoking a pipe on the verandah with my host (who might have been a wizard for aught I knew, at least this was my fantastic thought) I went out and looked at my machine, and was fortunate enough after an hour's tinkering to get her going again. The little man insisted that I should take a small glass of some liqueur brandy of which he was very proud. So I took some of the wonderful stuff—strong, sufficient, soul-filling, part of the good rich earth—and went out into the sunlight, and taking a foot-bridge over running water put myself out of the little wizard's power.

. . . . . .

About six months later I was hunting in an old

bookseller's shop in Salisbury when by something more than a mere coincidence I came across a small booklet called *Twenty-five Years of Village Life*, dealing with the district around Shaftesbury, and I read:

"It is somewhat remarkable that, during the last ten years, two vicars of the parish have died under somewhat mysterious circumstances at Woolpit House. It is not necessary to go into details here, but many wild stories about this picturesque old house are told around the countryside. The country people have an odd way of accounting for the ill fortune that has always attended Woolpit House. They say that it was built by the order of a dissolute old nobleman who had sold his soul to the devil, and in order to pass bad luck to all his successors who might occupy the mansion he caused grave-stones from ——— churchyard to be rooted up and built into the walls."

. . . . . .

The Vale of Blackmoor or Blackmore, watered by the upper part of the Stour, was formerly known as the White Hart Forest, but is now a strip of pasturage celebrated among farmers as one of the richest of grazing lands. Its marshy surface is speckled by herds of lazy cattle, and by busier droves of pigs, of which this vale supplies to

London a larger number than either of the counties of Somerset and Devon. Blackmoor is also known for the vigorous growth of its oaks, which thrive on the tenacious soil. Loudon says it was originally called *White Hart Forest* from Henry III. having here hunted a beautiful white hart and spared its life; and Fuller gives the sequel to the tale. He says that Thomas de la Lynd, a gentleman of fair estate, killed the white hart which Henry by express will had reserved for his own chase, and that in consequence the county—as accessory for not opposing him—was mulched for ever in a fine called "White-hart Silver." "Myself," continues Fuller sorrowfully, "hath paid a share for the sauce who never tasted the meat." Loudon also informs us that the vale contained *Losel's Wood*, in which stood the *Raven's Oak* mentioned by White in his *Natural History of Selborne.*

The Vale of Blackmore stretches westward from the Melburys north of Cattistock (Melbury Bub, Osmund and Sampford) to Melbury Abbas south of Shaftesbury.

Down beyond Pulham, seven miles south-west of Sturminster Newton, on a flat and dismal road, stands at the King's Stag Bridge across the River Lidden an inn called "King's Stag," with a signboard representing a stag with a

ring round its neck, and the following lines below :—

> " When Julius Cæsar reigned here,
> I was then but a little deer ;
> When Julius Cæsar reigned king,
> Upon my neck he placed this ring,
> That whoso me might overtake
> Should spare my life for Cæsar's sake."

The belief in the longevity of the stag prevails in most countries. Linnæus (*Regnum Animale*) says of the *Cervus Elaphus* : " Ætas Bovis tantum ; fabula est longævitatis cervi."

From a formula, as old as the hills, relating to the length of life of animals and trees we learn that—

" Three old dogs make one horse ; three old horses make one old man ; three old men, one old red deer ; three old red deer, one old oak ; three old oaks, one brent-fir [fir or pine dug out of bogs]."

If a dog be supposed to be old at eight years, this will give : horse, 24 ; man, 72 ; deer, 216 ; oak, 648 ; bog fir, or brent fir, 1944 years.

The proverbs which follow are not folk-sayings, but they are given a place here as being quaint and curious, and not devoid of a certain interest, as they were collected by the author while tramping in the Vale of Blackmore during the summer of 1921 :—

"When the gorse is out of blossom, kissing is out of fashion" (*i.e.* kissing is *never* out of fashion).

"Trouble ran off him like water off a duck's back."

"If you sing before breakfast, you'll cry before night."

"Turn your money when you hear the cuckoo, and you'll have money in your purse till the cuckoo comes again."

"Plenty of lady-birds, plenty of hops." (The *coccinella* feeds upon the *aphis* that proves so destructive to the hop-plant.)

"March, search; April, try;
May will prove if you live or die."

"When your salt is damp, you will soon have rain."

"It will be a wet month when there are two full moons in it."

Certainly the maidens of Blackmore have a benediction upon them, granted them for their homeliness and kindness. Their eyes are quiet and yet fearless, and all the maids have something wifely about them. William Barnes, the poet of the Dorset valley, praising the Blackmoor maidens, says:

"Why, if a man would wive
An' thrive 'ithout a dow'r,
Then let en look en out a wife
In Blackmore by the Stour."

William Barnes was not a wild wooer, and he found joy and adventure in a smile and a blush from a Blackmore milkmaid after having carried her pail, and he was satisfied to know that she would have bowed when she took it back had it not been too heavy. Perhaps—O dizzy fancy! —sweet Nan of the Vale would not have refused a little kiss! At all events Barnes knew womanhood in its perfection when he met with it—the maid who was " good and true and fair " was his preference.

CHAPTER IV

BLANDFORD TO DORCHESTER

If we return, will England be
Just England still to you and me?
The place where we must earn our bread?—
We who have walked among the dead,
And watched the smile of agony,
And seen the price of Liberty,
Which we have taken carelessly
From other hands. Nay, we shall dread,
If we return,
Dread lest we hold blood-guiltily
The thing that men have died to free.
Oh, English fields shall blossom red
In all the blood that has been shed,
By men whose guardians are we,
If we return.

F. W. Harvey.

BLANDFORD, or, to give the town its full title, Blandford Forum, gets its name from the ancient ford of the Stour, on a bend of which river it is pleasingly placed in the midst of a bountiful district. It is called "Shottsford Forum" in Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*, and in *The Woodlanders* we are told that "Shottsford is Shottsford still: you can't victual your carcass there unless you've got money, and you can't buy a cup of genuine there whether or no." The long chief street of the town has a bright, modern aspect, due to the great fire of 1731 which

destroyed all but forty houses in the place. There is nothing to detain the pilgrim here, but it makes a good centre for any who are exploring the country around it.

Five miles of rather hilly road brings us to Winterborne Whitchurch, which has a very interesting church containing a curious old font dated 1450 and a fine old pulpit removed from Milton. The grandfather of John and Charles Wesley was vicar here from 1658 to 1662. Of the poet George Turberville, born here about 1530, very little is known. He was one of the "wild" Turbervilles, and one would like to learn more about him. Anyway, here is a specimen of his verse:

"Death is not so much to be feared as Daylie Diseases are.
What? Ist not follie to dread and stand of Death in feare
That mother is of quiet rest, and grief away does weare?
Was never none that twist have felt of cruel Death the Knife;
But other griefes and pining paines doe linger on thro life,
And oftentimes one selfsame corse with furious fits molest
When Death by one dispatch of life doth bring the soul to rest."

When we arrive at Milborne St Andrews we are within eight miles of Dorchester. The Manor

House, up a by-road and past the church of St Andrew, is the original of " Welland House " in Hardy's *Two on a Tower*. This was once the residence of the Mansell-Pleydell family, but since 1758 it has been used as a farm-house. The village was formerly an important posting-place between Blandford and Dorchester, and we are reminded of the coaching days by the effigy of a white hart on the cornice of the post office, in time past a busy inn.

Puddletown is our next halt on the road. It is a considerable village whose church has a chapel full of ancient monuments to the Martins of Athelhampton. Canon Carter held the living here in 1838, and when he first arrived the news that he neither shot, hunted nor fished disturbed the rustic flock, and they openly expressed their contempt for him. Then he replaced the village church band with a harmonium, and the story gained so much bulk and robustity in travelling, as such stories do in the country, that I have no doubt he seemed a sort of devastating monster.

After this he did a most appalling thing: he tampered with a very ancient rectorial gift of a mince-pie, a loaf of bread and a quart of old ale to every individual in the parish, not even excluding the babies in arms, and ventured to assert that the funds would be better employed in forming a

clothing club for the poor. Carter was a very worthy man, but somehow I cannot forgive him for this. He should have placed himself a little nearer to the full current of natural things. In the essence the ancient gift was "clothing"—solid and straightforward. It was surely in this spirit that Bishop John Still penned his famous drinking song:

"No frost nor snow, no wind, I trow,
Can hurt me if I would,
I am so wrapt and throughly lapt
Of jolly good ale and old."

So at the next tithe-day supper at the Rectory a farmer who had in him the Dorset heart and blood, a very demi-god amongst the poor of Puddletown, arose in his place and asked the good Canon Carter if he still held to his purpose of converting the Christmas ale into nether garments for little boys, and the Canon replied to the effect that it was his intention to carry out that reform.

Then the farmer, full of the West, who had not come to talk balderdash, shouted: "I ban't agwaine tu see the poor folk put upon. I'll be blamed ef I du." His voice was very strong and echoed in the rafters in an alarming way, for he was of the breed that said "good-morning" to a friend three fields away without much effort. At

this point certain stuffy people folded their hands, and called out "Fie!" and "Shame!" for it was their purpose to curry favour with the vicar, they having many small children in need of nether garments.

But the farmer cried out over them all (and all the other farmers cheered him on): "I tellee what tez. I don't care a brass button for you, with all your penny-loaf ways. That to ye all!" And with that he snapped his fingers in the face of all the company, walked out, mounted his powerful horse and turned back to his great, spacious farm-house. Here he counted out a great bundle of Stuckey's Bank notes, and calling his bailiff sent them post-haste to the landlord of the King's Arms with word to the effect that they were lodged against a quart of Christmas ale for every soul who should care to claim it on Christmas Eve. That is the story of Farmer Dribblecombe, and may we all come out of a trying position as well as he.

But to return to the church. There are the old oak pews of bygone days, a choir gallery with the date 1635, an ancient pulpit and a curious Norman font shaped like a drinking-bowl. The most interesting corner of the church is the Athelhampton aisle, which is entered through a quaint archway guarded by a tomb on which lies an armed knight carved in alabaster. Buried

here are the Martins of many generations. They once owned the old manor-house, with the great barns behind it and the fertile acres spreading far on every hand. They once went forth swiftly and strongly, on hefty and determined horses, and worked hotly, and came in wearied with long rides and adventures. Now they rest together, "mediævally recumbent," and when their ghosts walk they do not inquire who owns the land where they tread. They let the hot world go by, and wait with patience the day when all the old squires of Athelhampton shall be mustered once again. A great company indeed! The offspring of one noble family, who, following each other for nearly four hundred years, ruled as lords of their little holding in Dorset. The first of the family came to Athelhampton in 1250, and the last in 1595. Everywhere is to be found carved on their tombs the dark and menacing motto, beneath their monkey crest, "He who looks at Martins' Ape, Martins' Ape shall look at him!" The crest is, of course, a play on the word Martin, which is an obsolete word for ape. But the menace of the motto has lost its power these three hundred years, and nothing of the might and affluence of the Martins remains but their mutilated effigies. I have been wondering to-day how they must look out upon us all with our cinematographs,

jazzy-dances, lip-sticks, backless gowns, cigarettes, whisky and pick-me-ups, and our immense concern over the immeasurably trivial. I don't know that I said it aloud—such things need not be said aloud—but as I read a touching epitaph which urged a little prayer for two of the family, I turned almost numbly away, while my whole being seemed to cry out: "God rest your souls, God rest your souls."

Here, since we are on the subject, is the touching prayer from the lips of one of the ancient house of the Martins:

"Here lyeth the body of Xpofer Martyn Esquyer,
Sone and heyre unto Syr Wm: Martyn, knight,
Pray for their souls with harty desyre
That both may be sure of Eternall Lyght;
Calling to Remembrance that evoy wyhgt
Most nedys dye, and therefore lett us pray
As others for us may do Another day."

The last of the Martins was the Knight Nicholas who was buried here in 1595, and the last passage of his epitaph are the words, "Good-night, Nicholas!" With these appropriate words they put Nicholas to rest, like a child who had grown sleepy before it was dark. After all, we are all children, and when the shadows lengthen and the birds get back to the protecting caves, we too grow tired—tired of playing with things much too large for us—much too full of meaning.

The church of Puddletown, or "Weatherbury," brings us to the crowning catastrophe of the sad love tale of Francis Troy and Fanny Robin, for it is the scene of the sergeant's agony of remorse. Having set up a tombstone over the poor girl's grave, Troy proceeds to plant the mound beneath with flowers. "There were bundles of snowdrops, hyacinth and crocus bulbs, violets and double daisies, which were to bloom in early spring, and of carnations, pinks, picotees, lilies of the valley, forget-me-not, summer's farewell, meadow saffron, and others, for the later seasons of the year." The author minutely describes the planting of these by Troy, with his "impassive face," on that dark night when the rays from his lantern spread into the old yews "with a strange, illuminating power, flickering, as it seemed, up to the black ceiling of cloud above." He works till midnight and sleeps in the church porch; and then comes the storm and the doings of the gargoyle. The stream of water from the church roof spouting through the mouth of this "horrible stone entity" rushes savagely into the new-made grave, turning the mould into a welter of mud and washing away all the flowers so carefully planted by Fanny's repentant lover. At the sight of the havoc, we are told, Troy "hated himself." He stood and meditated, a miserable

human derelict. Where should he turn for sanctuary? But the words that burnt and withered his soul could not be banished: "He that is accursed, let him be accursed still."

The ill-named River Piddle—a rippling, tortoiseshell-coloured stream at times—runs through the streets. An old thatched house is peculiar by reason of the fact that it has broken out into a spacious Georgian bow window—a "window worthy of a town hall," as Sir Frederick Treves has remarked. It is supported by pillars, and has a porch-like space beneath devoted to a flower-bed.

"Weatherbury Upper Farm," the home of Bathsheba, which she inherited from her uncle, is not to be found in Puddletown, but if the pilgrim desires to find it he must proceed up the valley of the Puddle, in the direction of Piddlehinton. Before reaching the village he will come to Lower Walterstone, where a fine Jacobean manor-house, bearing the date 1586, will be easily recognised as the original which Thomas Hardy made to serve as the "Upper Farm" in *Far from the Madding Crowd.*

In the story the author has placed the farm a mile or more from its actual position, and it is vividly portrayed:

"A hoary building, of the Jacobean stage of

Classic Renaissance as regards its architecture, and of a proportion which told at a glance that, as is so frequently the case, it had once been the manorial hall upon a small estate around it, now altogether effaced as a distinct property, and merged in the vast tract of a non-resident landlord, which comprised several such modest demesnes. Fluted pilasters, worked from the solid stone, decorated its front, and above the roof pairs of chimneys were here and there linked by an arch, some gables and other unmanageable features still retaining traces of their Gothic extraction. Soft brown mosses, like faded velveteen, formed cushions upon the stone tiling, and tufts of the house-leek or sengreen sprouted from the eaves of the low surrounding buildings. A gravel walk leading from the door to the road in front was encrusted at the sides with more moss—here it was a silver-green variety, the nut-brown of the gravel being visible to the width of only a foot or two in the centre. This circumstance, and the generally sleepy air of the whole prospect here, together with the animated and contrasting state of the reverse façade, suggested to the imagination that on the adaptation of the building for farming purposes the vital principle of the house had turned round inside its body to face the other way."

CHAPTER V

DORCHESTER

When I am dead, my body shall go back
To the hills between the Ridgeway and the Sea—
To the Earthworks and terracing and ancient bridle-track
To the Dorset hills my heart has held in fee ;
My limbs that thrived on them shall be their very own,
I shall live again in little wayside flowers ;
My flesh and bones and sinew shall give life to mighty trees
And my spirit shall abide in ancient towers.
. . . . . .
When I am dead, my dust shall mix with clay,
And "puddle" some lone dew-pond on the hill,
So every Dorset lad who drinks upon his way
Will somehow lead me back to Dorset still.

ANONYMOUS.

DORCHESTER deserves to be chosen as the headquarters of the earliest of a series of excursions in Dorset, not only by reason of the premier position which it holds in the country, but also on account of the multitude of interesting surroundings which claim the attention of the literary pilgrim, the antiquary and the archæologist. The town is situated on a hill which slopes on the one side to the valley of the Frome, and extends on the other in an open country, across which run the Roman roads, still used as the highways. The principal thoroughfares divide Dorchester pretty equally, the High Street

intersecting it from east to west, the South Street and North Market in the opposite direction. On the south-west is the suburb of Fordington. The principal street—on the line of the Via Iceniana —ends abruptly at the fields, and on the south and west is the rampart, planted with rows of sycamore and chestnut trees as a walk.

Daniel Defoe, in his whimsical description of his pilgrimage *From London to Land's End*, published in 1724, gives an entertaining survey of the town at that period. He says: "Dorchester is indeed a pleasant, agreeable town to live in, and where I thought the people seemed less divided in factions and parties than in other places; for though here are divisions, and the people are not all of one mind, either as to religion or politics, yet they did not seem to separate with so much animosity as in other places. Here I saw the Church of England clergyman and the Dissenting minister or preacher drinking tea together, and conversing with civility and good neighbourhood, like Catholic Christians and men of a catholic and extensive charity. The town is populous, though not large; the streets broad; but the buildings old and low. However, there is good company, and a good deal of it; and a man that coveted a retreat in this world might as agreeably spend his time, and as well, in Dorchester as in any town

I know in England. . . . There are abundance of good families and of very ancient lines in the neighbourhood of this town of Dorchester, as the Napiers, the Courtneys, Strangeways, Seymours, Banks, Tregonwells, Sydenhams, and many others, some of which have very great estates in the county, and in particular Colonel Strangeways (ancestor of the present Earl of Ilchester), Napier (ancestor of the present Lord Arlington) and Courtney."

As to the healthiness of Dorchester, the editors of Hutchins's second edition wrote: "The pleasant and healthy situation of this town deserves an encomium. The famous Doctor Arbuthnot, coming hither in his early days with a view to settle in it, gave as a reason for his departure that 'a physician could neither live nor die in Dorchester.'"

St Peter's Church, a venerable edifice, occupies a prominent position at the intersection of the four streets and rises in its tower to a height of ninety feet. It is a well-proportioned building, with Norman porch and some monuments, with effigies, to Lord Holles of Ifield and to two unknown Crusaders, in coats of mail, with their legs crossed.

In the north wall of the chancel is placed an altar-tomb, which is supposed to be that of the

founder. A mural tablet on the south wall commemorates THOMAS HARDY, Esquire, of Melcombe Regis, who founded and endowed the Free Grammar School.

There were two brasses, now lost, one on the chancel floor, on grey stone, over the effigy of a woman kneeling, reading:

"Miserere mei d's s'dum magnum mi'am tuam."

The other:

"Hic jacet Johanna de Sto. Omero, relicta Rob'bi More, qui obiit in vigilia ste. Trinitatis sc'do Die mensis Anno D'ni MCCCCXXXVI. Cuj'. a'ie p'piciet' D. Amen."

Tradition says that the church was erected by "Geoffrey Van, his wife Anne and his maid Nan." Two of the six bells are mediæval. Close to the south porch is a bronze statue of William Barnes. His learning, his writings and poems in the Dorset dialect, his kindliness to his poor and his parish made him universally beloved. The pedestal bears the simple inscription: "William Barnes. 1801-1886," and the following lines from his poem, *Culverdell and the Squire*:

"Zoo now I hope his kindly feace
Is gone to vind a better pleace,
But still we' vo'k a-left behind,
He'll always be a-kept in mind."

On 3rd September 1685 Judge Jeffreys opened his Bloody Assize at Dorchester. Lord Macaulay says: "By order of the Chief Justice, the court was hung with scarlet, and this innovation seemed to the multitude to indicate a bloody purpose. More than 300 prisoners were to be tried. The work seemed heavy, but Jeffreys had a contrivance for making it light. He let it be understood that the only chance of obtaining pardon or respite was to plead guilty. Twenty-nine who put themselves on their country, and were convicted, were ordered to be tied up without delay. The remaining prisoners pleaded guilty by the score. Two hundred and ninety-two received sentence of death." Thirteen were executed here on 7th September. The formidable judge's chair is preserved in the Town Hall, and visitors are shown the picturesque timber house in High Street West at which, tradition hath it, this brutal judge lodged.

Dorchester derives its name from the ancient Roman name of Durnovaria, and Thomas Hardy has transferred part of this Latinity in writing of Fordington as "Durnover" in his novels. Close to the London and South-Western Railway station, on the Weymouth Road, is a field, now a municipal pleasure ground, containing what is called Maumbury Rings—a large, oval, grassy

mound, curved like a horseshoe. This great earthen ring, which it is estimated would hold 10,000 spectators, is supposed to be the work of prehistoric man, adapted by the Romans to the purposes of an amphitheatre. Extensive excavations were carried on in the amphitheatre by the British Archæological Association and the Dorset Field Club during five summers — 1908, 1909, 1910, 1912 and 1913—and among many interesting finds by the archæologists' spade must be mentioned the oblong cave at the east end, probably for the confinement of beasts, prehistoric shafts in which picks of red-deer antlers, worked flints, etc., were found, sundry human skeletons interred, and a well of the Civil War period, during which the symmetrical terraces were apparently added to the original ancient banks.

A crowd of 10,000 people is said to have been gathered upon it at the execution of Mary Channing, the wife of a grocer at Dorchester, who was strangled and burnt in the arena for poisoning her husband in 1705.

The Via Iceniana or Icknield Street came out of Wiltshire by Blandford to Dorchester and strikes on towards the west by Eggerdun Hill, about ten miles from the town, where it is clearly marked.

A Roman road went from Dorchester to

Ilchester, by Bradford and Stratton, so called as the Stret-tun, the village on the Roman stratum or road.

"It is impossible," writes Mr Hardy, "to dig more than a foot or two deep about the town, fields and gardens without coming upon some tall soldier or other of the Empire, who had lain there in his silent, unobtrusive rest for one thousand five hundred years. He was mostly found lying on his side, in an oval scoop in the chalk, like a chicken in its shell, his knees drawn up to his chest, sometimes with the remains of his spear against his arm, a fibula or brooch of bronze on his breast or forehead, an urn at his knees, a jar at his throat, a bottle at his mouth, and mystified conjecture poring down upon him from the eyes of boys and men who had turned to gaze at the familiar spectacle as they passed on."

In the excavations made when Mr Hardy's house at Max Gate was commenced graves were discovered, of which Mr Hardy wrote: "In two of them, and I believe in a third, a body lay on its right side, the knees being drawn up to the chest and the arm extended downwards, so that the hand rested against the ankles. Each body was fitted with, one may almost say, perfect accuracy into the oval hole, the crown of the head touching the maiden chalk at one end and the toes at the

other, the tight-fitting situation being strongly suggestive of the chicken in the egg-shell."

Maiden Castle, the *Mai Dun* or "Hill of Strength," one of the finest old camps in England, is situated most conspicuously to the right of a Roman road (now the Weymouth highway). It may astonish the traveller by the scale of its three earthen ramparts, the innermost being sixty feet in height and a mile or more in circumference. It is about two and a quarter miles south-west from the centre of the town, and may be reached by continuing on through Cornhill, crossing the bridge over the Great Western Railway and turning to the right just beyond it. Here, where the road reaches the open, the left-hand track must be followed. On climbing to the camp the pilgrim will find that these ramparts are as steep as they are lofty, and that they are pierced by intricate entrances formed by the overlapping ends of the valla and additionally strengthened by outworks. The view is commanding, but not remarkable for beauty, the principal features being the Roman roads diverging from Dorchester and the innumerable barrows which dot the hills near the sea. Opinions differ as to the origin of this remarkable hill fortress, but the weight of authority is in favour of its construction by the Britons and its subsequent

occupation as a summer camp by the Roman troops stationed at Dorchester.

The visitor will be interested in the old inns of Dorchester. In High Street East stands, just as described in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, that fine and most comfortable of country hotels—the King's Arms. From a doorway on the opposite side of the street Susan and Elizabeth-Jane, amid the crowd, witnessed the dinner given to the mayor. Through the archway of this inn Boldwood carried Bathsheba, fainting at the news of her husband's death. From the diary of a landowner of the neighbourhood (Mr Richards, of Warmwell), written more than a hundred and fifty years ago, we find that the King's Arms and Antelope were Dorchester inns in his days, as he writes that on Saturday, 13th October 1697, he "agreed wth Capt^{n} Sidenham, at the Antelope in Dorchest^{r}, for 100 great bushells of his choice oats, at 6s. 8d. p^{r} sack," and at other times dined and transacted other business there; and at the King's Arms bought "choice early pease for seed at 3s. 6d. per bushell."

At the Antelope Hotel, which is in South Street, Lucetta, passing through the town on her way to Budmouth (Weymouth), appoints to meet Henchard, but is not on the coach she mentioned. The White Hart Tavern stands at the east

entrance to the town, close to the bridge. Here Troy lay in hiding, planning his surprise return to Bathsheba ; we also encounter this inn again in *The Withered Arm.* Gertrude Lodge came here on her fatal visit to Casterbridge gaol.

On the opposite side of the road to the King's Arms the pilgrim may still take his ale at the Phœnix, the scene of Janny's last dance in *Wessex Poems.* In *The Mayor of Casterbridge* Hardy mentions a low inn in Mixen Lane (Mill Lane, Dorchester) frequented by all sorts of bad characters. In early editions it is called "St Peter's Finger," and it would seem that the author borrowed this curious name from a genuine inn sign at Lychett Minster. The real inn was called the King's Head, which has now been pulled down.

The Grammar School is in South Street, an Elizabethan foundation, built in 1569, endowed with a small farm at Frome Vauchurch, and some houses in the town, by Thomas Hardy, Esq., of Melcombe Regis. Additions were made to it in 1618, on ground given by Sir Robert Napper.

Close to the school are Napier's Almshouses, called Napper's Mite, founded in 1616 by Sir Robert Napier for ten poor men, who have a weekly dole and a small section of garden ground.

The front, which opens into a small cloister, bears a clock, on a large stone ogee-corbelled bracket, a model of one that bears the sign of the old George, or Pilgrim's, Inn at Glastonbury.

The Hangman's Cottage, mentioned in the story of *The Withered Arm*, is still extant. It is a small grey cottage in the meadows by the Frome, opposite the gaol. It is one of a cluster of cottages built of flint and chalk, faced with red brick and strengthened with iron ties.

The Bull Stake and the gaol, both of which figure in the novels, are in North Square, near St Peter's and the Corn Exchange. Approaching the Frome, we pass close to the Friary Mill (the old mill of the suppressed Franciscan Priory), near which was Jopp's cottage, to which Henchard retired after his bankruptcy. "Trees, which seemed old enough to have been planted by the friars, still stood around, and the back hatch of the original mill yet formed a cascade which had raised its terrific roar for centuries. The cottage itself was built of old stones from the long dismantled Priory, scraps of tracery, moulded window-jambs and arch-labels being mixed in with the rubble of the walls." The remains of the Priory ruins were used up as building material and no trace is left. The prison was largely built from its remains, while in its turn it is said to have

been erected from the ruins of a castle built by the Chidiocks.

In South Street we shall find the High Place Hall, which was Lucetta's house. It stands at the corner of Durngate Street, but the façade has been modernised and the lower portion has been converted into business premises. The depressing mask which formed the Keystone of the back door was taken from Colyton House, in another part of the town. If we go to the bottom of South Street and take the turning to the left we quickly come to a quiet byway on the right near the shire hall, called Glydepath Road. On the left of this narrow thoroughfare is the early eighteenth-century mansion called Colyton House. Here will be found the long filled-in archway, with the mask as its keystone: "Originally the mask had exhibited a comic leer, as could still be discerned; but generations of Casterbridge boys had thrown stones at the mask, aiming at its open mouth, and the blows thereat had chipped off the lips and jaw as if they had been eaten away by disease." The building to which the archway belongs was formerly the county town residence of the Churchills. This is Lucetta's house as to character, though not as to situation.

Just beyond the White Hart we come to the first of the two bridges (the second, Grey's Bridge,

being only a few hundred yards farther along) which have their parts in *The Mayor of Casterbridge.* Thomas Hardy has quaintly described these bridges and has discoursed upon the habits of their frequenters:

"Two bridges stood near the lower part of Casterbridge (Dorchester) town. The first, of weather-stained brick, was immediately at the end of High Street, where a diverging branch from that thoroughfare ran round to the low-lying Durnover lanes, so that the precincts of the bridge formed the merging-point of respectability and indigence. The second bridge, of stone, was farther out on the highway—in fact, fairly in the meadows, though still within the town boundary. . . . Every projection in each was worn down to obtuseness, partly by weather, more by friction from generations of loungers, whose toes and heels had from year to year made restless movements against these parapets, as they had stood there meditating on the aspect of affairs.

"To this pair of bridges gravitated all the failures of the town. . . . There was a marked difference of quality between the personages who haunted the near bridge of brick and the personages who haunted the far one of stone. Those of lowest character preferred the former, adjoining the town; they did not mind the glare of the

public eye. . . . The miserables who would pause on the remoter bridge were of a politer stamp."

Dorchester has now lost its fame for brewing beer. But about 1725 the ale of this town acquired a very great name. In Byron's manuscript journal (since printed by the Chetham Society) the following entry appears:—

"May 18, 1725. I found the effect of last night drinking that foolish Dorset, which was pleasant enough, but did not at all agree with me, for it made me stupid all day."

A mighty local reputation had "Dorchester Ale," and it still commands a local influence, for this summer I was advised by the waiter of the Phœnix Hotel to try a bottle of "Grove's Stingo" made in the town. It is a potent beverage—and needs to be treated with respect, to be drunk slowly and in judicious moderation. Thomas Hardy thus describes this wonderful stuff, the "pale-hued Dorchester" in his novel, *The Trumpet Major*:

"In the liquor line Loveday laid in an ample barrel of Dorchester strong beer. . . . It was of the most beautiful colour that the eye of an artist in beer could desire; full in body, yet brisk as a volcano; piquant, yet without a twang; luminous as an autumn sunset; free

from streakiness of taste; but, finally, rather heady."

Francis Fawkes, in his song of the Brown Jug (1720-1777), mentions the "Dorchester Butt," and perhaps the Dorset reader, with, it may be, some tender memories of his own, will fancifully identify "sweet Nan of the Vale" with another maid down Blackmore Vale way.

"Dear Tom, this brown jug that now foams with mild ale
(In which I will drink to sweet Nan of the Vale),
Was once Toby Fillpot, a thirsty old soul
As e'er drank a bottle or fathom'd a bowl;
In boosing about 'twas his praise to excel,
And among jolly topers he bore off the bell.

It chanced as in dog-days he sat at his ease
In his flow'r-woven arbour as gay as you please,
With a friend and a pipe puffing sorrows away,
And with honest old stingo was soaking his clay,
His breath-doors of life on a sudden were shut,
And he died full as big as a Dorchester butt.

His body, when long in the ground it had lain,
And time into clay had resolved it again,
A potter found out in its covert so snug,
And with part of fat Toby he form'd this brown jug:
Now sacred to friendship and mirth and mild ale,—
So here's to my lovely sweet Nan of the Vale!"

Far from the Madding Crowd is a novel concerned with Dorchester and the immediate

neighbourhood, most of the incidents happening in "Weatherbury" (Puddletown) and "Casterbridge" (Dorchester). On market day at Dorchester one still meets prosperous farmers, stiffly dressed children, lean, tanned, rough-necked labourers caged in their Sunday clothes and stout horse-dealers in grey gaiters and black hats, and it is not difficult to conjure up a picture of the hiring fair mentioned by Hardy, where Gabriel Oak appeared in search of a situation as bailiff. It will be recalled that Bathsheba was in the habit of attending the Casterbridge market to sell her corn, and here she met William Boldwood, who attracted her attention on account of his indifference to her. Bathsheba comes vividly before us with her "debut in the Forum" in the place of her uncle. We can picture her with her beautiful black hair and soft, misty eyes attracting considerable attention as she displayed her sample bags, "adopting the professional pour into the hand, holding up the grains in her narrow palm for inspection in perfect Casterbridge manner." There was "an elasticity in her firmness that removed it from obstinacy," and "a *naïveté* in her cheapening which saved it from meanness." In a "Casterbridge shop Bathsheba bought the valentine which she sent anonymously to Boldwood to tease him. It was this fatal valentine

that drew his attention to Bathsheba, and caused him to fall strongly in love with her, and in the end to shoot Sergeant Troy dead. After this deed Boldwood travelled over Mellstock Hill and Durnover Moor (Fordington Moor) into Casterbridge, and turning into "Bull-Stake Square," halted before an archway of heavy stonework which was closed by an iron-studded pair of doors," and gave himself up for murder.

The White Hart Tavern at "Casterbridge" serves to call to the reader's mind the reappearance of Sergeant Troy, *in propria persona*, after playing the part of Turpin in a circus at Greenhill Fair.

Yellowham Wood, "Yallam" Wood locally, and the "Yalbury Wood" of *Far from the Madding Crowd*, is about three miles from Dorchester on the road to Puddletown. In a keeper's cottage here dwelt sweet Fancy Day, and here it was, as told in another novel, that Joseph Poorgrass had the experience the recounting of which used to put that most bashful of men to the blush. "Once he had been working late at Yalbury Bottom, and had had a drop of drink, and lost his way as he was coming home along through Yalbury Wood. . . . And as he was coming along in the middle of the night, much afeared, and not able to find his way out of the trees nohow, a' cried out, 'Man-a-lost! Man-a-lost!' An owl

in a tree happened to be crying 'Whoo-whoo whoo!' as owls do, you know, Shepherd, and Joseph, all in a tremble, said, 'Joseph Poorgrass, of Weatherbury, sir!' 'No, no, now, that's too much,' said the timid man. . . . 'I didn't say *sir*. . . . I never said *sir* to the bird, knowing very well that no man of a gentleman's rank would be hollerin' there at that time o' night. "Joseph Poorgrass, of Weatherbury," that's every word I said, and I shouldn't ha' said that if't hadn't been for keeper Day's metheglin.'"

Here, as in many other passages, Hardy shows his minute knowledge of nature. He appears to know every sight and sound of animal and bird life, at all seasons of the year. Some readers have perhaps, as they walked in the woods just before the thrushes and blackbirds have finished their evensong, heard the note of the brown owl—a long and somewhat tremulous "Whoo-oo." It is a very musical note, and it does not at all resemble Shakespeare's "To-whit, tu-whoo," which so many other writers have copied. Long may the brown owl live to chant his dim song in "Yallam" Wood—and long may he escape the gun and trap of the gamekeeper! For, of all the cursed and vile things in this world, there is nothing that is worse than the trap that snares some beautiful wild thing and keeps it prisoner for long hours in

patient suffering, unrelieved of any hope but of being torn from the cruel teeth and dashed to death against a wall. Yet thousands of owls have been destroyed for the sake of a few pheasants in the coverts, and after all the mischief done by hawks and owls has been greatly exaggerated—it is part of the hereditary ignorance of the rustic. Perhaps if we are in ferny glades of Yellowham Woods "when light on dark is growing" we may hear that curious sound which has been compared to the quacking of a duck with a sore throat, and after it a sniffing sound not unlike a dog might make while scratching at a rat-hole. This is a hedgehog taking his constitutional. The witch in Macbeth says, "Thrice the hedgepig whines," but as my acquaintance with "hedgepigs" goes, their conversation is limited to a "quack" and a "snuff."

Fordington is a large suburb adjoining Dorchester. The Church of St George is a fine old edifice, with a tall battlemented tower which is a landmark for those approaching the town by road. Within is a stone pulpit dated "1592, E.R." Over the top of a doorway of the south porch there is a carving of great antiquity representing a vision of St George at the battle of Antioch. The saint, mounted, has thrust his spear into the mouth of a Saracen soldier with great force and unerring

aim. He looks very bored and might be saying: "This is very tame sport to one who is accustomed to slaying dragons." No doubt the semi-prone Saracen, who is trying to pull the spear out of his mouth, feels very *bored* too!

Away to the east of Fordington is the little village of Stinsford, which is reached by leaving Dorchester by the road leading east to Puddletown and bearing to the right soon after leaving the town. This is the "Mellstock" of the idyllic tale, *Under the Greenwood Tree.* In the churchyard of the ivy-covered church there are tombstones of members of the Hardy family, and on the face of the tower there is a bas-relief of St Michael. The parish school is one in which Fancy Day is introduced as the new teacher at Mellstock in *Under the Greenwood Tree.* "The Fiddler of the Reels," Mop Ollamore, whose diabolical skill with the fiddle produced a "moving effect" on people's souls, lived in one of the thatched cottages of this village.

To the south of Dorchester are the Winterborne villages, all places of rural content, in the shallow valley of a stream which only becomes visible in the winter. The church of Winterborne Steepleton possesses an ancient stone steeple. In the porch—a cool grey place on the hottest day—there are stone seats and flagstones of hoary

antiquity, and on the outer wall is an angel carved in stone which is said to date from before the Conquest. The most interesting of the Winterbornes is Came. Barnes, the Dorset poet, was rector here for the last twenty-five years of his life. The church is a thirteenth-century building, hidden in a hollow among flowers, winding paths, outbuildings and cottages of an unattractive mansion. Barnes is buried beneath a simple cross in the churchyard. Herringtone adjoins Came, and its chief feature is the old manor-house, the seat of the Herring family, and, since James I.'s reign, of the Williamses. Winterborne Monkton and Winterborne St Martin are both contiguous to Maiden Castle. The old church of the former has been much restored; that of the latter contains a Norman font and some old stone shafts near the altar.

The pilgrim who shall elect to reach Abbotsbury will find a road, which forks by a picturesque old pond, about half-an-hour's walk towards Winterborne Abbas.

It will be noticed in some of Hardy's novels that the name of a village or town will often crop up in the name of a character, as, for instance, Jude Fawley living in Marygreen, which may be identified with the village of Fawley Magna, in Berkshire; and the name of the schoolmaster of

Leddenton, really the village of Gillingham, near Shaftesbury, is Gillingham. It was at Fawley Magna church that Phillotson and Sue were married after she had parted from Jude: "A tall new building of German Gothic design, unfamiliar to English eyes, had been erected on a new piece of ground by a certain obliterator of historic records who had run down from London and back in a day. The site whereon so long had stood the ancient temple to the Christian divinities was not even recorded on the green and level grass-plot that had immemorially been the churchyard, the obliterated graves being commemorated by ninepenny cast-iron crosses warranted to last five years."

The unusual way in which the town of Dorchester met in one line with the open country is picturesquely described by Hardy: "The farmer's boy could sit under the barley mow and pitch a stone into the office window of the town clerk . . . the red-robed judge, when he condemned a sheep-stealer, pronounced sentence to the tune of Baa, that floated in from the remainder of the flock browsing hard by; and at executions the waiting crowd stood in a meadow immediately before the drop out of which the cows had been temporarily driven to give the spectators room."

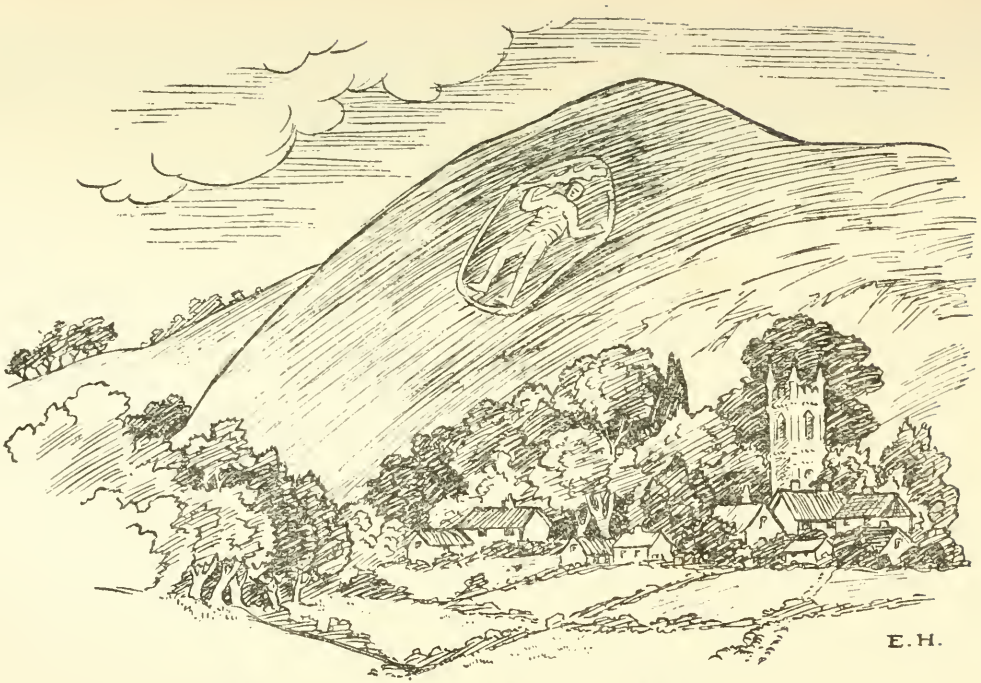
The intermixture of town and country life is again touched upon in a sketch of Fordington:

"Here wheat ricks overhung the old Roman street, and thrust their eaves against the church tower; great thatched barns with doorways as high as the gates of Solomon's Temple opened directly upon the main thoroughfare. Barns, indeed, were so numerous as to alternate with every half-dozen houses along the way. Here lived burgesses who daily walked the fallow—shepherds in an intramural squeeze."

The original manuscript of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, which is described in the Dorchester *Guide* by Harry Pouncy (published by Longman, Cornhill Press, Dorchester), as "an example of rare beauty of penmanship and of absorbing interest, especially in regard to the alterations" is now in the Dorset County Museum. The leaves of the manuscript have been bound in book form, and Captain Acland, the Curator, informs me the binding has resulted in the edges of the paper being cut, and the top edges being gilt. Let us hope that the marginal notes have not been maimed by the binder's guillotine—that is, if any marginal notes were added. However, the "absorbingly interesting alterations" are not yet for the public gaze, and Captain Acland was immovable before my entreaties to be allowed to make notes on them.

A most interesting jaunt from Dorchester is along the Sherborne Road northward for eight

miles to Cerne Abbas. The road from Dorchester bears to the left not far from the Great Western Railway and follows the River Frome. A mile along the road on the right, lying back and surrounded by trees, is Wolverton House, which figures in Hardy's *Group of Noble Dames.* This was formerly the seat of the knightly Trenchards, and is an interesting fifteenth-century house which has obtained a niche in history thus: "In this house John Russel, Esq., of Berwick, laid the foundation of the honours and fortunes of the illustrious family of the Duke of Bedford. Having resided some years in Spain, he was sent for by his relation, Sir Thomas Trenchard, to attend and entertain the Arch-Duke of Austria, King of Castile, who recommended him to the notice of King Henry VII., who took him into favour, and appointed him one of the Gentlemen of his Privy Chamber; and afterwards recommended him to his son Henry VIII." (Hutchins). The Russels were seated at Kingston Russel, where their old manor-house still remains. Wolverton was in later days the scene of a dread omen recorded by credulous Aubrey. The chief feature of the hall was a screen carven with the effigies of the kings of England; and "on the third of Nov., 1640, the day the Long Parliament began to sit, the sceptre fell from the figure of King Charles



The Giant, Cerne Abbas

the First, while the family and a large company were at dinner in the parlour." No wonder, when the Trenchard of that day proved a sturdy rebel, and did yeoman service for the Parliament in the county.

Lady Penelope, in Hardy's *A Group of Noble Dames*, was not an imaginary character, but a noble dame in real life. She was a daughter of Lord Darcy and in turn married George Trenchard, Sir John Gage and Sir William Hervey. She is described in Hardy's story as "a lady of noble family and extraordinary beauty. She was of the purest descent. . . . She possessed no great wealth . . . but was sufficiently endowed. Her beauty was so perfect, and her manner so entrancing, that suitors seemed to spring out of the ground wherever she went." The three suitors mentioned above would not be repulsed, and she jestingly promised to marry all three in turn. In the end Fate determined that her jest should fall true. First Penelope married Sir George Drenghard, who in the course of a few months died. A little while after she became the wife of Sir John Gale, who treated her rather badly. Two or three years after he died and Sir William Hervy came forward. In a short time she became Hervy's wife, and thus her promise, which was made so lightly, became an established

fact. But the canker-worm of rumour attributed the death of Sir John Gale to poison given him by his wife, and Sir William, believing it, went abroad and remained there. Penelope divined the cause of his departure, and she grieved so much that at last nothing—not even Sir William's return—availed to save her, and she died broken-hearted. Sir William afterwards was assured by the doctor who had examined Gale's body that there was no ground for the cruel suspicions, and that his death resulted from natural causes.

The road continues through Charminster, a large and scattered village, and steadily ascends to Godmanston, five miles from Dorchester.

A mile beyond, the road still rising, is Nether Cerne, with a tiny church, prettily situated. Steadily climbing another two miles, we reach Cerne Abbas, an exceedingly interesting little place, surrounded by chalk hills, on the River Cerne. It derives its distinguishing name from an *abbey*, which was founded in memory of Edmund the Martyr, King of East Anglia, who met his death at the hands of the Danes A.D. 870. It was erected about a hundred years later and was a place of some importance. Canute plundered the church. Here Margaret of Anjou sought refuge on the day following her landing at Weymouth, when she received tidings of the

defeat of her cause at the battle of Barnet, 1471. The remains consist of a gate-house, bearing the escutcheon of the abbey, and those of the Earl of Cornwall, Fitz-James and Beauford; the *abbey-barn*, a long, buttressed building, and some traces of the park and gardens.

The church, dedicated to St Mary, is of Perpendicular style and supposed to have been built by the abbots.

Immediately above the town rises a lofty eminence, popularly called the *Giant's Hill*, from an uncouth colossal figure cut on its chalky surface. It represents a man, 180 feet in height, holding in his right hand a club and stretching forth the other. "Vulgar tradition," says Britton, "makes this figure commemorate the destruction of a giant, who, having feasted on some sheep in Blackmoor, and laid himself to sleep on this hill, was pinioned down, like another Gulliver, and killed by the enraged peasants, who immediately traced his dimensions for the information of posterity." On the summit of the hill is an entrenchment called *Trendle* (*i.e.* a circle, Saxon). The Cerne giant is believed by some authorities to be of Phœnician origin and to represent Baal, but no one really knows much about him, and, it must be also added, the Dorset rustic cares very little about the matter.

CHAPTER VI

A LITERARY NOTE: THOMAS HARDY AND WILLIAM BARNES

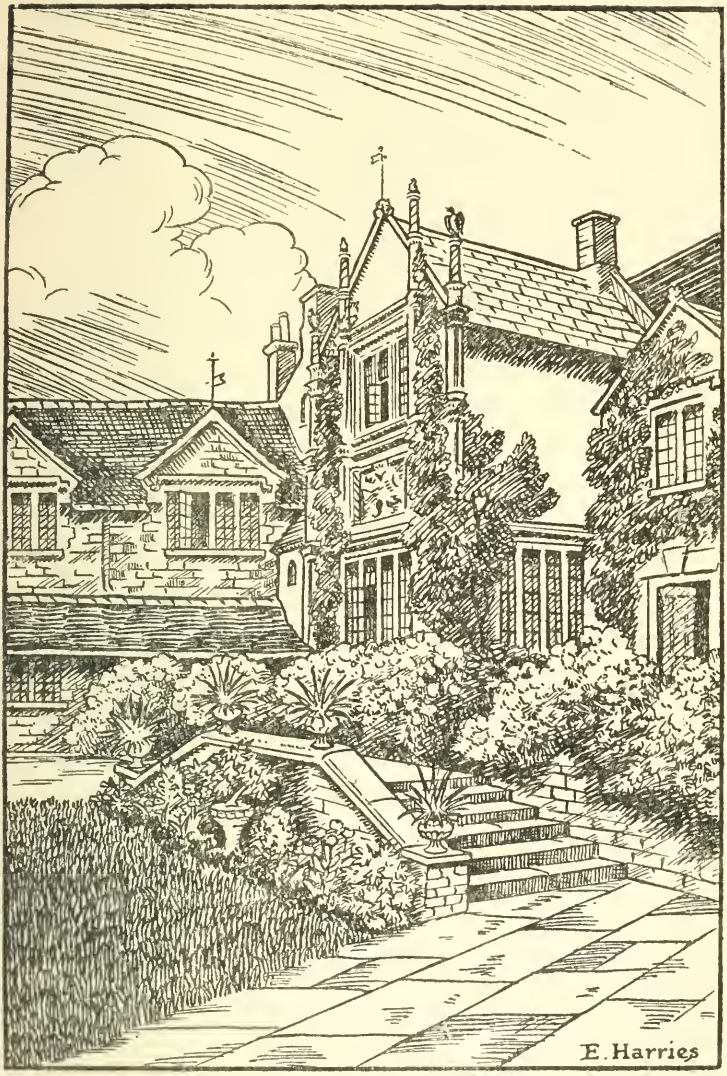
THOMAS HARDY is a Dorset man both by birth and residence. He was born on 2nd June 1840, in a pretty, thatched cottage in the hamlet of Higher Bockhampton. If one takes the London road out of Dorchester, a walk of a mile and a turn to the right will lead to the village of Stinsford; passing this hamlet and keeping to the road which crosses Kingston Park, a turn to the left breaks on to Higher Bockhampton. The house stands on the edge of Thoreycombe Wood, skirting Bockhampton Heath, but Hardy has told us that within the last fifty years the wood enclosed the house on every side.

Come into this old-world dwelling itself. The living-room is grey and white and dim. Ivy peers in at the open windows set deep in the thick walls. The floor is grey and shining, stone-flagged; the ceiling cross-beamed with rich old oak; the fireplace wide and deep, and the whole building covered with a fine roof of thatch. Here the

earlier years of the novelist were spent, here the aroma of the earth and woods invaded his heart when it was young. The environment helped to feed the long, long thoughts of the boy and gave him the image of the beginning of man living in the woods in the darkness, outwitting the wolves. It was here in the cradle of nature that Hardy first gained his minute knowledge of nature, and learnt how life and the meaning of life must be linked with place and the meaning of place. As in old Greek drama the chorus was directed to the audience at certain stages, so does Hardy turn the place spirit upon the progress of the story at certain moments with a vital bearing upon the action. He sees, as only the artist can see, how all the world is interwoven, and how the human spirit cannot be divorced from the plain course of nature without pity and disaster. To Hardy's delicate subtlety of mind in perceiving the right values of character and environment we owe the tremendous effect of certain great scenes: the selection of Woolbridge House, the antique and dismal old home of the Turbervilles, for the scene of Tess's confession; the thunderstorm during which Oak saved his beloved Bathsheba's ricks; the mist that rolled wickedly over the cart conveying Fanny Robin's body from the workhouse, and produced the horrible drip—drip—drip on

the coffin while the drivers caroused in an inn; the strange scene where Wildeve, "the Rousseau of Egdon," and the travelling ruddleman dice for Mrs Yeobright's money by the light of glow-worms. The delineation of Norcombe Hill at the commencement of *Far from the Madding Crowd* sets the key to which the theme of the story must always return after many delightful changes, and the vivid account of the lonely monarchy of the shepherd's night with his sheep, and the opulent silence when "the roll of the world eastward is almost a palpable movement" show the power and relentless grip of Hardy's work. Incidentally, also, with what fascinating detail does he introduce Bathsheba Everdene to the reader, so that we at once perceive what a curious blend of joyfulness, pride, astuteness and irresponsibility she would gradually develop as the years pass on—witness the little incident at the toll-gate, where, seated on the top of the loaded wagon, she refused to concede his rightful pence to the aggrieved turnpike-keeper.

The name of Hardy is very frequently encountered in Dorset, but the novelist's family is commonly said to be of the same blood as Nelson's Hardy. That Hardy's family possessed the sprightliness and resource of the Dorset people there can be little doubt, and this fact is



Bingham's Melcombe

(Ten miles north-east of Dorchester)

A LOVELY DORSET MANOR-HOUSE

accentuated by an anecdote concerning Hardy's grandfather, told by Mr Alfred Pope, a member of the Dorset Field Club, at a meeting of the society. About a century ago Mr Hardy's grandfather was crossing a lonely heath one midnight in June when he discovered he was being followed by two footpads. He rolled a furze faggot on to the path, sat down on it, took off his hat, stuck two fern fronds behind his ears to represent horns, and then pretended to read a letter, which he took from his pocket, by the light of the glow-worms he had picked up and placed round the brim of his hat. The men took fright and bolted on seeing him, and a rumour soon got abroad in the neighbourhood that the devil had been seen at midnight near Greenhill Pond.

At the age of seventeen Hardy was articled to an ecclesiastical architect of Dorchester named Hicks, and it was in pursuance of this calling that he enjoyed many opportunities of studying not only architecture, but also the country folk, whose types he has been so successful in delineating. Architecture has deeply coloured all his work, from *Desperate Remedies* to *Jude the Obscure.* The former of these stories (in which, as it will be remembered, three of the characters are architects practising the miscellaneous vocations of stewards, land surveyors and the like,

familiar to architects in country towns) appeared in 1871, signed only with initials. It was followed in the next year by *Under the Greenwood Tree*, and at this date Hardy departed from architecture (in which he had distinguished himself so far as to be a prize-winner at a Royal Society's competition). In 1873 *A Pair of Blue Eyes* appeared, and in 1874 *Far from the Madding Crowd* ran through the *Cornhill*. It was the first of his books to be published in yellow-backed form, which was then a sign that the novel had reached the highest point of popularity.

His first novel, *The Poor Man and the Lady*, was never published, and probably never will be, having been suppressed at Hardy's own request, although accepted for publication on the advice of George Meredith. But it was not long before he had finished a second story, *Desperate Remedies*, which first saw the light through the agency of Tinsley Brothers in 1871.

His first published article appeared without signature in *Chambers's Journal*, on 18th March 1865, entitled, "How I Built Myself a House," and was of a semi-humorous character. But previous to this Hardy had written a considerable amount of verse, all of which, with the exception of one poem, *The Fire at Tranter Sweatley's*, was unfortunately destroyed. This Wessex ballad

appeared, bowdlerised, in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in November 1875. The ballad was first reproduced in its original form at the end of Mr Lane's bibliography, together with the novelist's biographical note on his friend and neighbour, the Rev. William Barnes, the Dorset poet, contributed to *The Athenæum* in October 1886. Of Mr Hardy's remaining contributions to periodical literature in other directions than fiction I need, perhaps, only mention his paper on "The Dorset Labourer," published in *Longmans'* in July 1893.

The Trumpet Major was published in 1881, and the next novel was *A Laodicean*, which appeared originally in *Harper's Magazine*.

"The writing of this tale," says Mr Hardy in the new preface to the book, "was rendered memorable, to two persons at least, by a tedious illness of five months that laid hold of the author soon after the story was begun in a well-known magazine, during which period the narrative had to be strenuously continued by dictation to a predetermined cheerful ending. As some of these novels of Wessex life address themselves more especially to readers into whose soul the iron has entered, and whose years have less pleasure in them now than heretofore, so *A Laodicean* may perhaps help to wile away an idle afternoon of the comfortable ones whose lines have fallen to

them in pleasant places; above all, of that large and happy section of the reading public which has not yet reached ripeness of years; those to whom marriage is the pilgrim's Eternal City, and not a milestone on the way."

Hardy's next novel, *Two on a Tower*, was published in three volumes in 1882. Four years elapsed before Mr Hardy's tenth novel, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, made its appearance, though his story of *The Romantic Adventures of a Milkmaid*, which came out in *The Graphic* Summer Number in 1883, was reprinted in book form in America in 1884. *The Woodlanders* came next, this time through Messrs Macmillan, who published it in 1887 in three volumes. *Wessex Tales*, in two volumes, appeared in 1888, though the stories had been making their appearance in various periodicals since 1879.

In 1891 came *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, which took the reading and criticising world by surprise. Hardy became explicit and charged the collective judgment of society with being shallow and contrary to the laws of nature. He dashed aside the conventions and proclaimed a "ruined" girl a "pure woman," and made definite charges against the code of society, which, in the belief that it was contending against immorality, was all the while destroying some of nature's finest and most

sensitive material. Hardy does not preach, but there is more than a dramatic situation in Angel Clare's confession to Tess on the night of their wedding, for he shows the hopelessness of any justice coming to the " fallen " girl. Even if Tess had been faultless, all her faith, devotion, love and essential sweetness would have been given to an unjust and sinful man. The whole situation is summed up in the conversation which follows Angel Clare's confession of an " eight-and-forty hours' " dissipation. Hardy shows (and endorses) that it was quite right that Tess, with her natural, unsophisticated intelligence, should look upon her loss of virginity out of wedlock as a thing to be regretted and also a thing to be forgiven—just as the same event in Angel Clare's life:

" Perhaps, although you smile, it is as serious as yours or more so."

" It can hardly be more serious, dearest."

" It cannot—oh no, it cannot." She jumped up joyfully at the hope. " No, it cannot be more serious, certainly," she cried, " because 'tis just the same ! "

For life and light and movement it would be hard to surpass Chapter XXVIII. of *Far from the Madding Crowd*, where Sergeant Troy's skilful and dazzling exhibition with a sword bewilders

Bathsheba and ends in that unpropitious, fugitive kiss.

It is a curious fact that, although Hardy's novels are such a true living influence, there are many people who feel that as a poet he has somehow just failed to hit the mark. But he himself regards his verse as the most important part of his work, and a section of his readers look upon it as the most distinctive English poetry of the past twenty years. In some quarters his poems are received with that curiosity which is awarded to a man of genius who breaks out freakishly with some strange hobby. People might look upon Rudyard Kipling with just such curiosity if he invited his friends to inspect his latest experiments in fretwork. However, to those of us who have followed his lyric poems and his supreme achievement, *The Dynasts*, it seems a well-nigh inexplicable phenomenon that much of his poetry should have passed into the limbo of forgotten things. Is there something wrong with his poems, or unusual about them ? There is certainly a puzzling quality in his work. When his *Wessex Poems* were published in 1899 the reviewers, in a chorus, decided that it was " want of form " which weakened his verse, and it is interesting to read how *Literature* summed up his position as a poet :

"Here is no example of that positive inability to write well in verse which has marked several great prose writers, such as in Carlyle and Hume; nor of that still more curious ability to write once or twice well, and never to regain the careless rapture, as in Berkeley and Chateaubriand. The phenomenon is a strongly marked and appropriate accent of his own, composing (so to speak) professionally in verse, able to amuse and move us along lines strictly parallel with his prose, and yet lacking something. This is not a case like George Eliot's, where the essence of the writer's style evaporates in the restraint of verse. Never was Mr Hardy more intensely and exclusively himself than in 'My Cicely.' Yet is this a complete success? Much as we admire it, we cannot say that it is.

"'And by Weatherbury Castle, and therence
Through Casterbridge bore I
To tomb her whose light, in my deeming,
Extinguished had He,'

is not quite satisfactory. Why? Simply and solely because the form is grotesque. Here is the colour of poetry but not its sound, its essence but not its shape.

"It might seem only right that in the face of a volume of verse so violent and rugged as *Wessex Poems* we should protest that this is not the more

excellent way of writing poetry. At the same time, every man must preserve his individuality, if he has one to preserve, as Mr Hardy assuredly has; and we have no reason to suppose that it is the desire of the author of 'The Peasant's Confession' to found a school or issue a propaganda. On the contrary, it is far more likely that he has put forth his Wessex verses with extreme simplicity and modesty, not asking himself in what relation they stand to other people's poetry. As a matter of fact, the *Wessex Poems* will probably enjoy a double fate. They will supply to lovers of emotional narrative verse several poetic tales which they will lay up in memory among their treasures; and in time to come professors of literary history, when observing the retrogression of an imaginative period, and when speaking of Lydgate, of Donne, of the Spasmodists here, of the Symbolists in France, will mention Mr Hardy also as a signal example of the temporary success of a violent protest against the cultivation of form in verse."

But critics of discrimination are now beginning to discover that Thomas Hardy's poems do not lack the qualities which give poetic form a true balance. He fails to achieve popularity as a poet, they argue, because the "concentrated and unpalatable expression of his philosophy proves too

disagreeable to those who seek relief from life in literature," and because the first shock of the grinding harshness of his peculiar style "is a barrier against the recognition of his merits." Certainly he makes no direct appeal to the ear of the reader. But on reading his lyric poems a second time—some of which, it must be admitted, must assuredly offend those who have unbounded faith in the human soul, whether from the standpoint of the Church or otherwise—the first grotesqueness of effect wears off, leaving at times a clear-cut and bitter touch that it would seem impossible to improve upon. It is true we find among the youthful poems some of great gloom and sadness, but it is well to bear in mind when making an estimate of Hardy's work and personality that certain natures express their thoughts in unusual ways. It is all the time wrong to assume that Hardy does not perceive anything else in life but a bitter and hopeless procession, just because his eloquence is always keener upon perceiving tragedy. It is true, he himself has confessed, that he shares with Sophocles the conviction that "not to be born is best"; but at the same time the spirit which moves always under the surface of his poetry tells us that man, being born, must make the best of life, and *especially* do what he can to ease the burdens of

his fellow-men. After his moments of depression he finds his own consolations. He takes a great pleasure in the trivial little objects and customs of rustic life—those simple things that are best of all, and his poem *Afterwards* is a good example both of his measured and harmonious style, and of his "dark, unconscious instinct of primitive nature-worship":

"If I pass during some nocturnal blackness, mothy and warm,
When the hedgehog travels furtively over the lawn,
One may say, 'He strove that such innocent creatures should come to no harm,
But he could do little for them; and now he is gone.'

If, when hearing that I have been stilled at last, they stand at the door,
Watching the full-starred heavens that Winter sees,
Will this thought rise on those who will meet my face no more,
'He was one who had an eye for such mysteries'?"

The reader instinctively pictures Hardy as a morose, grim, cynical man—but he is really anything but that. From all accounts Hardy is mirrored in the whimsical and deep mirth that is so intermixed in the rustic characters in his novels. "It is too often assumed," says the capricious and tiresome Ethelberta—April-natured Hardy

would call her—" that a person's fancy is a person's real mind. . . . Some of the lightest of rhymes were composed between the deepest fits of dismals I have known."

Some years ago *The English Illustrated Magazine* printed an account of a visit paid by a cyclist to Hardy at his Dorchester home. Authentic pictures of Hardy are so scarce that I venture to draw on this interview :

" The picture he presented was, for the moment at least, all-satisfying ; there was more than nervousness in the strangely harassed-looking face, with the most sensitive features that I had ever seen. The deep-set eyes were troubled, but there was no mistaking their fearless courage. I knew that I was looking at a man whose soul was more ravaged than ever his careworn features were with the riddle of life and the tragedy of it, and yet a soul utterly self-reliant, for all the shyness of the outward man.

" I attempted no compliments, and asked him instead why he was so pessimistic a writer, why he wrote at once the most beautiful and the most dreadful of stories, and why he had not shown us far more often than he has done a picture of requited love, or of requited love that was not victimised at once by some pitiless act of fate.

" Mr Hardy had not sat down himself, but had

stood by the fireplace, with his white hands holding the lapels of his old-fashioned tweed coat.

"We were on better terms in a moment, as Mr Hardy replied, his voice curiously halting, but not as if he was in any doubt of his sentiments. It seemed a mixture of irony and diffidence.

"'You are a young man,' he said. 'The cruelty of fate becomes apparent to people as they grow older. At first one may perhaps escape contact with it, but if one lives long enough one realises that happiness is very ephemeral.'

"'But is not optimism a useful and sane philosophy?' I asked him.

"There's too much sham optimism, humbugging and even cruel optimism,' Mr Hardy retorted. 'Sham optimism is really a more heartless doctrine to preach than even an exaggerated pessimism—the latter leaves one at least on the safe side. There is too much sentiment in most fiction. It is necessary for somebody to write a little mercilessly, although, of course, it's painful to have to do it.'"

That is what we must do if we wish to move on the higher ideal of philosophical speculation as Hardy explains it. He points out that there is something in a novel that should transcend pessimism, meliorism or optimism, and that is the search for truth:

"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."

Charges of pessimism Hardy dismisses as the product of the chubble-headed people who only desire to pair all the couples off at the end of a novel and leave them with a plentiful supply of "simply exquisite" babies, hard cash and supreme contentment.

As I have hinted before, the face and the wealth of the earth are a constant joy to Hardy, and he has great admiration for the Dorset rustics—those sprack-witted, earthy philosophers who have won support for his novels even in circles where his ideals of life are not in favour. He enthusiastically follows the ways and works of nature in which man co-operates. One instantly calls to mind Winterborne, the travelling cider-maker in *The Woodlanders*, as an instance of this: "He looked and smelt like Autumn's very brother, his face being sunburnt to wheat colour, his eyes blue as cornflowers, his sleeves and leggings dyed with fruit stains, his hands clammy with the sweet juice of apples, his hat sprinkled with pips, and

everywhere about him that atmosphere of cider which at its first return each season has such an indescribable fascination for those who have been born and bred among the orchards."

The above is a prose-poem which is worthy to stand beside Keats' *Ode to Autumn.*

. . . . . .

William Barnes was born at Rushay, near Pentridge, a village about four miles from Cranborne, in the north-east of the county, on the Wiltshire border, and in the heart of the Vale of Blackmore, the beauties of which he was never tired of extolling in his gentle poems enriched with his native dialect. His mother was a woman of good education and refined tastes, and he attended an endowed school at Struminster, where the classes were composed of boys and girls and conducted in the American way. On leaving school he entered a solicitor's office in the same town, but at the age of eighteen he removed to Dorchester. In 1823 he went to Mere, in Somerset, where he worked as a schoolmaster for four years in loneliness. At this time he married Miss Julia Miles, and after an additional eight years at Mere he returned to Dorchester, where teaching was still his profession. One might almost say that Dorchester was his spiritual birthplace, for here his genius began to attract

more than local attention, and here he grew into the hearts of the people so deeply that when he passed away all wished to preserve his memory in the form of a public statue. Barnes was one of the secretaries of the Dorset Field Club. His most earnest wish was to enter the Church, and from St John's College, Cambridge, he was ordained by the Bishop of Salisbury in 1847, and became pastor of Whitcombe. He fell on troublous days and passed through a labyrinth of trials—sickness, death and sordid money embarrassments. Only once did he allow his pent-up humours of discouragement to break loose. One day he came in to his family with a sheaf of correspondence in which letters from duns were accompanied by others containing warm eulogy of the poet. "What a mockery is life!" he exclaimed; "they praise me and take away my bread! They might be putting up a statue to me some day when I am dead, while all I want now is leave to live. I asked for bread and they gave me a stone," he added bitterly. At about this time he was awarded a Civil List pension of seventy pounds a year, while the gift of the living of Came relieved him of the anxiety over money matters. The happiest days of his life were spent at Came, and here he followed with great diligence his one hobby—the Anglicising of the

Latinised English words in our vocabulary, which he called speech-lore.

He wrote two books on this subject, called *Redecraft* and *Speechcraft.* In his preface to *Speechcraft* he announced it as "a small trial towards the upholding of our own strong old Anglo-Saxon speech and the ready teaching of it to purely English minds by their own tongue." It was his fancy to replace all foreign and derived words with words based on Saxon roots. The following are selected from his glossary of Latinised words, with their Saxon equivalents facing them :—

Accelerate	to on-quicken.
Accent	word-strain.
Acoustics	sound-lore.
Aeronaut	air-farer.
Alienate	to un-friend.
Ancestor	fore-elder.
Aphorisms	thought-cullings.
Botany	wort-lore.
Democracy	folkdom.
Deteriorate	worsen.
Equilibrium	weight-evenness.
Equivalent	worth-evenness.
Foliate	to leafen.
Initial	word-head.

Thomas Hardy's note on the genius of his dead friend is a generous estimate : "Unlike Burns, Béranger, and other poets of the people, Barnes never assumed the high conventional style, and

he entirely leaves alone ambition, pride, despair, defiance, and other of the grander passions which move mankind, great and small. His rustics are as a rule happy people, and very seldom feel the sting of the rest of modern mankind—the disproportion between the desire for serenity and the power of obtaining it. One naturally thinks of Crabbe in this connection, but though they touch at points, Crabbe goes much further than Barnes in questioning the justice of circumstance. Their pathos, after all, is the attribute upon which the poems must depend for their endurance; and the incidents which embody it are those of everyday cottage life, tinged throughout with that 'light that never was,' which the emotional art of the lyrist can project upon the commonest things. It is impossible to prophesy, but surely much English literature will be forgotten when *Woak Hill* is still read for its intense pathos, *Blackmore Maidens* for its blitheness, and *In the Spring* for its Arcadian ecstasy."

In 1896 he published a copy of *Early English and the Saxon English.* In this he traces both Angles and Saxons. It was his idea that the ancient dykes which cut up so much of our land were delved by them to mark their settlements rather than to use in the case of warfare. He also sturdily asserted that the Britons were

accomplished road-makers before the Romans came, and that the Romans merely improved roads already existing.

The poem of *Woak Hill* is based on a Persian form of metre called *The Pearl*, because the rhymes are supposed to represent a series of beads upon a rosary. The pearl, or sequence of assonance, is shown in the second word in the last line of each stanza :

"When sycamore-trees were a-spreading
Green-ruddy in hedges
Beside the red dust of the ridges
A-dried at Woak Hill,

I packed up my goods all a-shining
With long years of handling
On dusty red wheels of a waggon
To ride at Woak Hill.

The brown thatchen roof of the dwelling
I then were a-leaving
Had sheltered the sleek head of Mary
My bride at Woak Hill.

But now for some years her light footfall
'S a-lost from the flooring.
Too soon for my joy and my children
She died at Woak Hill.

But still I do think that in soul
She do hover about us
To ho' for her motherless children,
Her pride at Woak Hill.

So lest she should tell me hereafter
I stole off 'ithout her

And left her uncalled at house-ridden
To bide at Woak Hill,

I call'd her so fondly, with lippens
All soundless to others,
And took her with air-reaching hand
To my side at Woak Hill.

On the road I did look round, a-talking
To light at my shoulder,
And then led her in at the doorway,
Miles wide from Woak Hill.

And that's why folk thought, for a season,
My mind were a-wand'ring
With sorrow, when I were so sorely
A-tried at Woak Hill.

But no; that my Mary mid never
Behold herself slighted
I wanted to think that I guided
My guide from Woak Hill."

Barnes saw the pathos in the joy of utter physical weariness of a labourer, and one of his finest poems depicts a cottage under a swaying poplar:

"An' hands a-tired by day, were still,
Wi' moonlight on the door."

He always has that deep, quiet craving for the hearth, the fire, the protecting thatch of a cottage, which gives his work a pathetic touch. I think sometimes that Barnes must have been nearer to being cold, homeless and tired at times than is generally understood.

CHAPTER VII

BERE REGIS AND THE ANCIENT FAMILY OF TURBERVILLE

> We who have passed into the Upper Air
> Thence behold Earth, and know how she is fair.
> More than her sister Stars sweet Earth doth love us:
> She holds our hearts: the Stars are high above us.
> O Mother Earth! Stars are too far and rare!

BERE REGIS, that "blinking little place" with a history extending back to Saxon times (identified by Doctor Stukeley with the Roman Ibernium), is a typical little Dorset town about seven miles to the north-west of Wareham. It makes a capital walk or ride from Dorchester, and it was this way I travelled. I left Dorchester by High Street East, ascending Yellowham Hill, the "Yalbury Hill" of Troy's affecting meeting with Fanny Robin, leaving Troy Town to pass through Puddletown and Tolpuddle. Evening had fallen when I arrived at Bere Regis, and the rising wind and flying wrack of clouds above seemed to presage a wild night. I was just wondering whether, although it looked so threatening, I dared ride on to Wareham, when my eyes rested on the Royal Oak Inn, with its Elizabethan barns, mossed and mouldering red tiles and axe-hewn timbers.

"It is at such houses," I thought, "that men may stretch out weary legs and taste home-cured bacon (I heard the squeak of a pig in the out-house), and such places are the homes of adventure. I will go in and call for ale and a bed."

So I walked straight into the courtyard, which backs upon the church, and found there a large man with considerable girth, a square, honest face and kindly eyes. He was wearing a cap, and wearing it in a fine rakish way too. His appearance gave me the impression that his wife had tossed the cap at him and failed to drop it on his head squarely, but had landed it in a lopsided manner, and then our friend had walked off without thinking anything more about it. He was singing a song to himself and staring at a pile of bundles of straw. He looked up and nodded good-humouredly.

"Looks like rain!" said I.

"Aw 'es, tu be sure, now you come to mention it. I dawnt think rain's far off."

"Can you tell me," said I, "if I can get a meal and a bed at this inn?"

"What you like," returned the man, with a quick tilt of his head, which drew my eyes with a kind of fascination to his ill-balanced cap, "but as I've nothing to do with the place I should ask the landlord avore me."

"Ah, to be sure," said I. "Sorry to trouble you. I thought you might be the landlord."

The man stopped singing his song to stare at me wide-eyed.

"Well, I beant; but it's a fine thing to be a landlord, with barrels o' beer down 'ouze and money in the bank."

"Then may I ask what trade you follow," said I, "and why you study that straw so intently?"

"Young fellow," said he, staring, "I follow a main-zorry trade in these days. I be a thatcher, and thatching to-the-truth-of-music is about done for. If you look at these thatched cottages about Dorset they will tell their own story. Why, the reed is just thrown on the roof hugger-mugger. They can't thatch no more down this part, I can tellee; they lay it on all of a heap."

"And is this the straw for thatching?" I inquired.

"Yes," said he, smiling; "they call them bundles of reed in Dorset—but in my country, which is Devon, they call 'em 'nitches o' reed.'"

"Then you are not contented with your trade?"

"Not quite," answered the thatcher, his face falling. "It has always been my wish to have a little inn—and barrels o' beer down 'ouze and money . . ."

"Far better be a thatcher," said I.

"I'll be dalled ef I can see why."

"It's an out-of-doors life in the first place," said I.

The thatcher nodded, and his cap looked about as perilous as the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

"It is a happier life, too, I should say."

"Aw! I an't ayerd nort about that," he returned.

"And who ever heard of a starving thatcher?"

"Young fellow," he sighed, "there soon will be no thatchers to starve. Tez a lost art is thatching. I am the last of my family to follow the trade, and we can go back three hundred years."

"Then thatch is dying out?"

"Yes, chiefly on the score of it being hard to 'dout' in case of fire."

"'Dout' is a strange old word. It means extinguish, I take it," said I.

"To be sure—extinguished. Maybe you've heard the story about the Devon gal who went to London as a maid and when she told the mistress she had 'douted' the kitchen fire she was told to say 'extinguished' in future, and not use such ill-sounding words. 'Ess, mum,' she said, 'and shall I *sting-guish* the old cat before I go to bed?'"

The thatcher laughed in his deep chest.

"But thatch suits us Devon folk middlin' well," he continued. "It's warm in winter and cool in summer, and will stand more buffeting by the wind and rain than all your cheap tiles and slates."

"And thatch is cheap too, perhaps?" I ventured.

"On the contrary," he answered. "Lukee, those nitches of reed cost four shillings each, and you want three hundred bundles for a good-sized roof. Then there is the best tar twine (which comes from Ireland), the spars and the labour to be counted in. It takes three weeks on the average house, but if the thatch is well laid it will last for thirty years, and if I set my heart on a job and finish it off with a layer of heath atop, well, then, it will last for ever. Ess, fay!"

"And what is the way you proceed to thatch a roof?" I asked.

"Well," he answered, "it's not easy to explain. 'Lanes' of reed—wheat straw, you would say—are first tied on the eave beams and gable beams; these are called eave locks and gable locks. A 'lane of reed' is about as long as a walking-stick and a bit thicker than a man's wrist, and a thatched roof is composed of these 'lanes' tied on the roof beams, in ridge fashion. Then when the reeds are all tied on, overlapping each other,

HURDLE-MAKING AT BERE REGIS

they are trimmed with a 'paring hook.' The reed has to be wet when put up; that is why thatchers wear leather knee-knaps. The best thatching reed comes from clay soil out Exeter and Crediton way."

"And where do you think," I asked, "can be seen the most perfect examples of thatching in England?"

"I lay you won't see any better than the cottages around Lyme Regis and Axminster. But soon Merry England will be done with thatch, for the boys of the village are too proud to learn how to cut a spar or use a thatcher's hook. Bless my soul! They all want to be clerks or school teachers."

My friend the thatcher had a profound contempt for "school larning" and he waxed triumphantly eloquent when he touched upon Council School teachers.

"What poor, mimpsy-pimsy craychers they be, them teachers," he remarked. "Fancy them trying to larn others, and ha'n't got the brains to larn themselves!"

. . . . . .

Bere Regis church is the most beautiful little building of its size in Dorset. It is the captain and chief of all the village churches, and has just managed to touch perfection in all the things

that a wayside shrine should achieve. There is an atmosphere about the old place that is soothing and above the pleasure of physical experience. The qualities of Bere Regis can only be fully appreciated with that sixth sense that transcends gross sight and touch. Upon entering the building one is captivated by the remarkable roof and the number of effigies, half life-size, in the dress of the period, which are carved on the hammer-beams. This magnificent carved and painted timber roof is said to have been the gift of Cardinal Morton, born at Milborne Stileman, in this parish. The roof effigies are supposed to represent the Twelve Apostles, but they are not easily identified. The canopied Skerne tomb possesses a special interest for its brasses and verse :

"I Skerne doe show that all our earthlie trust
All earthlie favours and goods and sweets are dust
Look on the worlds inside and look on me
Her outside is but painted vanity."

In the south porch will be found an interesting relic in the shape of some old iron grappling-hooks used for pulling the thatch off a cottage in the event of fire. An ancient altar-slab on which, perchance, sacrifices have been offered has been preserved, and there is also a fine old priest's chair, the upper arms of which have supported the leaning bodies of a great company of Dorset

vicars, for it must be remembered that the priest was not allowed to *sit* on the chair—but "leaning" was permitted. The Norman pillars in the south arcade are striking to the eye, and the humorous carvings on their capitals are objects of great interest. One of them gives a very good picture of a victim in the throes of toothache; apparently the sufferer has just arrived at that stage in which the pain is mounting to a crescendo of agony, for he has inserted his eight fingers in his mouth in an attempt to battle with his tormentors. The other figure displays some poor fellow who is a martyr to headache—perhaps a gentle reproof and warning to those who were inclined to tarry overlong in the taverns. But the main object of interest is the Turberville window in the south aisle, beneath which is the ledger-stone covering the last resting-place of this wild, land-snatching family, which is lettered as follows:—

"Ostium sepulchri antiquae Famillae Turberville
24 Junij 1710."

("The door of the sepulchre of the ancient family of the Turbervilles.")

It was at this vault stone that Tess bent down and said:

"Why am I on the wrong side of this door!"

Perhaps it is as well to recite the outline of

Hardy's story of *Tess* at this stage of our pilgrimage. Tess Durbeyfield, the daughter of poor and feeble-minded parents and descendant of a noble but somewhat wild old family, was forcibly seduced by a wealthy young loafer whose father had taken, with no right to it, Tess's proper name of "D'Urberville." A child was born, but died. Some years after Tess became betrothed to a clergyman's son, Angel Clare. On their wedding night Tess confessed to him her past relations with Alec D'Urberville, and thereupon Clare, a man who was not without sin himself, left her. In the end Fate conspired to force Tess back into the protection of Alec. Clare, who cannot be looked upon as anything but half-baked and insincere, returns repentant from Canada and finds her living with D'Urberville. In order to be free to return to Clare, Tess stabbed Alec to the heart, for which she was arrested, tried and hanged.

In this romance Bere Regis figures as "Kingsbere," and the church is the subject of many references. It was on one of the "canopied, altar-shaped" Turberville tombs that poor Tess noticed, with a sudden qualm of blank fear, that the effigy moved. "As soon as she drew close to it she discovered all in a moment that the figure was a living person; and the shock to her sense of not having been alone was so violent

that she almost fainted, not, however, till she had recognised Alec D'Urberville in the form."

Here Alec D'Urberville stamped with his heel heavily above the stones of the ancient family vault, whereupon there arose a hollow echo from below, and remarked airily to Tess: "A family gathering is it not, with these old fellows under us here ? "

In the south wall a doorway which has been long filled in can still be traced. There is nothing of special note in this alteration, but a legend has been handed down which is worth recording here. It is said that one of the Turberville family quarrelled with the vicar of Bere Regis and ended a stormy meeting by declaring that he would never again pass through the old door of the church. As time went on the lure of the Turberville dead in the ancient shrine obsessed him and he grew to regret the haste in which he had cut himself off from the ancient possessors of his land. After some years Fate arranged a chance meeting between the vicar and Turberville at a village feast, and under the influence of the general good-fellowship and merry-making they buried the hatchet and fell to discussing old times and friends. When time came for the breaking up of the entertainment it was only Turberville's dogged determination to keep his vow which

prevented a return to the old happy conditions before the breach of friendship.

"There is one thing I would ask you to do, Vicar," said Turberville as he parted. "When you attend vespers to-morrow just tell the old Turberville squires to sleep soundly in their vault. Although I have vowed never to pass through the church door while I am alive, I cannot stop 'em *carrying* me through when I am dead—so I shall sleep with them in the end."

However, the worthy vicar went to the town stone-mason next morning and arranged to cut a new doorway in the south wall, and thus it came to pass that the independent and stubborn Turberville once again was able to worship with the shades of his fathers and yet keep to his promise never to pass through the *old* door again.

The first of the family of Turberville was Sir Payne de Turberville (de Turba Villa), who came over with William the Norman. From Sir Payne down to the last descendants of the family who form the theme of Thomas Hardy's romance, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, the Turbervilles were a strange, wild company. It is excusable, too, in a way, for it appears that the first of the line, after the battle of Hastings, was one of the twelve knights who helped Robert FitzHamon, Lord of

Estremaville, in his evil work and returned to England when his commander was created Earl of Gloucester. In an ancient document of the time of Henry III. we come across a striking illustration of the unscrupulous ways of this family, for it is recorded that John de Turberville was then paying an annual fine on some land near Bere Regis, which his people before him had filched from the estate of the Earl of Hereford. The Turbervilles were established in the neighbourhood in 1297. Bryants Puddle, a very rude little hamlet situated on the River Piddle a little to the south-west of Bere, receives its title from Brian de Turberville, who was lord of the manor in the reign of Edward III. The village was anciently called "Piddle Turberville," but this name has been replaced by Bryants Puddle.

At a later period the Turbervilles came into the possession of the manor of Bere Regis at the breaking up of Tarent Abbey, and at this time the good fortune of the family was at its zenith. But with the spoils of the church came a gradual and general downfall of the old family, and with the increased riches, we may conjecture, the Turbervilles went roaring on their way more riotously than ever. There is an entry in the parish registers of Bere, under the year 1710, of the interment of Thomas Turberville, the last of

the ancient race. An intermediate stage of the house is represented by D'Albigny Turberville, the oculist mentioned by Pepys, who died in 1696 and was buried in Salisbury Cathedral. After the year 1710 the old manor-house of the Turbervilles, standing near the church, was strangely silent. Their time was over and gone, the wine had been drunk, the singers had departed. But the stories of their carousals and great deeds were still a matter for dispute and discussion at the village inn, and the eerie old house was especially regarded with feelings of awe and few cared to go near it after dark. It was not what they had seen, but what they might see, that caused them to shun the old place. I can picture the Dorset rustic of that time (and the distance between Hodge the "Goodman" of 1710 and Hodge the driver of the motor tractor is almost nothing at all) shaking his head on being asked his reasons for avoiding the house, and saying, with a grin, as how he "shouldn't like to go poking about such a divered [dead] old hole."

The ancient manor-house was allowed to lapse into ruin, and now nothing at all remains but a few crumbling stones:

> "Through broken walls and grey
> The winds blow bleak and shrill;
> They are all gone away.

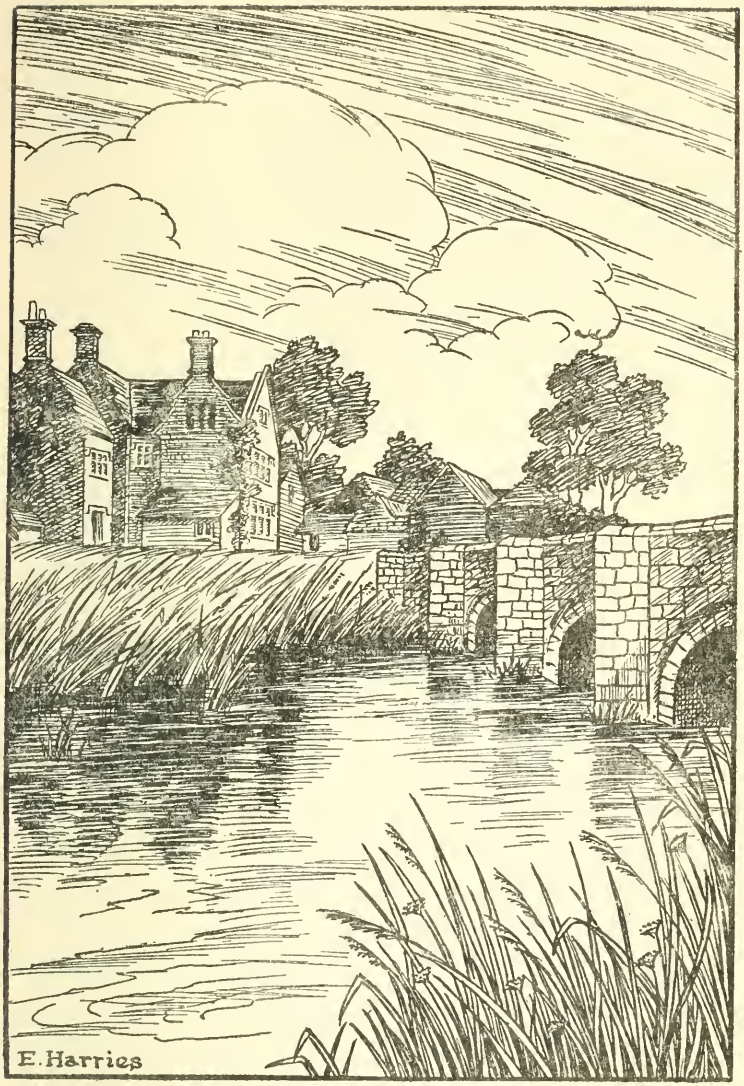
Nor is there one to-day
To speak them good or ill;
There is nothing more to say."

There is reason to believe that the rustics in Wilts and Dorset who bear different forms of the name Turberville, altered into Tellafield and Troublefield, are in truth the descendants of illegitimate branches of the family. One ancient Dorset rustic with the name of Tollafield, who aroused my interest, said to me in all seriousness that he would not care to go rummaging into the history of the old Turberville people. "You depend upon it, they were a bad lot—the parson told me so. There is no telling what them folks' speerits might not be up to, if so be the old devil had got ahold on 'em." This rustic, though an old man, had an eye as keen as a hawk's, was a man of immensely powerful frame, and would sleep under a hedge any night and feel little the worse for it. When I looked at his clear, hard blue eyes and straight, haughty nose he gave me the feeling that the Turberville blood had really survived in him. Then I learned that he was a flagrant poacher and, like the old earth-stopper in Masefield's poem,

"His snares made many a rabbit die.
On moony nights he found it pleasant
To stare the woods for roosting pheasants
Up near the tree-trunk on the bough.

He never trod behind a plough.
He and his two sons got their food
From wild things in the field and wood."

It was my fortune to run into the old fellow coming out of the Royal Oak one night with his friends. He was very exuberant and arrogant. I heard him offering to fight three men, "knock one down, t'other come on" style. Then it came over me with a sudden sense of largeness and quietude that the game old ruffian had his place in the order of things. This tyrant of the low Tudor tap-room was perhaps a Turberville, one of the rightful, immemorial owners of the land. If he has not the right to a pheasant for his Sunday dinner, then tell me who has. Perhaps when we, with our picture palaces and styles and jazzy-dances, have passed away our hoary friend the poacher will abide, his feet among his clods, rooted deep in his native soil. And if all this thin veneer of civilisation was suddenly ripped away from us, how should we emerge? Hodge would still go on poaching, sleeping under hedges, outwitting the wild things in the woods and drinking home-brewed ale. He would not even feel any temporary inconvenience. How old-fashioned and out-of-date we with all our new things would feel if we were suddenly brought into line with the eternally efficient Hodge!



Woolbridge House

From Bere Regis to Wool is a pleasant ride of five or six miles. Close to Wool station is the manor-house, now a farm, which was once the residence of a younger branch of the Turberville family, and readers will remember it is the place where Tess and Angel Clare came to spend their gloomy and tragic honeymoon. In Hardy's *Tess* the house is called Wellbridge Manor House, in remembrance of the days when Wool was called Welle, on account of the springs which are so plentiful in this district. Of course the house is named from the five-arched Elizabethan bridge which spans the reed-fringed River Frome at this point. Each arch of the bridge is divided by triangular buttresses, which at the road-level form recesses where foot-passengers may take refuge from passing motors or carts. The manor-house is of about the time of Henry VIII., and has been much renovated. Over the doorway a date stone proclaims that the building was raised in 1635 (or 1655), but it has been suggested that this is the date of a restoration or addition to the building. The two pictures of Tess's ancestors mentioned in the novel actually exist, and are to be seen on the wall of the staircase: "two life-sized portraits on panels built into the wall. As all visitors are aware, these paintings represent women of middle age, of a date some two hundred

years ago, whose lineaments once seen can never be forgotten. The long pointed features, narrow eye, and smirk of the one, so suggestive of merciless treachery; the bill-hook nose, large teeth, and bold eye of the other, suggesting arrogance to the point of ferocity, haunt the beholder afterwards in his dreams."

Old records show that in ancient times a curious custom was observed on Annual Court Day at Wool. It was known as collecting smoke-pence. It appears that the head of every house was called upon to pay a penny for each of his chimneys as a token that the property belonged to the manor. The money was collected by the constable, who was obliged to bring twenty pence into court, or make up the money himself.

The most characteristic and altogether unique feature of this nook of earth around Bere Regis is that superstition has not ceased to exist among the old people of the land. It is difficult to believe that there is a little district in England where superstition is still a part—a very obscure part, it is true—of the life of the people. But here I have noticed the shadow of witchcraft and magic thrown across the commonplace things of rustic life again and again while talking with old cronies over their beer, or along the winding hill roads. But it must be understood that the Dorset

man does not talk to any chance wayfarer on such matters: the subject of the "Borderland" and "spiritual creatures" is strictly set apart for the log fire and chimney corner on winter evenings. It is when the wooden shutters are up to the windows, and the tranquillising clay pipes are sending up their incense to the oak cross-beams, that we may cautiously turn the conversation on to such matters. On one such occasion as I watched the keen, wrinkled faces, on which common sense, shrewdness and long experience had set their marks, I wondered if two local farmers had made such sinners of their memories as to credit their own fancy. But no, I would not believe they were in earnest. It was only their quaint humour asserting itself. They were surely "piling it on" in order to deceive me! However, that was not the solution, for when the time came, somewhere about midnight, for one of the farmers to return home he stolidly refused to face the dark trackway back to his farm, and preferred to spend the night in the arm-chair before the fire. But let one of the dwellers on Bere Heath tell of his own superstitions. Here is old Gover coming over the great Elizabethan bridge which spans the rushy River Frome at Wool. One glance at his cheerful, weather-beaten face will tell you better than a whole chapter of a book that he is no

"lablolly" (fool), but a man of sound judgment, easy notions and general good character, like Hardy's Gabriel Oak. Leaning on the ancient stonework of the bridge, and smacking his vamplets (rough gaiters used by thatchers to defend the legs from wet) with a hazel stick, he stops to talk. A motor lorry filled with churns of milk passes on its way to drop its consignment at Wool railway siding.

"Tellee what 'tis," said Gover to me, pointing to the lorry: "'twill be a poor-come-a-long-o'-'t now them motors are taking the place o' horses everywhere. Can't get no manure from them things, and the land is no good without manure. Mr Davis the farmer at Five Mile Bottom hev got five Ford cars now where ten horses used to feed. He sez to me that he don't want any horse manure—chemical manures is good enough for him. But he dunnow nort 't-all-'bout-et! He'll eat the heart out of his soil with his chemicals, and his farm will be barren in a year or so. Ess, by Gor! You bant agwain to do justice to the soil without real manure, and them as thinks they can dawnt know A from a 'oss's 'ead."

Then I asked Gover about the Turberville ghost which we are told haunts this lane, and which is the subject of an allusion in Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles.* His keen old face became serious

at once. No ghosts or goblins had troubled him, he said, but John Rawles and another chap saw as plain as could be a funeral going along from Woolbridge House to Bere Regis, and they heard the priest singing in front of the coffin, but they could not understand what he did say. There was a cattle gate across the road in those days and Rawles ran to open it, but before he could get there the coffin had passed through the gate and it had all vanished! He had often heard tell of people who had seen ghosts, and he would not be put about if he did see one himself.

"So you have not seen the blood-stained family coach of the Turbervilles?" I inquired.

"No, I never see that," said Gover, shaking his head, "nor never heard of it."

"Then, as it is a tale that every child should know," I said, "I will tell you now, and you shall believe it or no, precisely as you choose. Once upon a time there was a Turberville who deserves to be remembered and to be called, so to speak, the limb of the 'old 'un' himself, for he spent all his days in wickedness, and went roaring to the devil as fast as all his vices could send him. I have heard it said that he snapped his fingers in the face of a good parson who came to see him on his death-bed, saying he did not wish to talk balderdash, or to hear it, and bade him clear out and send

up his servant with fighting-cocks and a bottle of brandy. Gradually all the drinking and vice, which had besieged his soul for so long, swept him into a state of temporary madness and he murdered a friend while they were riding to Woolbridge House in the family coach. The friend he struck down had Turberville blood in his veins too, so you may be certain the blame was not all on one side. Ever since the evil night the coach with the demon horses dragging it sways and rocks along the road between Wool and Bere, and the murderer rushes after it, moaning and wringing his hands, but never having the fortune to catch it up. The spectacle of the haunted coach cannot be seen by the ordinary wayfarer; it is only to be seen by persons in which the blood of the Turbervilles is mixed."

"Ah!" nodded old Gover, "I don't hold with that story. If so be as that 'ere Turberville who murdered t'other hev a-gone up above, 'tain't likely as how he'll be wishful to go rowstering after that ripping great coach on a dalled bad road like this." And then he shook his bony finger in my face and added: "And if the dowl have a-got hold on 'im he won't be able to go gallyvanting about—he'll be kept there!"

Wool has another attraction in the ruins of Bindon Abbey, lying in the thick wood seen from

the station, a few minutes to the south of the line towards Wareham. The ruins are very scanty. A few slabs and coffins are still preserved, and one stone bears the inscription in Lombardic characters :

ABBAS RICARDUS DE MANERS HIC TUMULATUR
APPOENAS TARDUS DEUS HUNC SALVANS
TUEATUR

The Abbey is in a wood by the river—a gloomy, fearsome, dark place. This is the Wellbridge Abbey of Hardy's *Tess*, and we read that " against the north wall of the ruined choir was the empty stone coffin of an abbot, in which every tourist with a turn for grim humour was accustomed to stretch himself." This is, of course, the lidless coffin in which Angel Clare, walking in his sleep, laid Tess. Woolbridge House is not so near to this spot as Thomas Hardy gives one to understand in the novel. Near the ruin is the old mill of Bindon Abbey, situated on the Frome, where Angel Clare proposed to learn milling. It is called " Wellbridge Mill " in *Tess*.

The old Abbey wood is full of shadows and is the kind of place that one would write down as immemorially old, barren and sinister. The singular impressiveness of its ivy-grown walls, shadowed by heavy masses of foliage, depresses

one dreadfully. The straight footpaths beneath the trees have been worn into deep tracks by the attrition of feet for many centuries. Under the trees are the fish-ponds which played such an important part in provisioning the monks' larder. They are so concealed from the daylight that they take on a shining jet-black surface. A book might be written about the place—a book of terrible and fateful ghost tales.

CHAPTER VIII

ROUND AND ABOUT WEYMOUTH

I walk in the world's great highways,
In the dusty glare and riot,
But my heart is in the byways
That thread across the quiet;
By the wild flowers in the coppice,
There the track like a sleep goes past,
And paven with peace and poppies,
Comes down to the sea at last.

E. G. Buckeridge.

MODERN Weymouth is made up of two distinct townships, Weymouth and Melcombe Regis, which were formerly separate boroughs, with their own parliamentary representatives. Of the two Weymouth is probably the older, but Melcombe can be traced well-nigh back to the Conquest; and now, although it is the name of Weymouth that has obtained the prominence, it is to Melcombe that it is commonly applied. Many visitors to Weymouth never really enter the real, ancient Weymouth, now chiefly concerned in the brewing of Dorset ale. The pier, town, railway station and residences are all in Melcombe Regis. The local conditions are something more than peculiar. The little River Wey has an estuary altogether out of proportion

to its tiny stream, called the Blackwater. The true original Weymouth stands on the right bank of the estuary at its entrance into Weymouth Bay. Across the mouth of the estuary, leaving a narrow channel only open, stretches a narrow spit of land, on which stands Melcombe. The Blackwater has thus a lake-like character, and its continuation to the sea, the harbour, may be likened to a canal. The local annals of the kingdom can hardly furnish such another instance of jealous rivalry as the strife between the two boroughs. Barely a stone's-throw apart, they were the most quarrelsome of neighbours, and for centuries lived the most persistent "cat and dog" life. Whatever was advanced by one community was certain to be opposed by the other, and not even German and English hated each other with a more perfect hatred than did the burgesses of Weymouth and Melcombe Regis. As they would not live happy single, it was resolved to try what married life would do, and so in 1571 the two corporations were rolled into one, the only vestige of the old days retained being the power of electing four members to Parliament from the joint municipality—a right which was exercised until 1832. Not until the union was the old-fashioned ferry over the Wey supplemented by a bridge, the predecessor of that which

now joins the two divisions of the dual town. The union proved to be a success, and in this way Weymouth saved both itself and its name from becoming merely a shadow and a memory.

It is to George III. that Weymouth must be eternally grateful, for just in the same way as George IV. turned Brighthelmstone into Brighton, it was George III. who *made* Weymouth. Of course there was a Weymouth long before his day, but whatever importance it once possessed had long disappeared when he took it up. For many years the King spent long summer holidays at Gloucester Lodge, a mansion facing the sea, and now the sedate Gloucester Hotel.

Considering its undoubted age, Weymouth is remarkably barren in traces of the past, and a few Elizabethan houses, for the most part modernised, well-nigh exhaust its antiquities.

Weymouth, which figures as "Budmouth" in Hardy's romances, is the subject of many references. Uncle Bengy, in *The Trumpet Major*, found Budmouth a plaguy expensive place, for "If you only eat one egg, or even a poor windfall of an apple, you've got to pay; and a bunch of radishes is a halfpenny, and a quart o' cider tuppence three-farthings at lowest reckoning. Nothing without paying!"

When George III. and the sun of prosperity

shone upon the tradesfolk of Weymouth the spirit of pecuniary gain soon became rampant. The inflated prices which so roused poor old Uncle Bengy even staggered Queen Charlotte, and "Peter Pindar" (Dr John Wolcot) criticised her household thriftiness in bringing stores and provisions from Windsor:

"Bread, cheese, salt, catchup, vinegar and mustard,
Small beer and bacon, apple pie and custard;
All, all from Windsor, greets his frugal Grace,
For Weymouth is a d——d expensive place."

Sandsfoot Castle, built by Henry VIII., on the southern shore of the spit of land called the Nothe, Weymouth Bay, is now a mere pile of corroded stone. It was built as a fort when England feared an invasion prompted by the Pope. The old pile plays a prominent part in Hardy's *The Well-Beloved.* The statue of King George, which is such an object of ridicule to the writers of guide-books, was the meeting-place of Fancy Day and Dick Dewy in *Under the Greenwood Tree.*

The "Budmouth" localities mentioned in *The Trumpet Major* are: the Quay; Theatre Royal; Barracks; Gloucester Lodge; and the Old Rooms Inn in Love Row, once a highly fashionable resort which was used for dances and other entertainments by the ladies and gentlemen who formed the Court of George III. It was also the spot

where the battle of Trafalgar was discussed in *The Dynasts.* However, the old assembly rooms and the theatre have now vanished. Mention of Hardy's tremendous drama reminds me that it is rarely quoted in topographical works on Dorset, and yet it is full of the spirit and atmosphere of Wessex. Thus in a few words he tells us what "Boney" seemed like to the rustics of Dorset:

"WOMAN (*in undertones*). I can tell you a word or two on't. It is about His victuals. They say that He lives upon human flesh, and has rashers o' baby every morning for breakfast—for all the world like the Cernel Giant in old ancient times!

"SECOND OLD MAN. I only believe half. And I only own—such is my challengeful character—that perhaps He do eat pagan infants when He's in the desert. But not Christian ones at home. Oh no—'tis too much!

"WOMAN. Whether or no, I sometimes—God forgi'e me!—laugh wi' horror at the queerness o't, till I am that weak I can hardly go round house. He should have the washing of 'em a few times; I warrent 'a wouldn't want to eat babies any more!"

There are a hundred clean-cut, bright things in *The Dynasts*, and some of the songs are so cunningly fashioned that we know the author must surely have overheard them so often that

they have become part of his life. Does the reader remember this from the first volume ?—

"In the wild October night-time, when the wind raved round the land,
And the Back-sea met the Front-sea, and our doors were blocked with sand,
And we heard the drub of Dead-man's Bay, where bones of thousands are,
We knew not what the day had done for us at Trafalgar.
(*All*) Had done,
Had done
For us at Trafalgar!"

Or the other ballad sung by a Peninsular sergeant—

"When we lay where Budmouth Beach is,
Oh, the girls were fresh as peaches,
With their tall and tossing figures and their eyes of blue and brown!
And our hearts would ache with longing
As we passed from our sing-songing,
With a smart *Clink! Clink!* up the Esplanade and down."

The principal attraction of Weymouth is its magnificent bay, which has caused the town to be depicted on the railway posters as the "Naples of England"; but Mr Harper, in his charming book, *The Hardy Country*, cruelly remarks that no one has yet found Naples returning the compliment and calling itself the "Weymouth of Italy." But there is no need for Weymouth to

powder and paint herself with fanciful attractions, for her old-world glamour is full of enchantment. The pure Georgian houses on the Esplanade, with their fine bow windows and red-tiled roofs, are very warm and homely, and remind one of the glories of the coaching days. They are guiltless of taste or elaboration, it is true, but they have an honest savour about them which is redolent of William Cobbett, pig-skin saddles, real ale and baked apples. And those are some of the realest things in the world. There is a distinct " atmosphere " about the shops near the harbour too. They shrink back from the footpath in a most timid way, and each year they seem to settle down an inch or so below the street-level, with the result that they are often entered by awkward steps.

Near the Church of St Mary is the Market, which on Fridays and Tuesdays presents a scene of colour and activity. In the Guildhall are several interesting relics, the old stocks and whipping-posts, a chest captured from the Spanish Armada and a chair from the old house of the Dominican friars which was long ago demolished.

Preston, three miles north-east of Weymouth, is a prettily situated village on the main road to Wareham, with interesting old thatched cottages and a fifteenth-century church containing an

ancient font, a Norman door, holy-water stoups and squint. At the foot of the hill a little one-arched bridge over the stream was once regarded as Roman masonry, but the experts now think it is Early Norman work. Adjoining Preston is the still prettier village of Sutton Poyntz, hemmed in by the Downs, on the side of which, in a conspicuous position, is the famous figure, cut in the turf, of King George III. on horseback. He looks very impressive, with his cocked hat and marshal's baton. Sutton Poyntz is the principal locale of Hardy's story of *The Trumpet Major.* The tale is of a sweet girl, Anne Garland, and two brothers Loveday, who loved her; the "gally-bagger" sailor, Robert, who won her, and John, the easy-going, gentle soldier, who lost her. *The Trumpet Major* is a mellow, loamy novel, and the essence of a century of sunshine has found its way into the pages. Even the pensiveness of the story—the sadness of love unsatisfied—is mellow. The village to-day, with its tree-shaded stream, crooked old barns and stone cottages, recalls the spirit of the novel with Overcombe Mill as a central theme. How vividly the pilgrim can recall the Mill, with its pleasant rooms, old-world garden, and the stream where the cavalry soldiers came down to water their horses! It was a dearly loved corner of England for John Loveday, and

if to keep those meadows safe and fair a life was required, he was perfectly willing to pay the price —nay, more, he was proud and glad to do so. In the end John was killed in one of the battles of the Peninsular War, and his spirit is echoed by a soldier poet who went to his death in 1914 :

"Mayhap I shall not walk again
Down Dorset way, down Devon way.
Nor pick a posy in a lane
Down Somerset and Sussex way.

But though my bones, unshriven, rot
In some far-distant alien spot,
What soul I have shall rest from care
To know that meadows still are fair
Down Dorset way, down Devon way."

The mill is not the one sketched in the tale, but it still grinds corn, and one can still see " the smooth mill-pond, over-full, and intruding into the hedge and into the road." The real mill is actually at Upwey.

Bincombe, two miles north-east of Upwey, is one of the " outstep placen," where the remnants of dialect spoken in the days of Wessex kings is not quite dead, and as we go in and out among the old cottages we come upon many a word which has now been classed by annotators as " obsolete." " I'd as lief be wooed of a snail," says Rosalind in *As You Like It* of the tardy Orlando, and " I'd as lief " or " I'd liefer " is still

heard here in Bincombe. There is a large survival of pure Saxon in the Wessex speech, and Thomas Hardy has made a brave attempt to preserve the old local words in his novels. He has always deplored the fact that schools were driving out the racy Saxon words of the West Country, and once remarked to a friend :

" I have no sympathy with the criticism which would treat English as a dead language—a thing crystallised at an arbitrarily selected stage of its existence, and bidden to forget that it has a past and deny that it has a future. Purism, whether in grammar or vocabulary, almost always means ignorance. Language was made before grammar, not grammar before language. And as for the people who make it their business to insist on the utmost possible impoverishment of our English vocabulary, they seem to me to ignore the lessons of history, science, and common sense.

" It has often seemed to me a pity, from many points of view—and from the point of view of language among the rest—that Winchester did not remain, as it once was, the royal, political, and social capital of England, leaving London to be the commercial capital. The relation between them might have been something like that between Paris and Marseilles or Havre ; and perhaps, in that case, neither of them would have

been so monstrously overgrown as London is to-day. We should then have had a metropolis free from the fogs of the Thames Valley; situated, not on clammy clay, but on chalk hills, the best soil in the world for habitation; and we might have preserved in our literary language a larger proportion of the racy Saxon of the West Country. Don't you think there is something in this?"

Returning from Bincombe and passing through Sutton to Preston we come in a mile to Osmington. A short distance beyond the village a narrow road leads off seawards to Osmington Mills. Crossing the hills, this narrower road descends to the coast and the Picnic Inn—a small hostelry noted for "lobster lunches" and "prawn teas." If we strike inland from Osmington we come to Poxwell, the old manor-house of the Hennings, a curiously walled-in building with a very interesting gate-house. This is the Oxwell Manor of *The Trumpet Major* and the house of Benjamin Derriman—"a wizened old gentleman, in a coat the colour of his farmyard, breeches of the same hue, unbuttoned at the knees, revealing a bit of leg above his stocking and a dazzlingly white shirt-frill to compensate for this untidiness below. The edge of his skull round his eye-sockets was visible through the skin, and he walked with great apparent difficulty."

Pressing onward from this village, we arrive, after a two-mile walk, at "Warm'ell Cross," three miles south-west of Moreton station. The left road leads to Dorchester, the right one to Wareham, and the centre one across the immemorially ancient and changeless "Egdon Heath." Here we turn to the right and Owermoigne, the "Nether Mynton" in which the events of *The Distracted Preacher* take place. Here indeed is a nook which seems to be a survival from another century; a patch of England of a hundred years ago set down in the England of to-day. The church where Lizzie Newberry and her smugglers stored "the stuff" is hidden from those who pass on the highroad and is reached by a little rutty, crooked lane. The body of the church has been rebuilt, but the tower where the smugglers looked down upon the coastguard officers searching for their casks of brandy remains the same.

The highway leads for two miles along the verge of Egdon Heath, and then we come to a right-hand turning taking us past Winfrith Newburgh and over the crest of the chalk downs steeply down to West Lulworth.

Lulworth Cove is justly considered one of the most delightful and picturesque retreats on the coast. It is a circular little basin enclosed by

towering cliffs of chalk and sand and entered by a narrow opening between two bluffs of Portland stone. It exhibits a section of all the beds between the chalk and oolite, and owes its peculiar form to the unequal resistance of these strata to the action of the sea. The perpetually moving water, having once pierced the cliff of stone, soon worked its way deeply into the softer sand and chalk.

Lulworth is the "Lullstead Cove" of the Hardy novels. Here Sergeant Troy was supposed to have been drowned; it is one of the landing-places chosen by the Distracted Preacher's parishioners during their smuggling exploits, and in *Desperate Remedies* it is the first meeting-place of Cynthera Graye and Edward Springrove.

The cove is most conveniently reached from Swanage by steamer. By rail the journey is made to Wool and thence by bus for five miles southward. By road the short way is by Church Knowle, Steeple, Tyneham and East Lulworth—but the hills are rather teasing; however, the views are wonderful. It is nine miles if one takes the Wareham road from Corfe as far as Staborough, there turning to the left for East Holme, West Holme and East Lulworth.

The entrance to the cove from the Channel is a narrow opening in the cliff, which here rises

straight from the sea. Mounted on a summit on the eastern side of the breach is a coastguard's look-out, while in a hollow on the other side are the remains of Little Bindon Abbey. The cove is an almost perfect circle, and in summer the tide, as it flows in, fills the white cove with a shimmering sheet of light blue water. Each wave breaks the surface into a huge circle, and the effect from the heights is a succession of wonderful sparkling rings vanishing into the yellow sands. To the east rise the ridges of Bindon Hill and the grey heights of Portland stone that terminate seaward in the *Mupe Rocks*, then the towering mass of *Ring's Hill*, crowned by the large oblong entrenchment known as Flower's Barrow, which has probably been both a British and a Roman camp.

In the summer steamers call daily at the cove. The landing is effected by means of boats or long gangways. After having climbed the hill roads into Lulworth, the pilgrim will not, I am certain, look with any delight upon a return to them, and will welcome an alternative trip to Swanage, Weymouth or Bournemouth by an excursion steamer.

Portisham, under the bold, furzy hills that rise to the commanding height of Blackdown, appears in *The Trumpet Major* as the village to which

CORFE CASTLE

From a photograph taken in 1865

The old-time shepherd stands in the foreground with his dog - a shaggy ruffian of a now fast-disappearing breed

Bob Loveday (who was spasmodically in love with Anne Garland) comes to attach himself to Admiral Hardy for service in the Royal Navy. Notwithstanding the fact that Robert Loveday is merely an imaginary character, the admiral was a renowned hero in real life, and no less a personage than Admiral Sir Thomas Hardy. He lived here, in a picturesque old house just outside the village, and the chimney-like tower on Black Down was erected to his memory. In a garden on the opposite side of the road to Hardy's house is a sundial, inscribed :

JOSEPH HARDY, ESQ.
KINGSTON RUSSELL, LAT. 50° 45′
1769
FUGIO FUGE

Admiral Hardy was born at Kingston Russell, and his old home at Portisham is still in the possession of a descendant on the female side.

From Portisham a walk of four miles leads to Abbotsbury, situated at the verge of the Vale of Wadden and the Chesil Beach. The railway station is about ten minutes' walk from the ancient village, which consists of a few houses picturesquely dotted around the church and scattered ruins of the Abbey of St Peter. The abbey was originally founded in King Knut's

reign by Arius, the "house-carl," or steward, to the king, about 1044, in the reign of Edward the Confessor. The building at the south-east corner of the church is part of the old abbey. It is now used as a carpenter's shop, but an old stoup can be seen in the corner. At the farther end of this building is a cell in which the last abbot is said to have been starved to death.

A gate-house porch and a buttressed granary of fourteenth-century architecture, still used as a barn, and a pond, with a tree-covered island, the ancient fish-pond of the monks, are all that remain to remind us of the historic past of this spot.

CHAPTER IX

POOLE

THE wide expanse of Poole Harbour is a well-known haunt of sportsmen, for in the winter it is the home of innumerable wild-fowl, and for those who are fond of yachting and pottering about with boats it is large enough to test their skill and patience in controlling a craft in the wind and wave. Here we get a double tide, the second rising rather higher than the first, and when the tide is in the view is not unlike a Dutch landscape. But the ebb lays bare acres of mud-banks, which mar the prospect. However, the marine emanations from the mud-banks are said to be very salubrious. This harbour is the only haven between Southampton and Weymouth for yachting men.

Inland from Poole the country is pleasantly varied by hills and heaths, through which, on the west side of the harbour, the verge of Bournemouth is reached, and an hour's walk will take the pilgrim over the Hampshire boundary.

Poole Quay, where we smell the smell of tar, piled-up teak and reeking pine, is an interesting

place for lovers of the picturesque. Here we find an old postern gate of Richard III.'s day, and the Town Cellar or Wool House. The last recalls the days when Poole was part of the manor of Canford. The lords of Canford sometimes received toll in kind, and the goods handed over were stored in this "Town Cellar." It is particularly interesting for the way its walls are formed, of flint and large, squared pieces of stone.

The smuggling for which Poole was long notorious is handed down to posterity by the following doggerel :—

"If Poole was a fish-pool, and the men of Poole fish,
There'd be a pool for the devil, and fish for his dish."

One of the most daring and successful of English buccaneers was *Harry Page* of Poole, or, as he was more commonly called, *Arripay*. His enterprises were principally directed against the coasts of France and Spain, where he committed such havoc that a formidable expedition was fitted out in those countries to destroy him. It sailed along our southern shores, destroying as opportunity offered, until it reached Poole. Here it landed, and a battle ensued, in which the inhabitants were driven from the town and the brother of Arripay killed.

The island of *Brownsea* or *Branksea* (it has a score of other variations) is the most prominent feature in Poole Harbour. It is ovoid in shape, about one and a half miles long by one mile broad, and lies just within the narrow harbour entrance, the main channel sweeping round its eastern side. This made the island of considerable importance in the defence of the port, and led to the erection of *Brownsea Castle* towards the end of the reign of Henry VIII. Prior to this Brownsea had been part of the possessions of the Abbey of Cerne. The castle was almost wholly destroyed by fire in 1896, and in the following year rebuilt.

From Poole the pilgrim can cross by the toll-bridge to Hamworth and visit Lytchett Minster, which is two miles north-west of the lonely railway junction. Part of the action of *The Hand of Ethelberta* takes place in this neighbourhood. The sign of one of the village inns, "St Peter's Finger," is one of the most interesting features of Lytchett Minster. The sign shows St Peter holding up a hand with two extended fingers, and is a curious instance of the way in which old terms and traditions are exposed to corruption. Sir B. Windle explains the matter tersely and clearly: "August the 1st, Lammas Day, known in the calendar of the Catholic Church as St Peter ad Vincula, was one of the days on which prædial

service had to be done for the lord of certain manors, as a condition of tenure by the occupants. Such lands were called St Peter-ad-Vincula lands, a term which easily got corrupted into St Peter's finger."

A brief description of Poole—under the Wessex name of "Havenpool"—is given in Hardy's "To please his Wife," one of the short stories of *Life's Little Ironies.* It is the story of Captain Shadrack Jolliff, who gave up the sea and settled down in his native town as a grocer, marrying Joanna Phippard. They had two sons, but the captain did not make much progress in business and his wife persuaded him to go to sea again, as they were in need of money. He bought a small vessel and went into the Newfoundland trade, returning home with his makings, which were deemed insufficient by his wife. Accordingly he resolved to make another voyage, and take his sons with him so that his profits might be more considerable. From this voyage they never returned, and Joanna was left penniless. She spent the rest of her life expecting the return of her husband and sons.

It is evident that Hardy chose the name of Jolliff from his counterpart in real life, an honest, deep-hearted son of Poole, Peter Jolliff by name, master of the *Sea Adventurer.* Off

Swanage, in 1694, with only the aid of a small boy, he captured a French privateer and made its crew prisoners of war. He secured royal recognition for this bold act and received a gold chain and medal from the hands of the King.

To the pilgrim who seeks things of antique beauty and interest on foot, with staff and wallet, in the old way, I cannot recommend a more enjoyable route than along the coast from Poole to Lyme, which may be covered in a week. But to do the thing comfortably ten days would be more advisable. Here is the itinerary if a week is taken. First day, borders of Poole Harbour by Studland to Swanage; second day, Swanage to West Lulworth; the third, Lulworth by Osmington to Weymouth; the fourth, Weymouth and Portland; the fifth, Weymouth by Abbotsbury to Bridport; and the sixth, Bridport to Lyme. Should the walker allow himself a few extra days he might give an extra day to Purbeck, to visit Corfe Castle, pay a visit to Dorchester, and to give himself two days between Weymouth and Bridport, halting midway at Abbotsbury.

CHAPTER X

SWANAGE AND CORFE CASTLE

SWANAGE is a well-known seaside resort, rapidly growing in favour. It nestles in the farther corner of a lovely little bay, and though in the rapid extension of rows of newly arisen houses, consequent upon the development of its fame as a watering-place, much of its old-time, half-sleepy, half-commercial aspect has passed away, Kingsley's still remains the best description of this spot — "well worth seeing, and when once seen not easily to be forgotten. A little semicircular bay, its northern horn formed by high cliffs of white chalk (*Ballard Head*), ending in white, isolated stacks and peaks (*The Pinnacles, Old Harry and his Wife*, etc.), round whose feet the blue sea ripples for ever. In the centre of the bay the softer Wealden beds have been worn away, forming an amphitheatre of low sand and clay cliffs. The southern horn (*Peveril Point*) is formed by the dark limestone beds of the Purbeck marble. A quaint, old-world village slopes down to the water over green downs, quarried, like some gigantic rabbit-

burrow, with the stone workings of seven hundred years. Land-locked from every breeze, huge elms flourish on the dry sea beach, and the gayest and tenderest garden flowers bask under the hot stone walls."

Tilly Whim is one of the attractions here. A short walk by Peveril Point, Durlston Bay and Durlston Head leads to Tilly Whim, which is on the eastern side of oddly named *Anvil Cove*, and is the first of a series of cliff quarries opened in the Portland-Purbeck beds along the coast. The cliff has been tunnelled into a series of gigantic chambers, supported by huge pillars of the living rock and opening on a platform in the face of the precipice, beneath which the waters roar and rage almost unceasingly. The boldness of the headland, the sombre greys of the rocks, the rude, massive columns which support the roof of the huge cavity, the restless sea—all are elements that heighten the scenic effect of a spot almost unique of its kind. Tilly Whim has been compared to a "huge rock temple"—like those of India.

Thomas Hardy has left us another interesting description of the Swanage of bygone days: "Knollsea was a seaside village, lying snugly within two headlands, as between a finger and thumb. Everybody in the parish who was not a

boatman was a quarrier, unless he were the gentleman who owned half the property and had been a quarryman, or the other gentleman who owned the other half and had been to sea."

At the time this was written the steamers were moored to a "row of rotten piles," but these have long passed away and their place has been taken by a substantial pier. But, let there be what changes there may, there will always be quarries in the town; it is one of those primeval vocations which remain unchanged and unchangeable in the midst of our changing civilisation. The quarry folk were an exceptionally reserved and isolated people, and the way their occupation has worked in the creation of a peculiar race is, while not at all surprising, yet very remarkable. The quarries have afforded a singular and most interesting instance of the survival, in full working order, of a mediæval trades guild of a somewhat primitive type, and even in these days no stranger is permitted to share in their rights and privileges.

The right to become a quarryman is inherited from one family to another, and the admission into the guild is an important ceremony: "The quarries and merchants have from time immemorial formed a sort of guild or company, whose rules are still enforced, affecting not only the prices of work, but determining the whole

THE FAMOUS TILLYWHIM CAVES

The mine-like entrance, from a photograph taken in 1860

social position and character of the people. The Society calls itself 'The Company of the Marblers and Stone-Cutters of the Isle of Purbeck,' and its meetings are held annually on Shrove Tuesday in the Townhall of Corfe Castle. Here they choose wardens and stewards, settle bye-laws and other business, and determine any difference between members in relation to the trade, or punish any infractions of their regulations. At these meetings the apprentices, who can only be sons of quarrymen, are, when they have attained the age of twenty-one, made free members of this community, on presenting themselves in 'court' with a fee of six shillings and eightpence, a penny loaf in one hand and a pot of beer in the other. Another portion of the business consists in a visit to the old wharf at Owre, and there renewing their ancient custom of presenting a pound of pepper to the landlord of the little inn there, receiving a cake from him, and having a game of foot-ball, which, in connection with this commemoration of the ancient acknowledgment for rent or use of wharfage, is called the 'Pepper Ball.' Seven years after taking up their freedom freemen may take apprentices. The widow of a freeman may take up her freedom on payment of one shilling, and then employ apprentices and carry on business. At the annual meeting the

sons of freemen are registered, and are not allowed to work at any department of the business unless duly registered."

The great majority of the old quarry-owners were members of a dozen families only, there being just a score of Bowers; Collinses, Harrises, Haysomes, Normans, Phippards and Tomeses averaging half-a-dozen each; with Coopers, Corbens, Landers, Stricklands and Bonfields not far behind.

New-comers were much disliked by the quarrymen, and the custom of "marrying the land" was observed in former days and, for aught I know, may be observed now. However, we do know that "foreigners" were not allowed to hold land in the Isle of Portland a hundred years ago, and the inhabitants, who claimed to be true descendants of the Phœnicians who traded with Cornwall and Devonshire for tin, kept themselves a distinct people. In "marrying the land" the contracting parties met at church, and joining hands the one who handed over the property simply said: "I, Uncle Tom" (the surname was never used by the quarry folk), "give to thee, Cousin Antony, such-and-such land." The clergyman then placed his hands over the others, and the contract was concluded.

As I have said, the old-world village of Swanage has altered much, and has become a town, and

since the opening of the branch railway from Wareham in the latter end of the eighties of the nineteenth century the ancient customs and characters of those unhurried, simpler, happier days have been swept away. The calming quietude of the quaint old stone houses is now disturbed by ugly, modern erections of red brick. But the quaint cottages, solid in great stone slabs and stone tiles, still breathe the true artlessness of the quarry folk. They are an instance of provident care and sound workmanship defying the neglect of a hundred successive tenants. The High Street of Old Swanage, which rises uphill from the Ship Hotel towards the church, traversing the centre of the town from east to west, seems saturated with human influence and has a flavour all its own. Half-way up the street on the right is the Town Hall, with an ornate façade which once formed part of the Mercers' Hall in London, designed by Sir Christopher Wren. A few yards down the side-turning by the hall can be seen, on the left, an even greater curiosity, the Old Lock-Up, of stone, "erected," as an inscription records, "for the prevention of wickedness and vice by friends of religion and good order, A.D. 1803."

On the left is Purbeck House, a low, private residence, built by a "local Mæcenas," the late Mr Burt, the contractor, in 1876. The fish vane,

of burnished copper, formerly adorned Billingsgate Market, and the wall fronting the street is faced with granite chips from the Albert Memorial, Hyde Park.

When we reach the highest point of the main street the hill pitches down to the right, and we look upon a prospect of the town with a character of its own, not unworthy of observation, in which the sturdy, square-towered church is a striking feature. To the left is a mill-pond, which begins to wear the airs of history and reflects in the unruffled lustre of its waters the inverted images of some very quaint houses built of grey stone and almost entirely overspread with fungi and moss. The lower walls of stone are black and polished with the leaning of innumerable shoulders, and the steps of the external stone stairways are worn into gullies by the tread of generations. The extraordinary "yards" and byways are also worthy of attention. A few downward steps will bring the pilgrim to St Mary's Church, which was rebuilt in 1859. The parish registers date back to 1567, and the tower is thought to be Saxon. At this church Ethelberta Petherwin, in *The Hand of Ethelberta*, is secretly married to Lord Mountclere, and her father and brother arrive too late to interfere with the ceremony.

A walk along the Herston Road brings us to Newton Manor, one of the old Dorset manor-houses. The only relics of the ancient building are an Elizabethan stone fireplace in the kitchen and the barn of the old homestead, with an open timber roof, which has been converted into a dining-hall. In the latter is a fine carved stone chimneypiece brought from a Florentine palace.

A favourite excursion from Swanage is a trip to Studland. Any native will direct the pilgrim to the footpath way to the "Rest and be Thankful" seat at the top of Ballard Down, where one can take a well-beaten track to the entrance of the village. At the remains of an old cross bear to the right and follow a picturesque "water lane" to the shore. Studland is one of the most charming villages in England, and the church is one of the most notable in Dorset. It is an admirable example of intact Norman work, and its chief details are perfect—including a quaint corbel table in the nave, font, and moulded arches with carved capitals.

The celebrated Agglestone is about a mile away on Studland Common. It is a huge fragment of the iron-cemented sandstone of the locality, raised on a mound above the heath. It has been regarded as a Druidical memorial, but though that idea may now be considered exploded,

associations still attach to it, since we are told "the name Agglestone (Saxon, *halig-stan* = holy stone) certainly seems to show that it was erected for some superstitious purpose." The country people call it the *Devil's Nightcap*, and there is a tradition that his Satanic Majesty threw it from the Isle of Wight, with an intent to demolish Corfe Castle, but that it dropped short here! How it comes to be poised here has puzzled the archæologist, but it has been explained as being simply a block that has been insulated by process of nature, the result of its protecting from the rigours of wind and rain the little eminence which it caps.

Corfe is six miles by road from Swanage by way of Langton Matravers, a village of sombre stone houses, which is occupied by workers in the neighbouring stone quarries. The place-name "Matravers" is identified with the family of Maltravers, one of whom was the unworthy instrument employed by Mortimer and Queen Isabella in the murder of Edward II. This member of the family having turned out to be such a particularly "bad Travers," his descendants sought to hide their evil reputation by dropping the "l" out of their name.

The "Old Malt House," which is now a school, is a fine specimen of the old-time stone building,

CORFE CASTLE

From a photograph taken in 1860, showing the old Greyhound Inn, with projecting porch and a capacious room poised above it. The picturesqueness and solid comfort of this inn, built three hundred years ago, remains unimpaired to this day

and one can still trace bricked-in windows, where the sacks were hoisted in to the malt floors. Passing Gallow's Gore Cottages we come to Kingston, which is two miles from Corfe Castle, and is pleasantly situated on an eminence which commands a good view of the surrounding country. Encombe, the seat of the Eldons, is about two miles to the south-west and is the Enckworth Court (Lychworth Court in early editions) of *The Hand of Ethelberta.* The house lies deep down in the beautiful valley of Encombe, which opens out to the sea, with fine views in almost every direction. This valley is known as the Golden Bowl, by reason of the fertility of the soil. A short distance from Kingston may be seen the remains of the old manor-house of Scowles.

. . . . . .

On the morrow, when I stepped out under the famous porch chamber of the Greyhound Hotel, Corfe wore her bright morning smile. The air was soft, warm and redolent with the scent of good blue wood smoke. Corfe is one of the pleasantest villages in Dorset and has a wonderfully soothing effect upon the visitor. I should recommend this old-world retreat for those who are weary of the traffic and frenzy of the city market-place. The prevailing colour of the old houses makes the place ever cool-looking and lends the village

an air of extreme restfulness. From the humblest cottage to the Town House opposite the village cross the buildings are of weather-beaten stone, and are a delicate symphony in the colour grey, the proportions also being exactly satisfying to the eye. Stone slabs of immense size form the roofs themselves. Look at the roof of the Greyhound Inn! When these roof stones were put down the builder did not put them there for his own day, selfishly, but for posterity. This, as Hilaire Belloc would say, is a benediction of a roof, a roof that physically shelters and spiritually sustains, a roof majestic, a roof eternal. A walk through the town will reveal Tudor windows, quaint doorways and several eighteenth-century porches, of which that at the Greyhound is the best example. The market-place, with the Bankes Arms Hotel at one end, the Greyhound backing on to the castle and the castle and hills peering over the roof tops of the town, gives one a mingled pleasure of reminiscence and discovery. Standing back a little from the Swanage road is the small Elizabethan manor-house of Dackhams or Dacombs, now called Morton House, and one of the best manor-houses in the country. The ground plan forms the letter E, and it has a perfect little paved courtyard full of flowers.

Corfe Church was rebuilt in 1860, but it preserves some historic continuity in its tower, which dates from the end of the fourteenth century. The churchwardens' chest in the porch was made in the year 1672, and Hy Paulett, who made it, was paid the magnificent sum of eight shillings. And did Hy Paulett go often to the Greyhound and allay his thirst in the making of it? A man would require good ale to make such a "brave good" chest as this. And can they make such chests in these days? Lord knows! . . . Anyhow, there is something in such a piece of work which appeals to me—something which seems to satisfy the memories in my blood. The clock dates from 1539. Curfew is tolled in Corfe daily, from October to March, at 6 A.M. and 8 P.M. Hutchins, writing at the end of the eighteenth century, tells us that the people of Corfe were of an indolent disposition, and goes on to say that "the appearance of misery in the town is only too striking." Perhaps they "mumped" around and watched Hy Paulett work laboriously on the church chest and became downcast when he only received eight shillings for it. However, the morality of Corfe should have been high, for the churchwardens appear to have been very exacting in the matter of Sabbath observance. In the quaint old church records, which date from 1563,

are many interesting references to the offenders in this respect:

"1629. We do Present William Smith for suffering two small Boys to have drink upon the Sabbath day during Divine service.

Item. We do Present John Rawles for being drunk on the Sabbath day during the time of Divine service.

Item. We Present the Miller of West Mill for grinding on the Sabbath day.

Item. We do Present John Pushman Anthony Vye and James Turner for playing in the Churchyard upon the Sabbath day.

1630. We do Present William Rawles for sending his man to drive upon the Sabbath day.

Item. We do Present James Turner and George Gover for being drinky on the Sabbath day during the time of Divine service."

The reader will note that the churchwardens at Corfe were blessed with a very keen sense of moral acumen and split hairs over the degrees of inebriation. They found it intolerable to write a man down as intoxicated who had "half-a-pint otherwhile," so they merely entered him in their records as "drinky"; while, on the other hand, the man who was vulgarly concerned in liquor was described as a plain "drunk."

According to an old rhyme the man who killed a fox was a great benefactor and was considered as rendering a service a hundred and sixty times more important than the man who killed a rook.

"A half-penny for a rook,
A penny for a jay ;
A noble for a fox,
And twelve pence for a grey."

But a noble has not always been the reward of the wily rustic who could entrap Reynard, and the churchwardens of Corfe were certainly a little niggardly in their disbursements :

		s.	*d.*
"1672	Paid Richard Turner for a Pole-Cat .	0	4
	Paid for three Fox Heads, 1s. each .	3	0
1691	Margaret White, Son, for a Hedge-Hog head . . .	1	0
	Paid for one dozen Sparrow Heads .	0	2

1698 June 22nd—

> It was then agreed by the Parishioners of Corfe Castle met in the Parish Church that no money be paid for the heads of any vermin by the Church Wardens unless the said heads be brought into the Church yard within one week after they are killed and exposed to Public View."

By the last entry it will be seen that the parishioners of Corfe were determined to get their money's worth, and the old churchyard must at times have contained quite a large collection of fur and feather. Speaking of rewards for the extermination of the fox, I am reminded of an entry in the Holne Churchwardens' accounts for 1782 which has a tinge of sly humour about it.

Four shillings and two pence is paid for "running a fox to Okehampton." We can imagine the good churchwardens of Holne rubbing their hands and congratulating themselves on having got rid of Reynard, or speculating over future raids on domestic fowls in the Okehampton district. But the churchwardens were not too hopeful; they were a little doubtful. As "dead men rise up never," so a dead fox would not come prowling home again. So they talked the matter over and decided that half the customary noble would be a fitting remuneration to the hunter away of the fox.

I cannot leave Corfe without saying a few words in praise of the Greyhound Inn. Here the beams of the roof are black oak and squared enormously, like the timbers of a mighty ship, and some of the odd, low doorways remind one of the hatchways in a vessel. Visitors have so often knocked their heads against the low doors that it has been necessary to paint in large letters above several of them, "MIND YOUR HEAD." In the little smoke-room at the back one might fancy himself on board a ship in strange seas—especially does one experience this sensation in the evening before the candles are carried in. If it is winter-time the impression is more intense—the wind howls and worries at the window and the sky is

swept clean in one broad, even stretch ; then one may call for a pint of Romsey ale, fill the pipe and enjoy the lonely kingdom of the man at the helm of a great vessel. When morning comes this same little room is bright and cheerful. The window looks out on a narrow courtyard paved with mighty stones, and Corfe Castle, which thrusts itself into every view of the town, fills the background. In the winter the rustics sit about the board in this room, but they do not come there in summer, being shy of visitors. The labourers seldom wear the smocks, made of Russian duck, which their fore-elders were so inclined to favour. These smocks were much more stout than people would imagine, and the texture was so closely woven and waterproof that no rain could run through it.

. . . . . .

Four miles of a good, comfortable road running through a breezy heathland brings the pilgrim from Corfe to Wareham. On these heaths large quantities of white clay are dug up and run in truckloads to fill vessels in Poole Harbour. This clay is used for making pipes and in the manufacture of china. The clay pits are a very ancient and uninterrupted industry, and they have been worked continuously since the Romans discovered them. The spade of the Dorsetshire

labourer still occasionally turns up fragments of Roman pottery made from this identical clay. When Stoborough, now a mere village, once an antique borough, is reached we come within sight of Wareham, which is entered across a long causeway over the Frome marshes. More life can be seen in an hour here by the Frome than in a whole long day upon the hills. I have noticed how the birds that fly inland, high above me, will follow the river as a blind man feels his way, by natural impulse. Over the water-meadows the peewits are twisting in eccentric circles, and everywhere in the reeds the little grey-brown, bright-eyed sedge-warblers are flitting about. It seems almost incredible that such a small bird as the sedge-warbler can produce such a torrent of sound. For a right merry, swaggering song, which, without being very musical, is indeed exhilarating, commend me to the sedge-warbler. He sings all the day long, and often far into the night, and even if he wakes up for a few seconds when he has once settled down to sleep he always obliges with a few lively chirrups.

The ancient town of Wareham has been alluded to somewhat contemptuously by several writers as "slumberous" and dull. Perhaps it is, although it is brighter in appearance than some towns near London that I know. At all events

its stormy youth—in the days when London itself was but a "blinking little town"—has entitled it to a peaceful old age. All the scourges against which we pray—plague, pestilence, famine, battle, murder and sudden death—have been endured with great strength of mind and calmness by the people of the town. Sir Frederick Treves tells us that its history is one long, lurid account of disaster, so that it would need a Jeremiah to tell of all its lamentations. However, an indomitable temper and a readiness to believe that to-morrow will be brighter than to-day is the prevailing spirit of her people, and the town has an incredible hold upon life and the grassy ramparts which almost encircle it. The ramparts, or town walls, are ten centuries old, and form three sides of an irregular square, and enclose, together with the Frome, an area of a hundred acres. Before the silting up of Poole Harbour the sea came nearer to its walls than it does now and the river was much wider. We learn from ancient records that a great swamp stretched seawards from the foot of the ridge. That Wareham was a port of a kind is probable enough, for it furnished Edward III. with three ships and fifty-nine men at the siege of Calais. As far back as one can follow the ancient records of the town a good number of ships called here,

and when one comes out on the ample quay it is clearly seen that this place has once been a lively and animated wharf, resounding to the clatter of sea-boots and the songs of the chanty men. The waterside taverns and huge storehouses on the boat-station speak of the brave days gone by, and I cannot imagine a more pleasant spot to linger in on a sunny day. The seats and tables outside the Rising Sun and New Inn are very inviting, and when I passed this way it gave me peculiar pleasure to spend an hour here, looking broadly about me. As I looked across the quay to the grey bridge, meadows and beautiful fertile valley the odours and sounds of the country cropped up around me. The sun, laying a broad hand on the river, had smoothed all the eddies out and was sending it between the banks, not bubbling loud, but murmuring softly. Yes, the river was very sleepy that day. However, the Frome has its share of living interests. Here one can see the heron as he stands upon the shallows waiting till an eel shall move in the mud. A melancholy-looking fellow he looks, too, as he stands, gaunt and still, brooding some new spell. Anon a small bubble rising in the shallows, followed by a slight turbidness of the water around it, attracts the watcher. A swift step or so, a lightning flash of his sharp beak and he has

secured his eel. One watches him rising with labouring wings in a direct upward flight, the eel writhing in fruitless efforts to escape.

The summit of the town wall is used as a promenade, and one part of the west rampart, looking across the heath to the Purbeck Hills, is called the "Bloody Bank." Here were executed, by order of Judge Jeffreys, some of Monmouth's unfortunate adherents. Their bodies were cut up and placed on the bridge, and their heads were nailed to a wooden tower in the town on the completion of the execution. Here, too, Peter of Pomfret was hanged. He was a queer, cranky fellow and it appears that he was given to drawing horoscopes and meddling with secret and hidden things. He would have been quite free from any trouble had he not ventured to read in the scheme of the twelve houses of the Zodiac the fortune of King John. He read, "under a position of heaven," that the King's reign would end on Ascension Day, 23rd May 1213, and this prophecy reached the ears of the King, who had little faith in the sayings of Peter. However, the King made up his mind that Peter's reign should end on this date, and he passed the unfortunate prophet on to Corfe Castle, where, we may be certain, he was carefully looked after. The 23rd of May passed the same way as other long-lost

May-days and pay-days have passed, but King John was still very lively and active, and to convince Peter of Pomfret that he was a poor soothsayer he ordered the fellow to be whipped at the back of a dung-cart from Corfe to Wareham, where a gallows had been erected to welcome him. At Wareham Peter was driven through the streets, followed by a crowd of yelling, bloodthirsty people, and then hanged from the Bloody Bank, with the heather-covered moor before his eyes and the sky full of birds twittering and flying above his head.

The name Wareham is Saxon. Wareham= Wearth-ham—"the dwelling on the 'land between two waters'" (one of the meanings of *wearth* or *worth*), a name descriptive in the fullest sense of the position of the town betwixt the Frome and Piddle. Certainly the history and importance of Wareham dates back to Saxon days. However, on the strength of a stone built into the north aisle of St Mary's Church, which bears the inscription: "Catug c . . . . (Fi) lius Gideo," this foundation has been presumed to be of the British period, a bishop bearing the name of Cating having been sent from Brittany in or about 430. It is concluded that this stone is the record of a consecration performed by him.

Beohrtric, King of Wessex, is said to have been

buried at Wareham, and here for a time lay the body of Edward the Martyr. Wareham was a favourite landing-place of the Danes, and despite its vicissitudes was important enough to sustain two sieges in the wars of Stephen and Maud, to be twice taken and once burnt. Wareham was once the chief port of Poole Harbour ; but while Poole flourished Wareham decayed. Unlike other Dorset towns it stood by the Cavaliers, but as the inhabitants were lacking in martial skill and a sufficient body of troops, the town was made a kind of shuttlecock by the contending parties. The last misfortune of the town was its almost total destruction by fire in 1762. All things considered, it is little wonder, therefore, that in spite of its age Wareham has so few antiquities. The castle has left but a name, the priory little more ; but reconstruction has spared the most interesting feature of St Mary's Church—the Chapel of St Edward—which is said to indicate the temporary burial-place of Edward the Martyr, whose marble coffin is now to be seen near the font.

If we follow the road from where the town is entered across the picturesque old bridge we pass the Black Bear, a spacious old inn, with an excellent effigy of Bruin himself sitting grimly on the roof. The Red Lion is the inn mentioned by Hardy in *The Hand of Ethelberta.* The queer

ivy-covered little Chapel of St Martin, on the left side of the main street, at the top of the rise from the Puddle, is visited by antiquaries from all the counties of England. It is one hundred and seventy years since regular services were held here. The roof beams are very ancient and still hold their own without any other aid. The interior is vault-like and eerie, and about the old place there hangs an atmosphere which has no affinity with the everyday world, but which reeks up from long-neglected tombs—a mystic vapour, sluggish and faintly discernible. An inscription on the north wall is to the memory of a surgeon, his wife and four children. The surgeon died in 1791, at the age of eighty-one, from an "apoplectic fit." It is rather a puzzle why the doctor was buried in this church, for in 1791 no parson had officiated here for fifty years or more. The pilgrim will be interested in the *Devil's Door*, by the altar, a memory of early Christian superstition. It was the custom to open this door when the church bells were rung, to allow the devil to flee.

CHAPTER XI

MY ADVENTURE WITH A MERRY ROGUE

Here
With my beer
I sit,
While golden moments flit.
Alas!
They pass
Unheeded by;
And, as they fly,
I,
Being dry,
Sit idly sipping here
My beer.

Oh, finer far
Than fame or riches are
The graceful smoke-wreaths of this cigar!
Why
Should I
Weep, wail, or sigh?
What if luck has passed me by?
What if my hopes are dead,
My pleasures fled?
Have I not still
My fill
Of right good cheer,—
Cigars and beer?

I LIKE inns, and I like old ale, and all the old curious glasses, mugs and pewters which were so dear to our forefathers, and I begin this chapter in this way to forestall any possible charges of heresy that my narrative may call

forth. I would almost go further, and say that my affection for such things is wholly a private matter concerning only myself, or, at least, no more than a few very intimate friends. That, I think, is how sentimentalism should be conducted. When it is managed otherwise, when it becomes a public thing, it becomes a public nuisance, besides being contemptible. But, as I have gone so far, I might as well go the length of admitting that I am addicted to the habit of collecting old drinking vessels, and I have allowed the disease to get the upper hand. I cannot pass a curio shop in which willow-pattern mugs, tapering glasses and "leather bottels" are displayed without a burning longing to possess them. I like to have these things about me, not merely as ornaments or to drink from, but for—— Well, when I come to think of it, I cannot quite say; there is not sufficient reason. That is enough to brand me an incurable curio-hunter. Curios and ancient drinking vessels are to me what the sea is to a sailor. It is a passion which has become interwoven with my blood and fibre, and I can never again wholly break loose from it.

But all this is by the way; the point is, why do I commence this chapter by talking about such things?

For the reason that in this chapter I am going

to tell of a singular adventure in which a "black jack" loomed very solidly.

It happened at Morcombe Lake. I will not write of this place. You must get it out of a guide-book, for the village is not a thing for fine words; it stirred me in no way. But it shall not be said that Morcombe Lake has not a small share of fame, for in this village is produced the famous Dorset Knob Biscuit, without which no Dorset table is really complete. Mr Moores, who "magics" butter, milk and sugar in his small bake-house and brings forth these golden-brown "Knobs," informs me that his family has been busy sending them out in tins for over a hundred years.

I had walked from Bridport, passing through Chideock, with its venerable-looking church beside the Castle Inn, and coming to Morcombe, where there is a deep-eaved, comfortable, ramshackle, go-as-you-please kind of a little inn, I could hear somebody singing inside. It was a clear, mellow voice, and I listened to the cadences of the song with a thrill of pleasure. It was a humorous trio, and the lonely singer changed his voice for each verse with a largeness and confidence in his vocal powers that quite carried me away. Indeed, it was a song which we all should know, which runs:

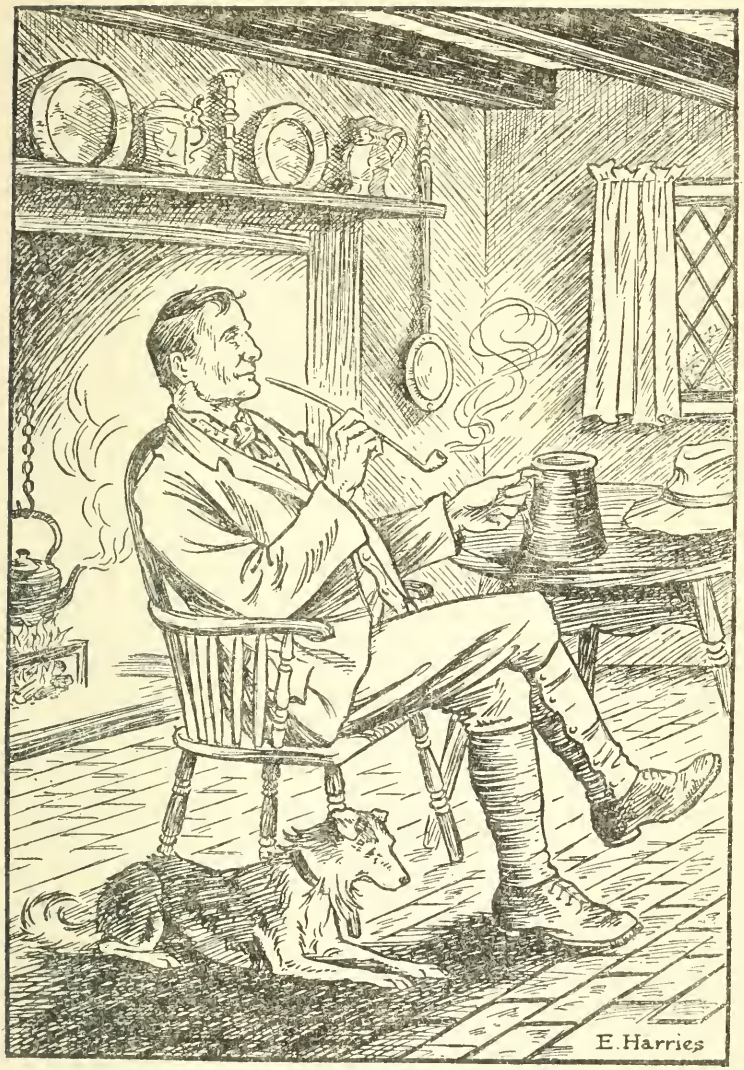
"A little farm well tilled,
A little barn well filled,
A little wife well willed—
Give me, give me.

A larger farm well tilled,
A bigger house well filled,
A taller wife well willed—
Give me, give me.

I like the farm well tilled,
And I like the house well filled,
But no wife at all—
Give me, give me."

Entering, I saw one of the kind of men God loves. He was of middle age, very honest and simple in the face, good-humoured and cheerful. He was sitting before a tall, leather black jack —one of the finest specimens of the old-fashioned leather jugs I have ever seen—quaffing his morning ale from it. He paused from his song and lifted his wide straw hat in a grandiloquent way.

"Good marning, sir! Fine marning's marning! Tez mortel 'ot ta-day," he said, in a mellow voice, and he looked up at me with large, china-blue eyes. I passed the time of day with him, but the fine leathern flagon had already claimed all my attention; I had no eyes for anything else at the moment. I dealt hotly with speculations over the ownership of the flagon. Did it belong to the rustic or the innkeeper? Did they know



The Lonely Singer

its value? This and a hundred other thoughts flashed through my mind. As I stood there I dwelt avariciously upon thought of possession. I said to myself: "I must have that flagon. I will buy. Beg it. Steal it, if necessary." The desire to possess it consumed my soul.

"Wantee plaize to take a seat? The cider here be a prime sort, I shuree!" said the rustic, breaking in upon my thoughts. He spoke very slowly and, as I have said, had a nice mellow voice, and he did what only honest men do—looked straight at me when he spoke.

"Surely," I said, and sat down beside him. "Pray excuse me," I continued, waving my hand towards the leather jack, "but that is a remarkable old drinking vessel."

"Thickee there is the ownly wan I ever see like it," said he, holding it up and looking at it with admiration. "Yes, sir, it be a brave good mug, and I have taken my cider and ale out of he for twenty year. It's just a fancy of mine to bring it along with me when I drink. I tellee that mug has been with my folk for two hundred years. Parson says it is just a 'miracle' of an old thing."

"Aha!" said I to myself, "the parson is after it too."

"They tell me," he said, "that it may be

worth a pound or two. Well, well! It is an old friend, and I should be loath to part with the cheel, but——"

"But," I repeated eagerly.

"But," he continued, "things have been cruel bad with me o' late, and I have thought, whatever is the good o' keeping it when like 'nuff we can sell it for a pound or so and buy the chillern a few clothes against the winter."

"True, true!" I said, trying to keep my excitement undermost. "But you would only get a few shillings for it, I am afraid. Such things have no market value."

"No market value?" he answered. "Well, I suppose I dunnow much 't-al-'bout-et!"

He mused for a few moments. I narrowly watched him out of half-closed eyes—"Oh, yes; I was playing the old grey wolf, sure enough"—and said, very carelessly: "I should hate drinking my ale out of a 'leather bottel.' They may look picturesque, but I am certain the beer would taste vile. I have no sympathy with the enthusiast who sang:

> "'And I wish in heaven his soul may dwell
> That first devised the leather bottel.'

However, I would not mind giving you a few shillings for it."

I happened to glance up as I said this. He sat there looking at me with a troubled expression in his blue eyes.

He then said a number of things in broad Dorset, and the "tellees" and "thickees" and "dallees" became unintelligible, but he meant that I could but be joking when I said "a few shillings."

"Well, I won't disturb your peace of mind any more," I said. "We will let the matter drop."

Then he stepped up close to me, put the black jack in my hand, and said, with an appealing note in his voice: "Two hundred years in my family, maister. Just say what you've a-mind to give me; only let it be a fair price. I would not be so anxious to sell it, but my rent is a bit behind, and I shall have to sleep with Miss Green——"

"Sleep with Miss Green?" I gasped, somewhat shocked.

"Sleep under the hedge, then," he continued, making the expression clear to me. "Now, you see the fix I'm in, maister."

Then I was ashamed. Deep shame covered me, and I had a great revulsion of feeling. How could I be so niggardly as to beat down this poor fellow's price? Perhaps, after all, it was his only possession of any value at all. I turned the jack over in my hands. It was strong and black

and very highly polished with age—and the curves and proportions of it were exactly satisfying to the eye that looked upon it. It was a benediction of a flagon. . . .

I held it up, and said, "How much?"

"Aw! dally-buttons! Take it for two pounds," he said, "you nidden begridge me that."

And he added, in passing, that two pounds made it a kind of gift to me—just a token to signify it had changed hands: it was an act of pure charity on his part.

"Then," I said, "thirty shillings," and he waved his hand about genially, and remarked that it "twidden" be worth his while to stretch out his hand for such a paltry sum.

So then I pulled out thirty shillings, and he pushed the flagon over to me and took the money. Thus the bargain was struck.

So this being settled, and I eager for a drink of ale, called the innkeeper, who was in another room. Beer was brought and my friend insisted on paying for it.

I asked him about his wife and children. But I could get very little from him, and that little in a low voice. I felt sorry for him, for I understood that parting with his flagon had rather upset him. He seemed as different as one could imagine from the singer I had seen when I entered. He

told me that his was a very old family in this place, and his name was Ralph Copplestone. He also quoted the following adage to strengthen his statement :—

"Crocker, Cruwys and Copplestone,
When the Conqueror came were all at home."

Before he left me, however, he had recovered his cheerfulness. He set off down the road, and as he passed he began singing :

"Dorset gives us butter and cheese,
Devonshire gives us cream,
Zummerzet zyder's zure to please
And set your hearts a-dream ;
Cornwall, from her inmost soul,
Brings tin for the use of man,
And the four of 'em breed the prettiest girls—
So *damme*, beat that if you can!"

Finally his voice, still singing, died away in the distance. I sat before the flagon with a feeling of wonder, not unmixed with sadness. The fresh breeze dropped, and it seemed as if the little inn parlour grew dark and grey. He was a strange fellow!

It was not till the next day, in the late afternoon, when the air was already full of the golden dust that comes before the fall of the evening, that I came down Broad Street into Lyme Regis. In passing, I was attracted by a little curiosity

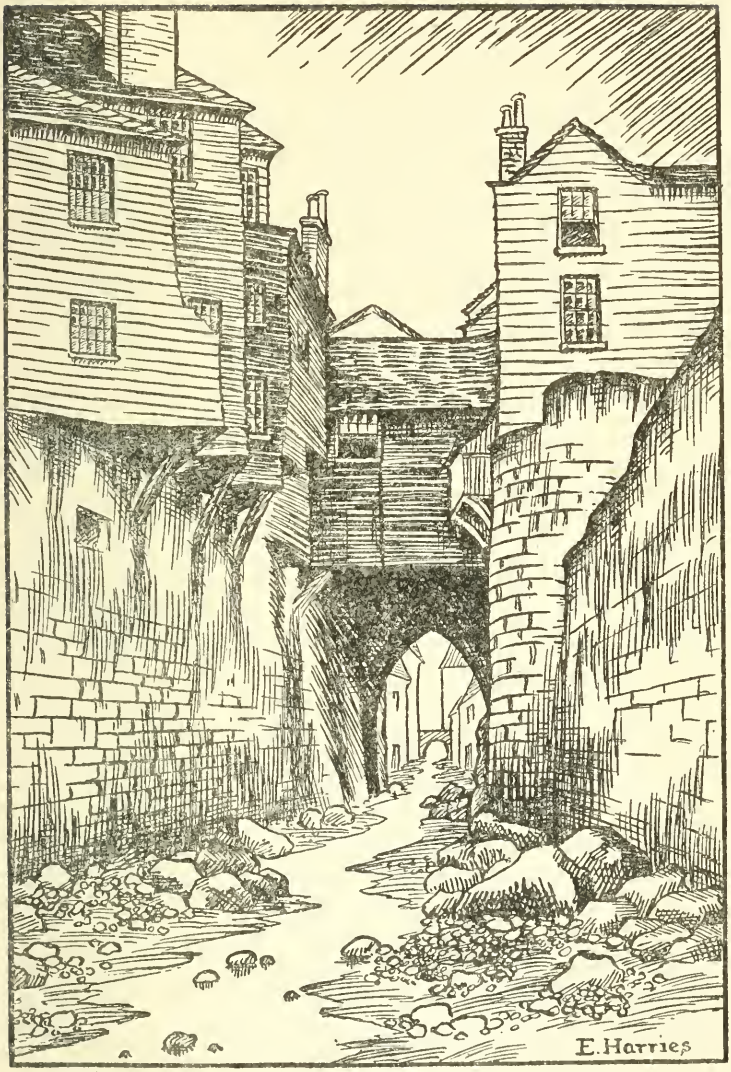
shop. The dusty window was full of all sorts of things—red-heeled slippers, old bits of brass, quaint, twisted candlesticks, blue enamel snuff-boxes, jewellery—value and rubbish being mixed in confusion together. And there right in the fore-front was an exact counterpart of my black jack! It was truly an amazing coincidence! I looked into the doorway, and saw the owner of the shop, a very old gentleman. His face was a network of wrinkles, which time so pleasantly writes on some old faces that they possess a sweetness which even youth lacks. I made up my mind to seek information from him about the flagon. He was examining a piece of china with a magnifying-glass when I entered.

"Good evening—good evening!" he said, putting down the glass, and looking up at me with a smile. "What can I show you, sir?"

The old man drew in his wrinkled lips expectingly.

"The odd black jack in your window," I said boldly.

The old man went to a corner of the window, and after much fumbling produced the black jack, which he set upon the counter. As I examined it he watched me in silence from beneath his pent-house brows. It was, indeed, a facsimile of the one I had purchased from the rustic.



The River Buddle, Lyme Regis

"It is not really antique. It is a very clever imitation, not more than a few months old," came the old man's voice. He paused, the smile still lighting his face. "A genuine specimen like this one is not to be found anywhere—outside the museums." He lifted his arm with a peculiar gesture that seemed to take in the whole world.

Outwardly I remained calm, swinging my foot nonchalantly against the wooden panel of his counter. If I had burst out laughing that moment I cannot think what the old curio-dealer would have thought, but it was with difficulty that I restrained myself from doing so. Little did he know that I had just picked up a genuine black jack for a mere song! Then I told him, with gusto, my adventure with the rustic at the inn.

Suddenly he broke out:

"What was his name?"

"Copplestone—Ralph Copplestone," I replied.

"Why, he's the very rogue that sold me this one," said the old man, shaking his simple head.

"Is that possible?" I said, and I jumped down from the counter where I had perched myself. The strangest sensation came over me. I thought of the honest, open face and the innocent blue eyes of my friend the tavern-haunter.

The curio-dealer smiled quietly, sadly.

"Yes, he imposed upon me, too. He is a very clever rogue. A harness-maker by trade, and all his people before him for three hundred years have been of the same calling. So you see the secret of making a black jack has been handed down from father to son. It is one of the traditions of his family; a knowledge which is mingled with his blood and fibre, so to speak. Such skill is older than five thousand years. He has the spirit of the artist—but the soul of the rogue."

"Why," I said, "then if he is a rogue, then I'm a rogue too, for I knew I was paying him a paltry sum for an article I thought to be worth ten pounds—perhaps twenty."

So I laughed, and I've been laughing gloriously ever since—at myself, at the merry rogue in the inn, at the silly old hypocritical world.

As I passed out of the dim old shop and walked down to the sea it came over me, with a sudden feeling of satisfaction in my soul, that the sun shone on Ralph Copplestone just as joyfully as it did on me, that the good God had endowed him with strong arms and a mighty voice for songs.

"After all," I said to myself, "we are all rogues if we are only scratched deep enough."

CHAPTER XII

THE DEVON AND DORSET BORDERLAND

"How far is it to Babylon?"
Ah, far enough, my dear,
Far, far enough from here—
Yet you have farther gone!
"Can I get there by candlelight?"
So goes the old refrain.
I do not know—perchance you might—
But only, children, hear it right,
Ah, never to return again!
The eternal dawn, beyond a doubt,
Shall break on hill and plain,
And put all stars and candles out,
Ere we be young again.

"R. L. S."

THE irregular and old-fashioned little town of Lyme Regis—"so crooked's a ram's horn," as the native would say—is situated in a most romantic position at the foot of the hills, being built in the hollow and on the slopes of a deep combe, through which flows the small stream of the *Lym* to the sea. It is seated on a grand coast, which rises to the east in the blackest precipices and west in broken crags thickly mantled with wood. As a port it is most ancient, having furnished ships to Edward III. during his siege of Calais.

Lyme, in its day, has seen a good many stirring

events. In the reigns of Henry IV. and V. it was twice plundered and burned by the French; and in that of Richard II. nearly swept from the earth by a violent gale. During the Rebellion it successfully withstood a siege which was one of the most important of the time. In 1644 Prince Maurice invested it, established his headquarters at Old Colway and Hay House, and his troops along the neighbouring hill. Day after day the assault continued, more than once by storming parties; but the gallant governor, Colonel Ceeley, assisted by Blake, afterwards so famous as an admiral, most courageously repulsed every attack, and after a siege of nearly seven weeks was relieved by the approach of the Earl of Essex. In 1685 the town was again enlivened by the bustle of arms, when, in the month of June, the Duke of Monmouth here landed, with about eighty companions, after running the gauntlet through a storm and a fleet of English cruisers in his passage from Amsterdam. As he reached the sandy shore he fell upon his knees and uttered a thanksgiving for his preservation. He remained here four days, at the George Inn, when, having collected about two thousand horse and foot, he set forward on his disastrous expedition.

There can be no doubt that Lyme Regis has failed to prove itself anything like a popular

watering-place; yet it has very good bathing, with neither currents nor hollows, and has the most picturesque front in Dorset. The fine scenery should tempt the holiday-maker to suffer the somewhat enclosed situation, which makes the place very close during the hot summer days. It is in winter that Lyme should be popular, for then it can boast a remarkably genial climate.

The quaint old stone pier, called the Cobb, is the real lion of Lyme, and is the source of much satisfaction to the stout hearts of the town. The Cobb, "the oldest arnshuntest bit o' stone-work in the land, a thousand years old—and good for another thousand, I tellee," as described to the present writer by a rustic, was probably first constructed in the reign of Edward I. It has been frequently washed away, and restored at a great price, and was finally renewed and strengthened in 1825-1826. It is a semicircular structure, of great strength, the thick outer wall rising high above the roadway, so as to protect it from the wind and sea.

At Lyme an inn received me: a room full of fishermen and agricultural workers, a smell of supper preparing, and much drinking of cider. It was the New Inn, and I was told that this room was only the tap-room and not usually used by visitors. I found that one wing of the old

building had been specially fitted for travellers, and I will gladly name it to all my readers who are satisfied with an old-fashioned comfort, a good bed and good fare.

After supper I bought a packet of sailor's shag, and went out smoking into the chief street. A few steps took me to the Cobb, and I leaned over the low wall and contemplated the glorious green sea, tumbling and gurgling below me. I always think that the union of mighty stone slabs and the sea is most satisfying to look upon—there is something endlessly good and noble about such a thing. I think a building of hewn stone when it dips into the water should act as a sedative to the mind, should teach one to become calm, slow and strong; to deal generously in rectitudes and essentials.

It was late in August, and the mellow chimes of the parish church had just boomed eight o'clock. The great orange moon hung over the bay, and the night came creeping over the rich yellow sand which crowns the Golden Cap. Then the cliffs merged into a fainter confusion. Bats came out and flitted about the old houses by the Buddle river, and the night became the natural haunt of restless spirits. A candle flickering behind a leaded casement brought back suddenly the memory of a home long passed away and whatever blessings belong to my childhood. And

all of a sudden that inexplicable heart-hunger for the place of my birth gripped me, and Youth (whatever Youth may be), with its sights, its undefinable, insistent spell, came back to me in one flash—Youth came to me from the old houses on the sea-wall, borne with the misty saltness of the sea air. Go away; travel the length and breadth of the land, visit a hundred cities, encounter a hundred new experiences, and form a hundred conflicting impressions of stranger scenes and places; go where you will, and do what you will; one day you will have seen and done enough, and you will find your thoughts turned again to the haunts of Youth.

At the sight of those ruffianly looking old dwellings by the riverside my memory was carried back to another small seaport town where, long enough ago, I played at smuggling. Are we not all haunted by certain landscapes which come back unbidden, not as topographical facts, but as vestures of the soul? Their enchantment is in our blood, and their meaning uncommunicable.

Here, where one can smell the smell of venerable wooden fishing boats and tar, there is a suggestion of the good old smuggling days. There is a hint of rum, brass-bound sea-chests, trap-doors and deep mouldy cellars about the Buddle River houses, and the people who inhabit them are of

very settled habits, and the inconveniences to which they have been accustomed seem to them preferable to conveniences with which they are unfamiliar. To this day, therefore, they empty slops out of the windows, burn candles, wind up their pot-bellied watches with large keys, and attain ripe old age. This curious quarter of Lyme Regis was once a smugglers' retreat and a favourite spot for their operations. A stranger visiting the banks of the Buddle could not fail to be struck with the curiously formed streets, alleys, and passages thereabouts, and if he secured the good offices of a native to pilot him through the mazes he would be still further astonished at their intricacy. The houses are connected in the most mysterious manner, whether from design or accident, or whether to meet the exigencies of the smuggling trade, and for the more readily disposing of the kegs of spirits, and bales of other excisable goods, it is impossible to say. The most reasonable conclusion to arrive at is that the latter was the case.

The curious name of Cobb has given rise to much discussion. Murray's *Handbook to Dorset* (1859) puts forward the theory that it is of British origin, and calls attention to a barrow-crowned knoll above Warminster called *Cop*head, and a long embankment on the race-course at Chester, which

protects it from the River Dee, which has been known from time immemorial as the *Cop*. The length of the Cobb is 870 feet, and height above the sea-level 16 feet. It combines in one stone causeway the duties of breakwater, double promenade and quay. The projecting stone steps, which form one of the oldest parts of the wall, are known as Granny's Teeth, and are described by Jane Austen in *Persuasion*. The beach to the west of the Cobb is known as Monmouth's Beach. The Duke landed about a hundred yards west of the wall. A local tradition states that when the late Lord Tennyson visited the town one of his friends was anxious to point out the spot where Monmouth landed, but the great man impatiently exclaimed: "Don't talk to me of Monmouth, but show me the place where Louisa Musgrove fell!"

The bridge arch in Bridge Street is considered to be of an age second only to that of the Parish Church, and is well worthy of inspection. The Buddle Bridge consists of one arch of large span, thought to have been built in the fourteenth century, when the bed of the *Lym*, or *Buddle*, was excavated to an extra depth of eight feet. An ancient Pointed arch with dog-tooth moulding has recently been unearthed in the basement of a house abutting on the bridge. The arch is below

the level of the roadway, and it no doubt formed part of a bridge of several arches built in the twelfth century. It rises from about two feet below the ground-floor cellar of this house. The arch has been seen by the Rev. C. W. Dicker, of the Dorset Field Club, who sent to the editor of *The Lyme Regis Mirror* the following letter :—

Dear Sir,—I have just received a copy of last week's *Mirror*, containing an account of the very interesting archway under Bridge Street, which I was kindly invited to inspect. As far as I can judge from the result of my one opportunity of examining it, the evidence points to the assumption that Bridge Street formerly crossed the Buddle upon a bridge of several arches, constructed in the twelfth century, and that the archway in question was probably the third from west to east. The street at this point is (or was) obviously supported upon a masonry substructure, upon which the houses abut. The masonry of the newly found arch is typical of the middle of the twelfth century, at which time the manor was chiefly in the hands of Roger of Caen, Bishop of Sarum and Abbot of Sherborne, a great builder, much of whose work is still to be found in Dorset. The archway clearly was built to support the roadway; and as its alignment is exactly that of

the larger archway (apparently of the fourteenth century), under which the river now runs, there seems little room for doubt as to its origin. Yours faithfully,

C. W. H. Dicker,
Vice-President and Hon. Editor
Dorset Field Club.

Pydeltrenthide Vicarage,
Dorchester.

The Town Hall, at the farther end of Bridge Street, was rebuilt on the site of the old Guildhall. The iron-cased door, that once led to the men's "lock-up," and the grating of the women's prison, have been fixed against the north front wall. This wall is pierced by two arches, with a doorway to the Old Market, over the gateway of which is a carved projecting window. Here are the ancient parish stocks, removed from the church. At the farther end, facing Church Street, a wide gable stands out, lighted by an old but plainer window. In the lower part is the passage through to the Gun Cliff, with a flight of steps in the wall, leading down to the beach. From Church Street there is an easy approach to the Drill Hall, which was opened in 1894. On the opposite side of the street, and directly facing Long Entry, there is "Tudor House," a large old house possessing much fine oak panelling and carving. The interest

of Tudor House is twofold, for it is associated with the "Father of English Literature," Henry Fielding, author of *Tom Jones*. Here lived Sarah Andrew, a rich heiress, when Fielding became wildly enamoured of her. This love affair was opposed by Andrew Tucker, who was Sarah's guardian, but Fielding persisted in his suit with such energy that Tucker had to appeal to the Mayor of Lyme to be protected from the violence of Fielding and his men. This is recorded in the town journals.

Fielding lost the rich heiress, but immortalised her memory in the supremely beautiful character of Sophia, in *Tom Jones*.

The Parish Church, dedicated to St Michael, contains some interesting relics. A prominent feature is the carved Jacobean pulpit and sounding-board, bearing in capitals the inscription: "TO GOD'S GLORY RICHARD HARVEY MERCER AND MERCHANT ADVENTURER THIS ANNO, 1613." It was removed from a column near the south door and entrance to the vestry during the renovation of the church by Dr Hodges, in 1833.

The building dates from the fifteenth century, though it is clear from town records that a church stood near or on the spot in 1298, and there are remains of a Norman arch and pillar in the west

porch. Note the two parish chests, one of Jacobean workmanship. The following interesting inscriptions are from six of the bells which were set up in 1770 :—

1. "O Fair Britannia Hail." T.B. f., 1770.
2. "Harmony in sound and sentiment." T.B. 1770.
3. "O be joyful in the Lord all ye lands." T.B. f., 1770.
4. Re-cast in 1843. Thomas Mears, founder, London. Fredk. Parry Hodges, vicar. Robert Hillman, Mayor. John Church and George Roberts, churchwardens.
5. "O sea spare me." This peal of bells was erected partly by rate and part by subscription in the year 1770.
6. "*Pro Religione, pro Patria, pro Libertate.*" 1770. Mr Tuff and Mr Tucker, C. W. Thomas Bilbie, *Fecit.*

The curfew is still rung at eight o'clock at Lyme Regis.

Fuller details of the history of the church and town will be found in a very comprehensive little *History of Lyme Regis*, by Cameron, which is published by Mr Dunster at "The Library" in Broad Street.

Broad Street, leading downwards from the station to the sea, is the main thoroughfare, and the principal business part of the town. Half-way up the street on the eastern side is a small passage leading to an ancient forge. It is scarcely to be

noticed unless one is expressly seeking for it, but once up the narrow court there it is, with its open doorway all red inside like a wizard's cave, with the hammers ringing on the anvil, and the sparks showering out of the big flue. Here Vulcan has toiled, moiled and, let us hope, aled for five hundred years without a break, and here, in spite of cheap machinery, Mr Govier, the master smith of Lyme Regis, still seems to enjoy a regular and ready custom. The forge has been in Mr Govier's family for three hundred years, and it has a great weather-beaten wooden-and-tile roof, which is all but on the verge of collapse. A long sweep of old oak wood controls the bellows, and as you look in you will see the hand of Govier himself is on the bellows handle. He draws it down and lets it up again with the peculiar rhythmic motion of long experience, heaping up his fire with a cunning little iron rake, singing a most doleful song to himself all about "shooting his true love at the setting of the sun." But you must not think the master smith is a gloomy man, for this song (and other still more pathetic ones) is just a tune of acquiescence to his labours—a song in sympathy with the roar of the bellows and the ascending sparks of his fire.

"Come in, come in," he said, when I told him I had come to pay my respects to him.

THE MASTER SMITH OF LYME REGIS

He turned from his forge, set his hands on his hips and looked at me a moment. Then I realised why McNeill Whistler spent so much of his time in this forge making sketches of the smith. He looked like Vulcan's very brother, his face sunburnt and forge-burnt to wheat-colour, his eyes blue as cornflowers, and his hair black and crisp, and everywhere about him the atmosphere of the blacksmith. There are all kinds of interesting things in the old forge, from Roman horseshoes to plates for race-horses, and a pair of old beam-scales dated 1560. These scales have been hanging up as far back as Govier and his father before him could remember. Besides having the knowledge of a craftsman, Govier is a singer of old songs.

"That song you were singing when I came in?" I asked. "I know it as well as anyone, but somehow it has escaped me."

"Ah!" said the master smith. "Well, well! It is years ago now that I first heard it, when the ships came inside our walls with coal and took away stone. We rarely see a ship in our walls now, but when I was a boy my father and I frequently went down to the quay to repair ironwork aboard the old sailing boats. Those old Devon sailors were the fellows for songs. Upon my soul, I believe sailors no longer sing as they

once did. I find a great difference between the old-fashioned chanty man and the modern seaman who never sings at his work. The man who sings loudly and clearly is in good health, prompt, and swift to the point, and his heart is as big as parson's barn. The silent sullen fellow may have these qualities—he may have 'em, I say; but then the chap who sings is the happier man."

"But there are some miserable fellows who reckon to be very happy," I said.

At this Govier gave a shrug of his ox-like shoulders, and waved away all such sorry triflers.

"There are such people," said he; "but they are not entertaining. However, you want to get the hang of that song, and though I cannot remember the exact words I have the rhythm of it in my head right enough, and I think it runs like this:

"'Come all you young fellows that carry a gun,
Beware of late shooting when daylight is done;
For 'tis little you reckon what hazards you run,
I shot my true love at the setting of the sun.
In a shower of rain, as my darling did hie
All under the bushes to keep herself dry,
With her head in her apron, I thought her a swan,
And I shot my true love at the setting of the sun.

In the night the fair maid as a white swan appears :
She says, O my true love, quick, dry up your tears,
I freely forgive you, I have Paradise won ;
I was shot by my true love at the setting of the sun.'

"You should have heard that song as I heard it on board an old-time schooner, when the ship's company all banged and roared heartily, and shouted in enormous voices. When they came to 'I was shot by my true love' the company would all join together in a great moan, and wag their heads in a most melancholy way. But there are no songs like that now. All this complicated machinery in ships has darkened men's minds and shut out the old songs."

A good many very interesting places may be cleared up by just trespassing a few miles into Devon when we leave Lyme Regis, and taking the main road to Axminster, a parish and market town on the River Axe. St Mary's Church is of ancient origin, and contains some objects of antiquarian interest. The other churches are modern. South of the town are the ruins of Newenham Abbey ; its history is interesting. Seven miles north, Ford Abbey affords another attraction. Membury Castle (one mile south) and Weycroft are ancient Roman or British

fortifications. It is believed that the battle of Brunanburgh, A.D. 937, was fought near here.

The George Inn at Axminster, standing in a plot formed by George Street, Victoria Place and Lyme Street, is a noble old place with a spacious court-yard. The barn above the archway at the back of the inn is very picturesque, with mouldering red and purplish tiles and hand-wrought iron cleats. Three miles south of Axminster we come to Musbury—it was to see a thatcher at this village that I was tempted to make a short expedition into Devon. The ancient Church of St Michael has been largely rebuilt. It contains many interesting old monuments, chiefly to members of the family of the Drakes, of Ashe. Musbury Castle is a British or Roman camp. Ashe House, the former seat of the Drake family, is now a farm-house. The New Inn is an odd little place, with a grey and shining stone floor, and windows set deep in thick walls.

Cloyton is five miles south-west of Axminster in the picturesque valley of the River Coly, and three miles from the sea. The Parish Church of St Andrew contains much of great interest. The porch of the old vicarage house should be seen, with the inscription PEDITATIO TOTUM; MEDITATIO TOTUM, A.D. 1524, over the window. There is an ancient market-house here.

DRAKE MEMORIAL AT MUSBURY

The " Great House " is another old and interesting building. It was once the home of the Yonge family, and was built in the seventeenth century by John Yonge, a merchant adventurer who settled at Colyton, but it has been partly rebuilt, although the portion of the house which remains suggests something of the old building and contains some interesting carving. The Duke of Monmouth stayed here in 1680. There are interesting effigies of the Pole family in their chapel in the Church of St Andrew, which is fenced off with a stone screen erected by the vicar of Colyton, 1524-1544. The vicar was also Canon of Exeter, and his rebus figures prominently on the screen. The great tomb of Sir John Pole, buried in 1658, and Elizabeth his wife displays elaborate effigies, while the altar-tomb is that of William Pole, buried in 1587. Near by is a mural monument to his wife, Katherine, and another to Mary, wife of Sir William, the historian, and daughter of Sir W. Periham of Fulford. Both these ladies have their children kneeling round them. The author of the well-known *Description of Devon* is buried in the aisle, but there is no monument. When I was staying with the headmaster of Colyton Grammar School (an ancient building bearing the date 1612) some twenty years ago there were representatives of the knightly family of Poles among his pupils.

In the north aisle is the mausoleum of the Yonge family. Another interesting monument is an elaborate altar-tomb in the chancel with a recumbent female figure popularly known as "Little Choke-Bone," referring to Margaret Courtenay, daughter of William Earl of Devon, and Katherine, his wife, sixth daughter of Edward IV. She is said to have been choked by a fish-bone at Colcombe Castle in 1512.

The Courtenays, Earls of Devon, once held all the land in this neighbourhood, and their seat was at Colcombe Castle, hard by, for three hundred years, but Henry VIII. quarrelled with Henry Courtenay, Marquess of Exeter, and deprived him of his estates in 1538. It is a curious fact that the parish charities of Colyton are still mostly derived from these forfeited estates.

The ruins of Colcombe Castle lie about half-a-mile from the town, and are now used as a farm-house. Near here grows *Lobelia úrens*, the "flower of the Axe," a rare British flower, in appearance very like the garden lobelia. Kilmington is said to bear, in the first syllable of its name, the trace of the great battle fought in the Axe Valley in Saxon times.

Another interesting excursion from Lyme might be taken to Lambert's Castle and Ford

Abbey. Ford can be reached by rail to Card Junction. The Abbey is about a mile east of the station. The first long climb out of Lyme by the Axminster road to Hunter's Lodge Inn is not encouraging. From this inn the road runs straight ahead along the road to Marshwood, passing Monkton Wyld Cross, and gradually ascending to Lambert's Castle, which is eight hundred and forty-two feet above the sea-level. The Castle is an important British and Roman camp. A fair and horse-races are still held here twice a year, and a magnificent view over the Char valley is obtained from this point. Pilsdon Pen can be reached by the Beaminster Road, which can be picked up two miles north-east from Lambert's Castle. At Birdsmoor Gate, two miles beyond, is the Rose and Crown Inn and a crossing of the ways. The road to Ford Abbey and Chard swings round to the left, but if the pilgrim wishes to view the home of Wordsworth and his sister, he must change his route and proceed along the Crewkerne road for half-a-mile until Racedown Farm is reached. Dorothy Wordsworth described it as " the place dearest to my recollections upon the whole surface of the island ; the first home I had " ; and she wrote with great feeling about the charm and beauty of the neighbourhood.

Charmouth is a pleasant walk of two miles from Lyme Regis, but the road goes over a very steep hill at the top of which is a cutting known as the "New Passage," the "Devil's Bellows," where in windy weather there is a chance of being carried off one's feet. The village consists of one long street situated above the mouth of the *Char*, the leading feature of the view being the heights which hedge in the valley, particularly those from which the road has just descended. It is an ancient place, which still preserves the memory of two sanguinary battles between the Danes and Saxons. In the first the Saxons were commanded by Egbert, in the second by Ethelwolf. In both the Danes were victorious, but so crippled in the fight that they were obliged to retreat to their ships. At Charmouth, too, in the attempted escape of Charles II. to France, occurred the incident which so nearly led to the discovery of the fugitive. A plan had been concerted with the captain of a merchantman trading to Lyme that a boat at a particular hour of the night should be sent to the beach at Charmouth. Charles rode hither under the guidance of Lord Wilmot and Colonel Wyndham and rested at the little inn to await the appointed time. The vessel, however, from unforeseen circumstances, was unable to leave the harbour, and the fugitive

was obliged to give up the enterprise and to pass the night in the village. The next morning it was found that his horse had cast a shoe, and the village blacksmith was summoned to repair the loss. This was a curious fellow, whose suspicions were aroused on observing that the old shoes were fastened in a manner peculiar to the north of England. The hostler, who was a Republican soldier, carried the information to the Puritan minister. From the minister it went to the magistrate, and from the magistrate to the captain of a troop of horse, who soon galloped with his men in pursuit. Fortunately for the king, they took the wrong road, and he escaped.

The inn at which Charles rested is still standing. Part of it is now the Congregational Manse. The front of the house has now been entirely modernised, but the interior has retained all the quaint features of the Carolean period, and here one may still see heavy ceilings and fine oak-panellings. In the portion which is now a cottage a large chimney (which is said to have served as a hiding-place) and the "king's bedroom" are still pointed out to visitors. Until comparatively recent times the inn was still providing ale to thirsty rustics and was called the "Queen's Head," and several old natives can remember when the landlord displayed a sign on which was inscribed:

"Here in this house was lodged King Charles,
Come in, sirs, you may venture;
For here is entertainment good
For churchman or dissenter."

In 1902 a commemoration tablet was placed on the house. Similar tablets have been placed on Ellesdon Farm, the George Inn (now a shop), Bridport, and on the George Inn, Broadwindsor, at each of which Charles II. took refreshment or a night's lodgment during his passage through Dorset.

Two lanes, one turning off near the top of the straight descent, and one just below the church, lead in a few minutes to the sea. The beach is sand, shingle and rock, and supports a coast-guard station, bathing machines and a few fishing-boats which are launched from the beach. There are cliffs on each side of the bay, and here the Char, "a small, irregular, alder-fringed, playful river, full of strange fish such as inland streams yield not," mingles very modestly with the sea. The river rises under Lewesdon and Pilesdon, about six miles distant in a direct line. Three miles north of Charmouth is Corrie Castle (King's Castle), supposed to have been the camp of Egbert when he fought with the Danes.

The cliffs at Charmouth exhibit a fine section of the strata and abound in interesting fossil

remains. These include the bones of those colossal reptiles the ichthyosaurus and plesiosaurus, of the pterodactyl, and numerous fish; and, among other shells, those of the ammonite and belemnite, which are found in great quantities on Golden Cap. The lias contains much bituminous matter and iron pyrites, which have frequently taken fire after heavy rains. At a bed of gravel near the mouth of the river the remains of an elephant and rhinoceros have been discovered.

The tourist must look for the relic of the "Queen's Head" next above a chapel and opposite the picturesque George Inn. I think that the quiet folk who occupy the genuine inn where the king stopped must often breathe mild maledictions over the heads of inquisitive pilgrims who peep and peer into their windows, and I suspect that they have begged mine host of the George to claim for his house the honour of sheltering Charles Stuart from the troops. At all events the George is pointed out to the visitor as the great historical attraction, in spite of the fact that it was built long after the time King Charles was in hiding in Dorset.

CHAPTER XIII

RAMBLES AROUND BRIDPORT

I, who am a pagan child,
Who know how dying Plato smiled,
And how Confucius lessoned kings,
And of the Buddha's wanderings,
Find God in very usual things.

TOLLER PORCORUM (Toller of the Swine) has a railway station on the Bridport branch line and is two miles from Maiden Newton. The name is explanatory, and great herds of swine were once bred here. The affix serves to distinguish this Toller from its next neighbour, Toller Fratrum (Toller of the Brethren, *i.e.* monks), which is one mile from Maiden Newton station. The mansion of Sir Thomas Fulford still stands and is a fine instance of early seventeenth-century domestic architecture. The very first things I noticed about this house were the tall, narrow, thick windows—windows that any man might look upon with covetous eyes. Such tall stone-mullioned windows are an enchantment, and, as Hilaire Belloc says, it is the duty of every man to keep up the high worship of noble windows till he comes down to the windowless grave. A building

with a thatched roof near the house is a refectory, and appropriately cut in stone on the wall will be noticed a monk eating bread.

At Wynford Eagle, two miles south, the church still preserves a curious tympanum of a Norman door. It shows two ferocious and unspeakable-looking beasts, who are about to fight. They are said to be wyverns—which are heraldic monsters with two wings, two legs and tapering bodies. The most remarkable discovery ever made in the vicinity of Wynford Eagle was recorded by Aubrey in connection with the opening of a barrow at Ferndown. The diggers came upon "a place like an Oven, curiously clay'd round; and in the midst of it a fair Urn full of very firm bones, with a great quantity of black ashes under it. And what is most remarkable; one of the diggers putting his hand into the Oven when first open'd, pull'd it back hastily, not being able to endure the *heat*; and several others doing the like, affirmed it to be hot enough to bake bread. . . . Digging further they met with sixteen Urns more, but not in Ovens; and in the middle one with ears; they were all full of some bones and black ashes."

The house of the Sydenhams still stands at Wynford Eagle. On the highest point of the central gable a fierce-looking stone eagle arrests our attention, and under it is carved the date 1630.

Rampisham is three miles south of Evershot, and the churchyard contains an ancient stone cross, the decayed condition of which will test the patience and ingenuity of those who desire to satisfy themselves of the accuracy of Britton's description of the sculpture—namely, that it represents "the stoning of St Stephen, the Martyrdom of St Edmund, the Martyrdom of St Thomas à Becket, and two crowned figures sitting at a long table, to whom a man kneels on one knee."

The inn called the "Tiger's Head" is of great antiquity; it has stooped and settled down with age, and, within, the low-ceiled rooms seem saturated with influence, and weighty with the wearing of men's lives.

Cross-in-Hand stands on the verge of the down, which breaks away precipitously to the vale where Yetminster lies. A bleached and desolate upland, it took its name from a stone pillar which stood there, a strange, rude monolith, from a stratum unknown in any local quarry, on which was roughly carved a human hand. Differing accounts were given of its history and purport. Some authorities stated that a devotional cross had once formed the complete erection thereon, of which the present relic was but the stump; others that the stone as it stood was entire, and

that it had been fixed there to mark a boundary or place of meeting."

It was on this stone that Alec D'Urberville made Tess swear not to tempt him by her charms. "This was once a holy cross," said he. "Relics are not in my creed, but I fear you at moments." It was with a sense of painful dread that Tess, after leaving this spot, learned from a rustic that the stone was not a holy cross. "Cross—no; 'twere not a cross! 'Tis a thing of ill-omen, miss. It was put up in wuld times by the relations of a malefactor, who was tortured there by nailing his hands to a post and afterwards hung. The bones lie underneath. They say he sold his soul to the devil, and that he walks at times."

Deep down below is the sequestered village of Batcombe. An uncanny story attaches itself to a battered old Gothic tomb in Batcombe churchyard. The tomb stands near the north wall of the church, and it is said to be the resting-place of one Conjuring Minterne, who Hardy in one of his novels tells us left directions, after having quarrelled with his vicar, that he was to be buried "neither in the church nor out of it." It is said that this eccentric injunction was complied with, but the tomb has since been moved. What deed Minterne had committed that prevented him from lying quietly in the usual grave like the other

good folk of Batcombe who had departed this life no man can tell. All the rustics could tell me was they had heard he had sold himself to Old Nick, and that his request to be buried in such a unique manner was a ruse to prevent his master "the old 'un" from getting him when he died.

In bygone days the "conjurer" was an important character in the Dorset village, and he was generally of good reputation, and supposed to be gifted with supernatural power, which he exercised for good. By his incantations and ceremonies he cured anything from inflamed eyes to lung disease. A Wessex dealer in magic and spells is mentioned in Hardy's story, *The Withered Arm*. He lived in a valley in the remotest part of Egdon Heath:

"He did not profess his remedial practices openly, or care anything about their continuance, his direct interests being those of a dealer in furze, turf, 'sharp sand,' and other local products. Indeed, he affected not to believe largely in his own powers, and when warts that had been shown him for cure miraculously disappeared—which it must be owned they infallibly did—he would say lightly, 'Oh, I only drink a glass of grog upon 'em—perhaps it's all chance,' and immediately turn the subject."

But to return to Minterne. The present vicar

of Batcombe church—Rev. Joseph Pulliblank—thinks the fore-shortened stone of Minterne's tomb, which is square instead of the usual oblong, gives some support to the story of the "conjurer" being buried with his feet under the masonry of the church wall. The following paragraph is also from some notes kindly sent to me by the Rev. Joseph Pulliblank :—

"Batcombe Church, originally Saxon, has only two points which testify to the fact—(1) A Saxon font inside, (2) a small portion of Saxon masonry worked into the outside south wall.

"In modern times Batcombe was the seat of 'the Little Commonwealth' settlement founded by the Earl of Sandwich and run on the lines of the 'George Junior Republic' in America—owing to financial and other difficulties it came to an end during the war."

In the church are wall tablets to the Minterne family: one to a John Minterne who died in 1716, as well as a John Minterne who was buried in 1592. There is a monument to Bridget Minterne in Yetminster church, who was the wife of John Minterne of Batcombe. The inscription runs :

> "Here lyeth y body of Bridgett Minterne wife of John Minterne of Batcombe esq., second daughter of Sir John Brown of Frampton Kt. who died y 19th July Ano Domini 1649."

Which of the ancient possessors of Batcombe can claim the honour of being the famous Conjuring Minterne I was unable to discover. Little remains of his history. We only know that he was always kind, and knew how to ride well, for he once jumped his horse from the crest of the down into the village, knocking one of the pinnacles off the church tower on his way. He would not talk much about wizardry, but would rather sing songs. No doubt Minterne was a very lovable fellow!

In Rudyard Kipling's "Marklake Witches" (*Rewards and Fairies*) the Sussex "conjurer" is represented by Jerry Gamm the witchmaster, and he is one of the most striking examples in literature of the rustic astrologer and doctor. The following charm—a very excellent one, too—was Jerry Gamm's charm against a disease of an obstinate and deadly character:

"You know the names of the Twelve Apostles, dearie? You say them names, one by one, before your open window, rain or storm, wet or shine, five times a day fasting. But mind you, 'twixt every name you draw in your breath through your nose, right down to your pretty toes, as long and as deep as you can, and let it out slow through your pretty little mouth. There's virtue for your cough in those names spoke that

way. And I'll give you something you can see, moreover. Here's a stick of maple which is the warmest tree in the wood. It's cut one inch long for you every year," Jerry said. "That's sixteen inches. You set it in your window so that it holds up the sash, and thus you keep it, rain or shine, or wet or fine, day and night. I've said words over it which will have virtue on your complaints."

Bridport lies two miles inland from the sea and its unheard-of harbour of West Bay. We first hear of the town in the reign of Edward the Confessor, when it could boast a mint, a priory of monks and two hundred houses. In Saxon days it was probably a place of some importance, owing to the fact of it being the port to the River Brit, but its early history is without any distinctive mark or important event. When Charles II. arrived at Bridport in his hasty flight from Charmouth the town was full of soldiers, but the royal party went boldly to an inn (the *George*, now a shop, incorporating part of the old building opposite the Town Hall) and mixed with the company. Every stranger was mistrusted by the troops, however, and Charles and his suite quitted the town after a hasty meal. They retired by the main Dorchester road and took a lane leading to Broadwindsor and so escaped. Lee Lane, a

mile to the east of Bridport, is said to be the actual scene where the royal party retreated to security.

The first thing the pilgrim will notice when entering Bridport is the generous width of the streets, and it is a curious fact that the local industries have left their stamp on the town in this way. The town was always famed for its hempen manufactures, and it furnished most of the cordage for the royal fleet in the good old times of "wooden walls." It was for this reason the roads were made wider—to allow each house to have a "rope walk." At one time the town enjoyed almost a monopoly in the manufacture of cordage. Gallows' ropes also were made here, hence the grim retort often heard in Wessex: "You'll live to be stabbed with a Bridport dagger!"

George Barnet, "a gentleman-burgher of Port Bredy," in Hardy's *Fellow Townsmen*, was descended from the hemp and rope merchants of Bridport.

The church is fifteenth-century and contains a cross-legged effigy of a mail-clad knight, probably one of the De Chideocks. The old building was restored in 1860, when two bays were added to the nave. Thomas Hardy waxes bitterly jocular over this piece of restoration: "The church had had such a tremendous joke played upon it by

some facetious restorer or other as to be scarce recognisable by its dearest old friends."

West Bay and Bridport are scenes in Hardy's tale, *Fellow Townsmen*, where they are dealt with under the name of "Port Bredy," from the name of the little River Bredy, which here flows into the sea. The town mainly consists of one long highway, divided at West Street and East Street by the clock tower of the Town Hall, which forms the very hub of commercial liveliness, with the fine old inns and quaint shops about it. The Greyhound Hotel is a place very much favoured by travellers, and for old-fashioned fare and comfort there is no inn in England which could better it. Mr Trump, the broad-shouldered landlord, is one of the old school, a man of genial humour and generous strength, and his popularity reaches well over the borders of Dorset. He is a great lover of horses, and I stood by his side as he surveyed a manifestation of Divine Energy in the form of a horse of spirit and tremendous power owned by a local farmer. "Walter" Trump took off his hat to the fine animal and turned to me, saying: "If there are no horses in heaven I don't want to go there."

South Street turns down to the quay near the Greyhound, and in the summer traps will be usually found at this corner to take one down to the sea.

The Literary and Scientific Institute, in East Street, opposite the Bull Hotel, contains a number of coins and some natural history exhibits, as well as a library.

The Conservative Club has been established in a fine old Tudor building in South Street, on the opposite side of which is another ancient house called Dungeness. At the back of a house on the south side of the East Bridge is a portion of the old Hospital of St John. The Bull has been modernised, but it is the Black Bull where George Barnet put up on his return to his native town, in *Fellow Townsmen.*

Between the Town Hall and the Greyhound is a passage known as Bucky Doo, which the Rev. R. Grosvenor Bartelot traces to "Bocardo," "originally a syllogism in logic, which was here, as at Oxford, applied to the prison, because, just as a Bocardo syllogism always ended in a final negative, so did a compulsory visit to the Bocardo lock-up generally mean a closer acquaintance with the disciplinary use of 'the Bridport dagger' and a final negative to the drama of life."

If the pilgrim wishes to make a pleasant excursion on foot to West Bay he must take a track that goes round the churchyard and follow the riverside footpath on the right bank of the stream. Thus we arrive at Bridport Quay and

West Bay. The harbour never became of any importance owing to the microscopic shingle which has always obstructed and choked its mouth. Everywhere the pilgrim turns he sees hillocks of this waste sand which has prevented a willing port from serving its country. The fact that Bridport was not called upon to provide any ships either for the siege of Calais in 1347 or for the fleet to oppose the Spanish Armada may be accepted as proof that the burgesses of the town possessed no vessels large enough for fighting purposes. So the little harbour fell into indolence and sluggishness, thus bearing out the truth of the old saying: "That which does not serve dies."

The place is picturesque in an odd and casual way, and a scattering of quaint old dwellings contrast with a row of new lodging-houses which are very showy (rory-tory the Dorset rustic would style them!) in spite of their affectation of the dandy-go-rusty tiles of antiquity. A little group of fishermen may always be seen loafing and smoking by the thatched Bridport Arms Hotel, and the only time these good fellows ever show any quickening to life is when some barque, taking unusual risks, allows itself to be towed and winched between the narrow pier-heads. At such times the spirit of ships and men departed

seems to enter into them, and they shout and heave and sing randy-dandy deep-sea songs, and use much profanity.

The shingle is part of one of the remarkable features of the Dorset coast—the Chesil Beach or Chesil Bank, which runs as far as Portland. Chesil is Old English for *pebble*, the old word being found in Chesilton in Dorset and Chislehurst in Kent. The pebbles gradually grow coarser as one progresses in a south-easterly direction, so that in olden days the smugglers, running their "tubs" ashore, at venture, in the fog or during the night, knew the exact stretch of bank they had arrived on by taking a handful of shingle to examine. The attractions of West Bay are good bathing, good sea fishing and good boating, for the curious little harbour is a particularly pleasing haunt for amateur sailors.

There are many pleasant short walks in the neighbourhood of Bridport and West Bay. Eype is reached from Bridport by field paths passing through Allington and the Lovers' Grove. A bridle-way takes one to Eype church, standing on the ridge, whence it leads through the village down a deep hollow to the beach. Continuing over Thorncombe Beacon, we reach Seatown, which is a seaside branch of Chideock. "Chiddick," as any Wessex man of the soil will pronounce

the name, is a little less than a mile inland on the Lyme Regis road. The Anchor Inn at Seatown is an old place of entertainment I have not personally visited, but a man who knows his Dorset informs me that it is a place where the centuries mingle ; with black beams in the ceiling, oak settles, shining with long usage, and ironwork full of the rough simplicity of the Elizabethan forge. I shall call there next time I fare Dorset way, if only to stand in the great bay window which looks out to the sea. Such buildings remind one, not of decay but of immutableness. Perhaps even the summons of the dark Reaper would not sound quite so sharp in an ancient inn. There are less perfect places one might die in, and if I had my wish I would choose to pass away in an inn, where all my regrets would be arrested by the stamping of feet on the sanded floor beneath, and the ancient and untutored voices of farm-hands and ploughmen singing some lively song.

CHAPTER XIV

ROUND ABOUT BEAMINSTER

BEAMINSTER is six miles to the north of Bridport, and is reached by a pleasant walk, passing on the way the little village of Melplash.

It is a sleepy country town, deeply seated among hills, near the head-waters of the *Birt*, which flows through it. It is a place of some antiquity, but not remarkable for much, if we except its sufferings by fire. In 1644, when Prince Maurice was quartered here, it was burnt completely to the ground, having been fired by a drunken soldier. The greater part of it was a second time destroyed in 1684, and again in 1788.

Very prominent landmarks of the Beaminster district are Pilsdon Pen and Lewesdon Hill, two eminences of green sand remarkable for their likeness to one another. The singularity of their appearance has naturally excited much attention. Sailors, whom they serve as a landmark, call them the *Cow and the Calf*; the Rev. William Crowe has sung the praises of Lewesdon in a descriptive poem, and the two hills together have given

rise to a proverbial saying current in this country and applied to neighbours who are not acquainted:

"... as much akin
As Lew'son Hill to Pil'son Pen."

These hills command a charming prospect, and Pilsdon is further interesting as the site of an ancient camp, of oval form, encompassed by three strong ramparts and ditches. It is the highest point in the county, nine hundred and thirty-four feet above the sea. Crowe's *Lewesdon Hill* was much admired by Rogers, who says in his *Table Talk*: "When travelling in Italy I made two authors my constant study for versification, Milton and Crowe."

Beaminster is in a centre of a district famous for its great dairies, flowers, bees and rural industries, and here is produced the famous Double Dorset and Blue Vinny cheese which has always a place on the table of the true Dorset family. The word "vinny" means mouldy; thus when the rustic thinks his cheese is in a fine ripe condition he will be likely to remark: "This yer cheese is butvul now; tez vinnied through and through." The same word is also used in Devonshire for "bad-tempered," thus, "You vinnied little mullybrub, git out of my sight this minut!"

The large dairies where the cheeses are made are called " soap factories " by the facetious natives, and one frequently meets motor lorries grinding up the sharp hills beneath the burden of a hundred or so freshly pressed rounds of cheese.

In spite of the town's sufferings by fire the grand old church has fortunately always escaped. It is approached by a lane at the corner of the market-place. The pride of Beaminster is the old church tower, which was built in 1520. A native said to me : " Didee ever see zich a comfortable-looking old tower as that be, and I knaws you won't see more trinkrums on any church in the county." By " trinkrums " I suppose he meant the gargoyles, pinnacles and profusion of delicate carvings for which the gracious amber-coloured tower is justly famous. The church itself cannot vie with the tower for elegance or magnificence. Indeed the church is quite a dull-looking place. However, the nave, arcade and a squint from the south aisle into the chancel are Early English. The pulpit is Jacobean. There are two handsome monuments to members of the Strode family and some memorial windows to the Oglanders and other benefactors. Affixed to the pavement of the south aisle is an early brass, with this inscription in Old English characters:

"Pray for the soule of Sr. John Tone whos body lyth berid under this tombe on whos soule Jhu have mercy a patr nostr & ave."

Sir John was a priest, and probably a Knight of Malta, who died in Beaminster while he was on a pilgrimage through Dorset.

The church is the scene of a "well-authenticated" apparition. Down to the year 1748 the free school (of which the Rev. Samuel Hood, father of Admirals Viscount Hood and Lord Bridport, was at one time master) was held in one of the galleries, and there, on "Saturday, June 22, 1728," did one John Daniel appear at full noonday to five of his school-fellows, "between three weeks and a month after his burial." The reason was plain when his body was dug up and duly examined, for it was found that he had been strangled.

Letherbury, about a mile south of Beaminster, is a pleasant walk down the Brit valley, by the river-side. On the road is *Parnham*, a noble mansion of the Tudor period standing in a well wooded and watered demesne. From the Parnhams this estate came to the Strodes, passing thence in 1764 to the Oglanders. Other old houses in the neighbourhood of Beaminster are *Strode*, *Melplash* and *Mapperton*, and the whole district bears the marks of long and prosperous agricultural occupation in the old-fashioned days

when "squire" and tenant lived and died in semi-feudal relationship on the estate which the one owned and the other rented.

Mapperton House belongs to the time of Henry VIII. In the reign of that sovereign the lord of the manor was Robert Morgan, who had the following patent granted to him:—"Forasmoche as we bee credibly informed that our welbiloved Robert Morgan Esquier, for diverse infirmities which he hathe in his hedde, cannot convenyently, without his grete danngier, be discovered of the same. Whereupon wee in tendre consideration thereof have by these presents licensed him to use and wear his bonnet on his hed at all tymys, as wel in our presence as elsewher at his libertie."

Poor old Robert! Perhaps his Dorset stubbornness had as much to do with his wearing a "bonnet at all tymys" as the "infirmities in his hedde." But he was well able to take care of himself, for he built this beautiful manor-house and recorded the fact in the great hall:

"Robt. Morgan and Mary his wife built this house in their own lifetime, at their own charge and cost.

What they spent, that they lent:
What they gave, that they have:
What they left, that they lost."

A GLOSSARY OF WEST COUNTRY PROVINCIALISMS

Abide. Cannot abide a thing is, not able to suffer or put up with it.

Addle. Attle is a term used in mining, and signifies the rejected and useless rubbish. Hence an addled egg is an egg unfit for use.

Aft, now only used as a sea term, but anciently with degrees of comparison, as "after, aftest."

Agate, open-mouthed attention; hearkening with eagerness. "He was all *agate,*" eager to hear what was said.

Alare, a short time ago: in common use.

Anan. A Shakespearean expression formerly used by the Dorset rustics when they wished to have a repetition of what had been said; but no one now uses it.

Backalong, homeward.

Ballyrag, to scold.

Banging-gert, very large.

Barken, an enclosed place, as a rick-barken, a rick-yard. In Sussex a yard or enclosure near a house is called a "barton," from barley; and tun, an enclosure.

Barm, yeast.

Bayte, to beat, or thrash.

> "A wumman,
> A spenyel,
> And a walnut-tree,
> The oftener yu bayte 'em
> Better they'll be."

Blare, to shout loudly.

> "Chillern pick up words as pigeons pease,
> And blare them again as God shall please."

Brath, the ancient Cornish name for a mastiff dog. Perhaps this accounts for the common expression, "a broth of a boy," meaning "a stout dog of a boy" —a sturdy fellow.

Buck, that peculiar infection which in summer sometimes gets into a dairy and spoils the cream and butter; a sign of gross negligence and want of skill, and not easily to be eradicated.

Bumpkin, a common term for a clumsy, uncouth man. But whence the word?—for it is also applied to a part of a ship where the foretack is fastened down. The word *bump* means a protuberance, a prominence: to *bump* against a thing is a local term for striking oneself clumsily against it.

Butt, a straw beehive.

"A butt of bees in May
Is worth a guinea any day;
A butt of bees in June
Is worth a silver spoon;
A butt of bees in July
Isn't worth a fly."

Chitter, thin, folded up. It is applied to a thin and furrowed face, by way of ridicule. Such a one is said to be "chitter-faced." The long and folded milts or testes of some fishes are called "chitterlins," as were the frills at the bosom of shirts when they were so worn. The entrails of a pig cleaned and boiled are common food in Wiltshire, and the dish is called "chitterlings."

Churer, an occasional workman. Char, to do household work in the absence of a domestic servant as a charwoman. In Dorset they say "one good choor deserves another," instead of one good turn, etc.

Click-handed, left-handed.

Cloam, common earthenware.

Clush, to lie down close to the ground, to stoop low down.

Clusty, close and heavy; particularly applied to bread not well fermented, and therefore closely set. Also applied to a potato that is not mealy.

Coccabelles, icicles.

Condididdle, to filch away, to convey anything away by trickery.

Craking, complaining.

> "I, Anthony James Pye Molley,
> Can burn, take, sink, and destroy;
> There's only one thing I can't do, on my life!
> And that is, to stop the craking tongue of my wife."

Crummy, fat, corpulent. "A fine crummy old fellow."

Daddick, rotten wood.

Dew-bit, breakfast.

Dout, to extinguish.

Downargle, to argue in an overbearing manner.

Drattle you! A corruption of the irreverent oath, "God throttle you."

Dubbin o' drenk, a pot of ale.

Durns, door-posts.

Ebbet, the common lizard, commonly called the "eft," which may be a corruption of this word. The word *eft* signifies speedy or quick.

Escaped. A person is said to be just escaped when his understanding is only just enough to warrant his being free from constraint of the tutelage of his friends.

Ether or *Edder*, a hedge; also the twisted wands with which a "stake hedge" is made. They have a rhyme in Dorset on the durability of a "stake ether":

> "An elder stake and black-thorn ether
> Will make a hedge to last for ever."

Fags! or, *Aw Fegs!* An interjection. Indeed! Truly!

Fenigy, to run away secretly, or so slip off as to deceive expectation; deceitfully to fail in a promise. It is most frequently applied to cases where a man has shown appearances of courtship to a woman, and then has left her without any apparent reason, and without any open quarrel.

Fess, proud, vain. "Lukee her agot a new bonnet. Why, her's as fess as a paycock." Mrs Durbeyfield uses this word in Hardy's *Tess*.

Flaymerry, a merry-making, or what is now vulgarly called "a spree," but with an innocent meaning, an excursion for amusement.

Gabbern. Gloomy, comfortless rooms and houses are "gabbern."

Galley-bagger, a person fond of gadding about.

Gallied, scared. Jonathan Kail the farm-hand at Talbothay's uses this word (see Hardy's *Tess*).

Gallyvanting, going from home.

"Then for these flagons of silver fine,
Even they shall have no praise of mine;
For when my lord or lady be going to dine,
He sends them out to be filled with wine,
But his man goes gallyvanting away,
Because they are precious, and fine, and gay;
But if the wine had been order'd in a leather bottel,
The man would have come back, and all been well."

Gigglet, a merry young girl, one who shows her folly by a disposition to grin and laugh for no cause. It is used as a term of slight and contempt, and commonly to a young girl. Gigglet-market, a hiring-place for servants. From time immemorial, to within the last sixty years, on Lady Day young girls in Dorset and Devon were accustomed to stand in the market-place awaiting a chance of being hired as servants.

Gu-ku, cuckoo.

"The gu-ku is a merry bird,
She sings as she flies;
She brings us good tidings,
She tells us no lies.
She sucks little birds' eggs
To make her voice clear;
And when she sings 'gu-ku'
The summer is near."

Hadge, hedge.

"Love thy neighbour—but dawnt pull down thy hadge."

Holt, hold.

"When you are an anvil, holt you still,
When you are a hammer, strike your fill."

Hozeburd, a person of bad character. "Jack Dollop, a 'hore's bird of a fellow," is the hero of a story related by Dairyman Crick in Hardy's *Tess*.

Klip, a sudden smart blow, but not a heavy one. It is most usually applied to a "*klip* under the ear." Of late the word *klipper* is grown into use to describe a smart-sailing vessel, one that sails very swiftly, with some distant reference to the same idea.

Knap, prominent. It is sometimes applied to the prominent part of a hill; but it is more frequently used as significant of the form of a person's knees when they are distorted towards each other, and which some people have chosen to term knock-kneed.

Lasher, a large thing, of any sort. The meaning sought to be conveyed appears to be that this thing beats or excels every other. The opinion that any object which excels another is able to beat, *lash* or inflict violence on that other is a strange but not uncommon vulgar one.

Lof, unwilling.

"Dawntee be like old Solomon Wise—
'Lof tu go tu beyd
And lof to rise.'
Cuz then you'll soon be
'Out tu elbaws,
Out tu toes,
Out ov money,
An out ov cloase.'"

Main, very. I remember once hearing a Dorset thatcher say:

"I be main fammled. I be so hungry I could welly eat the barn tiles."

Mommet, a scarecrow. See *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*: "Had it anything to do with father's making such a mommet of himself in thik carriage?"

Nitch, a bundle of reed, straw or wood. "He's got a nitch"—he is drunk.

Peg, pig. "Tez time tu watch out when you're getting all you want. Fattening pegs ain't 'ardly in luck!

At a tithe dinner a farmer in giving the Royal toast said:

"The King, God bless him! May he be plaized to send us more pegs and less parsons."

Stubberds, delicious apples.

"Did you say the stars were worlds, Tess?"

"Yes."

"All like ours?"

"I don't know; but I think so. They sometimes seem to be like the apples on our stubbard-tree. Most of them splendid and sound—a few blighted."

"Which do we live on—a splendid one or a blighted one?"

"A blighted one." (See Thomas Hardy's *Tess*.)

Stugged, stuck in the mud.

> "He that will not merry be
> With a pretty girl by the fire,
> I wish he was a-top o' Dartmoor
> A-stugged in the mire."

Squab pie, a pie in favour in Devon and Dorset:

> "Mutton, onions, apples and dough
> Make a good pie as any I know."

Ingredients.—3 lb. mutton or pork cutlets, 6 large apples sliced, 2 large onions, ¼ lb. salt fat bacon cut small, 2 oz. castor sugar, ½ pint of mutton broth, pepper and salt to taste. Place these in layers in a deep pie-dish, cover with rich paste and bake for an hour and a half, or place the whole in a crock and stew an hour and a half. Serve piping hot. I have seen clotted cream served and eaten with this "delicacy."

Squab, the youngest or weakest pig of the litter. The London costermonger speaks of the youngest member of his family as the "squab."

Withwind, the wild convolvulus.

Withy, the willow-tree. They say in Wiltshire, in reference to the very rapid growth of the willow, that "a withy tree will buy a horse before an oak will buy a bridle and saddle." The willow will often grow twelve feet in a season.

Wizzened, shrivelled, withered: as "a wizzened apple," "a wizzened-faced woman."

Wosbird. A term of reproach, the meaning of which appears to be unknown to those who use it. It is evidently a corruption of whore's-bird.