

CHAPTER-II

THE BACKGROUND OF HARDY'S LOVE-POEMS

Thomas Hardy left school at the age of sixteen in 1856 and began an apprentice to John Hicks, his father's friend and an architect in Dorchester. After completing his training with Hicks, Hardy moved to London in 1862 to join the staff of a well-known architect Arthur Bloomfield. He returned to Dorchester in 1867. He was sent by Crickmay to St.Juliot in Cornwall to make an estimate for the repairs to St.Juliot Church in 1870. On his way to Cornwall, the poetic name of which was Lyonesse, he was mediating on the various things he had noticed on his early walk. He had written the following lines on a piece of paper which was in his pocket.

When I set out for Lyonesse
A hundred miles away,
The rime was on the spray,
And starlight lit my lonesomeness
When I set out for Lyonesse
A hundred miles away.¹

When he approached St.Juliot, he was welcomed by the maid. He entered the house where fortune, whom he had accused of being a guilty goddess, had all this time been preparing a great surprise for him.

What would be chance at Lyonesse
While I should sojourn there
No prophet durst declare,

Nor did the wisest wizard guess
What would bechance at Lyonesse
While I should sojourn there.²

He was welcomed by the rector's sister-in-law, Miss.Emma Lavinia Gifford when he was admitted to the rectory at St.Juliot. She was then twenty-nine years old, half a year younger than Hardy. In writing his memoranda regarding the events of that day. Hardy needed only six words to describe his arrival : 'Received by young lady in brown.' It is sure that Hardy was dreaming of a woman and not of a church tower. Hardy had written down five years previously, on the evening of his twenty-fifth birthday : 'Wondered what woman, if any, I should be thinking about in five years' time', and then supplement that note by reading 'The Wind's Prophecy' in which Hardy tells us that, he was day-dreaming about a lady.

'My eyes now as all day
Behold her ebon loops of hair!'
Like bursting bonds the wind responds,
'Nay, wait for tresses flashing fair!'³

Even Miss.Gifford's feelings about the expected arrival were later versified by Hardy himself in 'A Man Was Drawing Near to Me' :

There was a rumble at the door,
A draught disturbed the drapery,
And but a minute passed before,

With gaze that bore
My destiny,

The man revealed himself to me.⁴

In 'The Discovery' Hardy described how he had
'Wandered to a crude coast ...and....never once guessed'
that there a young lady lived - one whom 'my heart could
not but follow.'⁵

During his stay at St.Juliot he drove with
Mrs.Holder and Miss.Gifford to inspect several near-by
slate quarries, and in this way became acquainted with
Peupethy, Tintaget and Boscastle. Throughout his later
life, he never saw green slates without recalling that
visit to Miss Gifford.

And how, though fifty years have flown.
Green slates - seen high on roofs or lower

In Waggon, truck, or lorry -

Cry out : 'Our home was where you saw her
Standing in the quarry!'⁶

Every sight seen by him on that day-of-discovery was
recorded in his memory even to the 'Smiling' inn at
Launcheston where he 'hired horse and man for bearing me on
my way - faring'.⁷

On the drive back from Boscastle the road was too
steep for the carriage with three passengers. So Hardy and
Miss Gifford walked. In the poem 'At Castel Boterel' Hardy
tells what happened :

It filled but a minute But was there ever
A time of such quality, since or before,
In that hill's story? To one mind, never.⁸

That hill's 'story' remained in his memory to the end of his life. In 'A Dream or No' he recognizes that 'much of my life' claims the country near St.Juliot' as its key'.

A maiden abiding
Threat as in hiding;

Fair-eyed and white-shouldered, broad-browed and brown
tressed.⁹

Hardy drove with Miss Gifford to Boscastle and she became 'E.L.G.' That evening the two sisters sang duets. In 'A Duettist to her Pianoforte' Hardy identifies some of the songs played that evening.¹⁰

They also paid a visit to Beeny Cliff which resulted in one of the Hardy's lyrics, 'Beeny Cliff'.

O the opal and the Sapphire of that wandering Western sea,
And the woman riding high above with bright hair flapping
free -

The woman whom I loved so, and whom loyally loved me.¹¹

In 'The Phantom Horsewoman' Hardy recalls E.L.G. as a 'girl-rider' and imagines that -

She still rides gaily
In his rapt thought
On that shagged and shaly
Atlantic Spot,.....
And as when first eyed.

Draws rein and sings to the swing of the tide.¹²

In 'Places' Hardy recalls how, at Boterel Hill 'Where the waggoners skid'

She cantered down, as if she must fall

Though she never did.'

To the charm of all.¹³

After the return to St.Juliot from the Cliff Miss Gifford wore a 'gown of fading fashion' which is described in the poem 'The Old Gown'.

She sang with lips that trembled,

'Shall I see his face again?'¹⁴

Hardy's poem 'The Frozen Greenhouse' tells us something about the morning after their return journey. 'There was a frost last night', she said at the breakfast table. The room was lit by candles because of the early hour. 'The stove was forgot when we went to bed, and the greenhouse plants are frozen!'¹⁵

Hardy began to think that there was little chance of his ever seeing E.L.G.again,' Their differing habits and....contrasting positions'. 'Farewell!' he said, 'I soon must be gone!' Even then, the scale might have been turned

Against love by a feather,

But crimson one cheek of hers burned

When we came in together.¹⁶

He kissed her cheek and lips too - at least 'in fancy, as I came away in the morning glow'. So he wrote,

long after in 'Two Lips', 'I kissed them through the glass
of her picture - frame.'

On the train-ride back to Bockhampton, Hardy thought
what had happened to him.

As 'twere at wanning of this week
Broke a new life on me.¹⁷

He never forgot this week and a few days'
experience.

On Wednesday I did not opine
Your Life would ever by one with mine¹⁸

By the time the week was over, he could confess -

On Sunday night I longed for thee,
Without whom life were waste to me!¹⁹

When Hardy returned at Higher Bockhampton something
unusual had happened to him. His parents said nothing, but
they noticed and 'surmised'.

When I came from Lyonesse
With magic in my eyes,
All marked with mute surmise
My radiance rare and fathomless,
When I came back from Lyonesse
With magic in my eyes!²⁰

Hardy couldn't forget that isolated Cornish spot and
couldn't get the vision of that lady in brown out of his
mind.

Within Walls of Weathered stone,
Far away

From the files of formal houses,
By the bough the firstling browses,
Lives a Sweet : no merchants meet,
No man barterers, no man sells
Where she dwells.²¹

Long afterwards he wrote -

Show me again the time
When in the Junetide's prime
.....
Love lures life on.²²

Hardy again left for Cornwall in 1870 and there he found a lady in brown. They often walked to Boscastle Harbour down the beautiful Valency Valley, where once they lost a tiny picnic tumbler. Later, he wrote a poem about it, 'Under the Waterfall', in which he imagines Emma Gifford telling the story of the loss.

We placed our basket of fruit and wine. By the
runlet's rim, where we sat to dine;

.....

I held the vessel to rinse in the fall, where it slipped,
and sank, and was past recall.²³

Many years later, he came back to the site of that
summer picnic and wrote poem about it - 'Where the Picnic
was'.

And scan and trace,
The forsaken place
Quite readily.²⁴

After this they went again to Beeny cliff of which the scene is described in the poem 'The Figure in the Scene' -

It pleased her to step in front and sit
Where the cragged slope was green,
While I stood back that I might pencil it
With her amid the scene,
Till it gloomed and rained.²⁵

Another poem, 'Why Did I sketch', makes use of this same episode.

Why did I sketch an upland green,
And put the figure in
Of one on the spot with me?²⁶

He wrote another poem to describe the same scene.

'It never looks like summer here
On Beeny by the Sea'.
But though she saw its look as drear,
Summer it seemed to me.²⁷

Hardy's poem 'Self-Unconscious' was composed near Bossiney when he was revisiting this spot which he and E.L.G. had driven together.

O it would have been good
Could he then have stood
At a clear-eyed distance, and conned the whole.²⁸
On his return to Bockhampton he found himself

mooning about Emma.

And I have wasted another day.....
But wasted - 'wasted', do I say?
Is it a waste to have imaged one

Beyond the hills there, who, anon,
My great deeds done,
Will be mine always?²⁹

Letters went back and forth between Bockhampton and St. Juliot. In May 1871 there was another visit to Cornwall. His desire to marry Miss Gifford was overshadowed by the thought that he had not made a real success of anything. His discouragement has left its trail in a sonnet, 'The Minute Before Meeting'.

And knowing that what is now about to be
Will all have been in 0, so short a space!
I read beyond it my despondency
When more dividing months shall take its place.³⁰

Hardy went to St. Juliot for the third time in the autumn. This time Miss Gifford encouraged him to write fiction. The encouragement is described 'In the Seventies'.

In the seventies I was bearing in my breast,
Pinned tight,
Certain starry thoughts that threw a magic light
On the worktimes and the soundless hours of rest³¹.

They did not have to obtain paternal consent to their marriage. But it was customary to ask for it. Emma Gifford now, in 1872, decided that the time had come to introduce Thomas Hardy to her father and to acquaint him with their intentions. Her father scolded him as 'that base churl who has presumed to wish to marry into my family'. But she had enough loyalty to her 'Chosen one'. In 'I Rose

and Went to Rou'tor Town' Hardy versified her thoughts by representing Emma as the speaker -

The evil wrought at Rou'tor Town
On him I'd loved so true
I can not tell anew :
But nought can quench, but nought can drown
The evil wrought at Rou'tor Town
On him I'd loved so true!³²

The tone of the poem is tragic. They were still under the cloud of this paternal denunciation. They walked out from Bodmin on the road to Lanivet. They stopped to rest on the way. The feelings of their depression are described in the poem 'Near Lanivet', 1872.

She leant back, being so weary, against its stem
And laid her arms on its own,
Her white-clothed form....
Made her look as one crucified...³³

After the painful trip to the country 'near Lanivet' they never went back there.

She said, outworn by mile and mile,
The blurred lamps wanning her face the while
O' Love, I am here ; I am with you!' ...Ah, that there
should have come a change!³⁴ Before the end of the year
they two paid a visit to the coast. Their association with
this place is described in the poem, 'The place on the Map'
So, the map revives her words, the spot, the time, And the
thing we found we had to face before the next.

Year's prime;

The charted coast stares bright,
And its episode comes back in Pantomime.³⁵

Now, the thing they had to face was the risk of marriage. But the year 1874 was the year of decision. Both lovers knew that Mr. Gifford never forgive them if they married so they went to St. Peter's Church in London and married there.

After marriage the newly married couple lived at Surbiton. As far as his poetry of later years supplies any evidence, we must conclude that Hardy's marriage was 'neither joyful nor sorry', or- better still it was both joyful and sorry. Their superstitious nature is described in the poem 'At A Fashionable Dinner'.

Then we noticed a shade extend
By a distant screen,.....
'- It is like my own body lying
Beyond the door.³⁶

The Hardy's moved to Bournemouth for a brief stay in 1875, and there, on a rainy day, they got on each other's nerves. He came to recognize that there had been blindness on both sides. We were irked by the scene, by our own selves; yes

For I, did not know, nor did she infer
How much there was to read and guess
By her in me, and to see and crown
By me in her.³⁷

Hardy's marriage was already proving to have its sorrowful, as well as its joyful aspect. The worst of it was that he 'did not know'. She was not frank with him, nor he with her. Their silence, only made matters worse. In 'The Rift' he says -

So sank I from my high sublime!

We faced but chancewise after that,

And never I knew or guessed my crime....³⁸

The Hardy's shortly moved to near-by Swanage where they experienced another stormy day, but, this time, it was only the weather that was stormy.

And there we stood, hands clasped; I and she.³⁹

Later on they moved again to Yeovil and settled at Surminster and spent two years there. The Bournemouth 'rift' was forgotten momentarily and in 'A Two-Years' Idyll' Hardy recalled with great pleasure 'those two seasons'.⁴⁰

He was unaware of the fact that he was blind to some aspects of his stay at Surminster.

And never I turned my head, alack,

While these things met my gaze...

To see the more behind my back.⁴¹

And in 'The Musical Box' he is even more explicit about the fact that he 'did not hear and did not see'.⁴²

Yet, there was lack of frankness between Hardy and his wife. This was the reason they had to think.

There is some hid dread afoot

That we can not trace.⁴³

They both had brought up on the different religious background which became the source of friction between the two.

Hardy designed a house in Dorchester for his own residence to be known as Max Gate arose. The house is still standing, and many a twentieth-century visitor to it has had occasion to question Hardy's abilities as an architect. But some of Hardy's later poems suggest that Emma was not slow in expressing her dissatisfaction with the new dwelling.

The house is bleak and cold

Built so new for me!...

As a screen for you

Both from winds, and eyes that tease!⁴⁴

In 'The Tree and the Lady' the disappointed Hardy represents one of the trees at Max Gate.

I have done all I could

For that lady I knew...

During those days she had nothing
to pleasure her;

Gone is she, scorning my bough!⁴⁵

In 'Fetching Her' Hardy imagines one of his friends speaking to him about his folly in bringing a Cornish bride 'Unto your own newbuilded door' in Dorset.

You sought her on her surfy shore,

To fetch her thence away....

But time is prompt to expugn.⁴⁶

Now Hardy's fame was growing as a successful author. He had ten novels to his credit. In all these years while the trees at Max Gate were pushing their roots down into the Dorset Soil, the poison and the antidote were doing their work inside the house. Emma's resentful thoughts were on the way 'these women in London Society' were spoiling her husband. The Old master-mason, Hardy's father died in 1892. He wrote a poem in which he pictured his parents in the Bockhampton cottage, and himself, 'Childlike', looking the other way.

She sat here in her chair,

Smiling into the fire,

He who played stood there,

Bowing it higher and higher.

Childlike, I danced in a dream;

Blessings emblazoned that day,

Everything glowed with a gleam;

Yet we were looking away!⁴⁷

Emma's part is played in 'We' in the last 'looking away'.

Among the people whom Hardy had met in London was Richard Monckton Milnes, the first Lord Houghton. In June 1883 Hardy was a guest at a luncheon given by the baron, and he met Lord Houghton's daughter Florence who had married a young army officer, Lieutenant Arthur H. Henniker.

Three years later Mrs.Henniker's father died and she went to Dublin to serve her brother. She had literary ambitions. Even she invited the Hardys to visit her in Dublin. After this there had been the exchange of letters and books between the two novelists. It resulted into the growing intimacy between them. Even she had written a book which was dedicated 'To my Friend Thomas Hardy'. All of this activity with Mrs.Henniker naturally and inevitably had its effect on the atmosphere at Max.Gate. In the poem 'The Division' Hardy records his feelings.

I am here, and you are there,
And a hundred miles between!
.....
But that thwart thing betwixt us twain,
Which nothing cleaves or clears,
Is more than distance, Dear, or rain,
And longer than the years!⁴⁸

The 'You' of the poem was Emma Lavinia Hardy and that the 'hundred miles' between him and her were psychological or metaphorical miles, symbolizing the chasm now yawning between them. But in 'Thomas Hardy: A Bibliographical study', Professor Richard little Purdy says, 'The Division' is to be associated with Mrs.Henniker'' and hundred miles are geographical and not metaphorical miles. If 'you' does refer to Mrs.Henniker, the 'thwart thing' would presumably be the fact that both she and Hardy were married. On the other hand, if, 'you' refers to Emma Hardy,

'that thwart thing' may be her disapproval of his growing interest in Mrs. Henmiker. Hardy was aware of a 'division' there can be no doubt, but it was from Emma that he felt divided. The poem 'Had you Wept' makes the fact clear.

though you suffer as much I from
Storms the hours are bringing.
Upon your heart and mine, I never see you
shed a tear.....
And hence our deep division, and our
dark undying pain.⁴⁹

The poem is a very revealing cry from the heart. In another poem 'Without, Not Within Her', Hardy comments on how 'out from his spirit flew death, and bale, and ban ', from a soul 'Whereon no thought of yours tarried two moments.'⁵⁰

The situation in which Hardy now found himself brought him deep distress. Thus he passed 1890's and thought that he had no heart at all.

I look into my glass,
And view my wasting skin,
Any say, 'Would God it came to pass
My heart had shrunk as thin!'⁵¹

The disappointment has found its expression in 'Memory and I'- a poem that begins 'O Memory, where is now my youth!' O Memory, where is now my love,
That rayed me as a god above!⁵² Other painful poem is 'You Were the sort that Men forget' in which Hardy speaks of Emma's lack of social 'art', of her failure to understand

'friends whose mode was crude'.⁵³ At the end of the nineteenth century Hardy sat composing the lines of 'The Darkling Thrush'.

The ancient pulse of germ and birth
Was shruken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon Rarth
Seemed Fervourless as I.

These were the days of mental suffering. In 'I said to Love' he wrote of 'features pitiless and iron daggers of distress'.⁵⁴ His distress was so great that even the once-loved music that Emma had played for him in the early days of his visits to St.Juliot no longer had power to move him. In 'Lost Love' he imagines Emma as saying to herself:

I play my sweet old airs
The airs he knew
When our love was true-
But he does not balk
His determined walk,
And passes up the stairs.⁵⁵

Hardy found relief from his pain in an unexpected way. But closely scanning in the night I saw them standing crimson-bright

Just as she made them:
Nothing could fade them.⁵⁶

Some time in 1904 Mrs.Florence Henniker came to Max Gate bringing with her a young friend, Miss.Florence Emily Dugdale. She, too, had literary ambitions. She worked for

Hardy for the sheer pleasure of helping a famous author. Two years later Hardy wrote a poem 'The End of the Episode', in which he is urging himself to 'make no moans'.

Ache deep; but make no moans.
Smile out; but stilly suffer:
The paths of love are rougher
Than thoroughfares of stones.⁵⁷

Hardy's uncomplaining fortitude, grim endurance under painful experience gave its expression in 'The Wound'.

'Like that wound of mine
Of which none knew,
For I'd given no sign
That it pierced me through.'⁵⁸

He himself preferred to call his nature 'tolerant', 'enduring', forbearing'. In the poem 'Tolerance' he declared that

'And at each cross I would surmise
That if I had willed not in that wise
I might have spared me many sighs.'⁵⁹

In 'When Oats Were Reaped' Hardy took pleasure in remembering or thinking. When he wrote this poem, he could sorrowfully confess that 'I.....now know well I wounded her.'⁶⁰

Hardy was now seventy years old, weary, worn and sad. The rosy colour of the cornish romance of forty years ago had faded. The fire on the hearth at Max Gate had gone out. His poems provide us with a curious kind of

step-ladder on which we can mount and peer through the windows of Max Gate during the year 1912. His feelings of those days are expressed in 'Read By Moonlight' -

I chance now on the last of hers,
By the moon's cold shine;
It is the one remaining page
Out of the many shallow and sage
Where to she set her sign.
Who could foresee there were to be
Such missives of pain and pine
Ere I should read this last of hers
By the moon's cold shine!⁶¹

Once Emma had seated at the piano and Hardy had paused a moment on his way out of the house. She saw him and -

'I am playing my oldest tunes', declared she,
'All the old tunes I know,-
Those I learnt ever so long ago.'⁶²

Instead of staying to listen her husband walked out and came back after two hours -

When I returned from the town at nightfall
Notes continued to pour

As when I had left two hours before : 'It's the very last time', she said in closing;

'From now I play no more.'⁶³ There had once been a time when the sound of the piano would catch his attention and keep him at home. But that time was past. Mrs. Hardy had tried to rekindle the fire on the cold hearth by means of the old songs but Hardy honestly confessed-

But I would not welcome it;
And for all I then declined
O the regrettings infinite
When the night-processions flit
Through the mind !⁶⁴

His feeling of regret were so sharp that he came back, in poem after poem, to this subject of her peace offering and his rejection of it. In 'An Upbraiding' he imagined her as speaking to him from the grave.

Now I am dead you sing to me
The songs we used to know,
But while I lived you had no wish
Or care for doing so,⁶⁵

In 'Penance' he describes how he now sits in the cold room, where there is 'not a spark within the grate', and stares at the silent piano with its 'Chill old keys', and remembers his own defection. He says, 'I would not join'.

I would not stay,
But drew away,
Though the winter fire beamed brightly.⁶⁶

When it was all too late, he could -

Look in her face and say,
'Sing as you used to sing
About Love's blossoming',
But she hints not Yea or Nay.⁶⁷

Sixteen years after Emma's death Hardy found a previously unsuspected meaning in the words she sang.

Now shall I sing
That pretty thing
"The Mocking - Bird"?' And sing it straight did she.
But after years
of hopes and fears...
I found I had heard
The Mocking - bird.
In person singing there to me that day.⁶⁸

In another poem he pictures Max Gate in the year A.D.2000,
and imagines another couple occupying his old home.

'I hear the piano playing - Just as a ghost might
play'.

O' - what are you saying?
There is no piano to-day;⁶⁹

In 'The Walk' Hardy tells us why he often went alone
when he set out from Max Gate on a stroll. 'You were weak
and lame', he says. So....I went alone, and I did not mind,
Not thinking of you as left behind.⁷⁰ But even when it was
not a case of walking but of driving, Mrs.Hardy often had
to go alone. 'I drove not with you', he sadly admits in
'Your Last Drive'. His bitter regret is placed -

Should you censure me I shall take no heed,
And even your praises no more shall need.⁷¹

The day after Emma's seventy-second birthday, after
the departure of two American ladies, Mrs.Hardy (Emma) went
slowly upstairs and forty hours later she was dead. Only
later he remembered:

That calm eve when you walked up the stair,
No thought soever
That you might never
Walked down again, struck me as I stood there.⁷²

Mrs. Hardy's death on 27 November 1912 was unexpected but its effect on Thomas Hardy was even more unexpected. His unhappiness was removed to the some extent by the production of some of the tendermost poetry he had ever written. His bitterness was forgotten and he wrote love poem after love poem. These 'poems of 1912-13', were published in a volume called 'Satires of Circumstance, Lyrics and Reveries' in 1914. The first of the 'poems of 1912-13', entitled 'The Going' describes the effect upon Hardy of Emma's sudden death.

O you could not know
That such swift fleeing -
No soul foreseeing
Not even I - would undo me so!⁷³

In 'Without Ceremony' Hardy muses on the fact that the suddenness of her death was so characteristic of the living woman. She seemed to like 'to vanish without a word'.

So, now that you disappear
For ever in that swift style,
Your meaning seems to me
Just as it used to be :
'Good - bye is not worth while!'⁷⁴

He had always been a man for remembering dates and anniversaries. He had now a new one to add to his list.

So many times when blamed or praised,
Morning or noon, through years and years,
Accepting the gifts that fortune bore,
Sharing, enduring, joys, hopes, fears!⁷⁵

Her shrouded presence left its mark upon his memory,
and a year later he could still see -

Her who, before last year ebbed out,
Was costumed in a shroud.⁷⁶

Her silent lips reminded him of the day when, at St. Juliot,
he had kissed them for the first.

I kissed them in love, in truth, in laughter,
When she knew all; long so.

That I should kiss them in a shroud thereafter
She did not know.⁷⁷

In another poem Hardy tried to recall the last time he had
kissed his wife.

When, at a time anon,
A figure lay stretched out whitely,
And I stood looking thereon.⁷⁸

When the day of the funeral came-Saturday, 30 Nov.- Hardy
Watched the rain - smitten back of the car
When it started forth for a journey a far
Into the sullen November air.⁷⁹

The resurgence of love was immediate. Emma's grave in the
Stinsford Churchyard became one of the shrines in Hardy's
list of holy places. Pilgrimages were regularly made to it.
The grass was kept cut; flowers were often carried to the

grave. Florence Dugdale was called upon to make so many such visits with him. Hardy's thoughts often turned to that Grave. Two months after the funeral, when it was still mid-winter, he was looking forward to the spring.

Soon will be growing
Green blades from her mound,
And daisies be showing
Like stars on the ground.
Till she form part of them -
Ay - the sweet heart of them,
Loved beyond measure
With a child's pleasure
All her life's round.⁸⁰

He knew that her spirit was not in the grave it would have flitted off to Cornwall. He imagined her saying to him -

My spirit will not haunt the mound
Above my breast,
But travel, memory-possessed,
To where my tremulous being found
Life largest, best.....
And there you'll find me.....⁸¹

He did find her -

I found her out there
On a slope few see,
That falls Westwardly
To the salt-edged air.⁸²

The contrast between St.Juliot and Stinsford is here -

Wind foul or fair,
Always stood she
Prospect - impressed;
Solely out there
Did her gaze rest,
Never elsewhere
Seemed charm to be.⁸³

Hardy remembers the grave of Louisa, the farmer's daughters. Emma had never known Louisa, but now they were neighbours. Emma had joined the farmer's daughter. 'Long two strangers they and far apart; such neighbours now!⁸⁴

In 'The Dream is - Which '! Hardy wanders 'through a mounded geen - To find her, I knew where.'⁸⁵ In 'Lament'

She is shut
From friendship spell
In the jailing shell
Of her tiny cell.⁸⁶

In 'The Curtains Now Are Drawn' he 'stands there in the rain, with its smile upon her stone'.⁸⁷ In 'Something Tapped' he imagines her spirit saying to him -

So cold it is in my lonely bed,
And I thought you would join me soon.⁸⁸

The voice from the grave continued to speak to Hardy-

Woman much missed, how you call to me,

Call to me,

Saying that now you are not as you were when you had changed from the one who was

all to me,

Saying that now you are not as you were
When you had changed from the one who was
all to me,
But as at first, when our day was fair.⁸⁹

In another poem he imagined Emma's voice speaking to
him before her death -

It will be much better when
I am under the bough;
I shall be more myself, Dear, then,
Than I am now...⁹⁰

In 'The Prospect' Hardy describes the icy airs that 'Wheeze
through the skeletoned hedge from the north' and he feels
'a numbing that threatens snow.'

But well, well do I knew
Whither I would go! ⁹¹

At the end of the year 1912, he thought the fact
that 'You are not here...' to wish him a Happy New Year.

So it comes that we stand lonely
In the star-lit avenue,
Dropping broken lipwords only,
For we hear no songs from you.⁹²

As soon as Emma was buried, the poet began making
sentimental pilgrimages to spots associated with her, and
began writing poems about these pilgrimages. In 'Old
Excursions' he explains why he enjoyed going to places' as

we used to do'. Simply because 'while walking weary, near me seemed her shade'.⁹³ He revisited both all the places they had visited together. St.Juliot ranked first on the list of spots to be revisited. Hardy says, "much of my life claims the spot as its key". He never forgot the day, 7th March, 1870 when Hardy had first gone there.

'This grate date' he called it in his poem.

Don't you know it,
That this day of the year
What rainbow-rays embolw it!⁹⁴

This return to Lyonesse was done with mixed feelings, for upon finding himself back at the scene where his Cornish romance had begun. First, there were the 'Joys of Memory' -

I begin again, as if it were new,
A day of like date I once lived through⁹⁵

A number of poems were written under the inspiration of this joy. But Hardy's joy in seeing these places was marred by the thought that he was alone.

The Woman now is - elsewhere - whom
the ambling pony bore,
And nor knows nor Cares for Beeny,
and will laugh there nevermore.⁹⁶

After the forty-year interval between his first visit and the present return, there had been much pain and sorrow.

Summer gave us sweets,
But autumn wrought division?⁹⁷

Hardy was haunted by the thought that he was partly responsible for the unhappiness. He had not always sought Emma's company. Her imagined voice now came to rebuke him

When I could let him know
How I would like to join in his journeys
Seldom he wished to go,
But now he goes and wants me with him
More than he used to do.⁹⁸

Now he has the feeling that -

Phantom draws me by the hand,
To the place - Plymouth How -
Where side by side in life, as planned,
We never were to go!⁹⁹

Other two poems 'places' in which he thinks of Emma as lying in her baby - hood 'In a room by the Hoe, like the bud of a flower'¹⁰⁰; and 'The Marble - Streeted Town', in which he regrets that 'none here knows her history' and none 'has heard her name', even though she was 'the brightest of its native souls',¹⁰¹ deal with his thoughts about Plymouth, where Emma was born. In 'The Clock of the Years' Hardy amuses himself with the idea of 'making the clock....go backward', 'clock....go backward', and thus recapturing his lost wife. He watches Time turn backwards till Emma is as 'I first had known her'.

'I can make the clock of the years go backward,
But am loth to stop it where you will'.¹⁰²

After his return from Cornwall he made some changes at Max Gate. In 'His Visitor' he imagines that Emma's ghost

would not approve of the changes he was making and records her imagined words to him :

I don't want to linger in this re-decked dwelling
I feel too uneasy at the contrasts I behold.¹⁰³

The same type of imaginary comment on the Max Gate changes is found in the next poem. 'The Spell of the Rose'.

He built for me that manor-hall,
And planted many trees withal,
But no rose anywhere
And as he planted never a rose
That bears the flower of love.¹⁰⁴

Hardy was aware of changes in himself by the year 1913. In 'Paths of former Time' he notes the fact that-

We can no more go
By the summer paths we used to know!¹⁰⁵

In 'This Summer and Last' he addresses the unhappy Summer of 1913 and declares that 'Never, never will you be match to me' what the previous summer had been, when the rays of the summer sun had 'crept into cornbrown curls'.¹⁰⁶ Those curls had been brought back into his thoughts by his recent coming upon a locket in which he had kept the curl which Emma Lavinia Gifford had given him in 1870. Two poems grew out of that discovery: 'A Forgotten Miniature', in which Hardy spoke of Emma's 'beauties' as 'glowing as at first',¹⁰⁷ and 'On a Discovered Curl of a hair', in which the 'corn-coloured' hair is described as 'brightest brown'.¹⁰⁸



When November 1913 arrived, he wrote 'A Death-Day Recalled' in which the 'listless' poet would relive' the hour of her spirit's speeding'.¹⁰⁹ In 'A Night in November', he describes how some dead leaves blew into his room and alighted upon his bed.

One leaf of them touched my hand,
And I thought that it was you
There stood as you used to stand,
And saying at last you knew'.¹¹⁰

The last fifteen years of Hardy's life were spent in the pleasant glow of the rekindled embers. He writes in 'At the Piano', the mere sight of her'sent him mentally straying'¹¹¹ Even the absence of sounds from the piano reminded him of Emma. At the door of Max Gate he pauses long enough to think 'no song-notes within the door now call to me'.¹¹² He sees a woman driving : the sight serves to remind him of what an expert horse-woman Emma had been. 'Where drives she now? It may be where no mortal horses are.'¹¹³ Even a shadow recalls her to his mind in 'The shadow on the stone'

To the shade that a well-known head and shoulders,
Threw there when she was gardening.¹¹⁴

In the late summer of 1916, Hardy made another trip to Cornwall to see whether the marble tablet which he had designed in Emma's memory had been properly hung in St.Juliot Church. 'There it stands', he wrote '...the still marble, date driven'. But as he looked at it, he thought and regretted that no marble could record 'her glance,

glide, or smile, nor....her voice...' ¹¹⁵ In 'The Monument-Maker', he imagines his wife's 'sweet ghost' making scornful comments on the tablet he has just erected. 'You, who carve there your devotion ...you felt none, my dear!' And when the ghost vanishes with those accusing words, Hardy ruefully concludes that he had 'never been truly known by her, and never prized!' ¹¹⁶ The church at St.Juliot was the appropriate place for the erection of a memorial to Emma Lavinia Gifford. Hardy points out in 'Her Haunting -Ground' -

When here she flourished sorrow -free,

And, save for others, knew no gloom? ¹¹⁷

His memory carried his thoughts back nearly half a century, and he was keenly aware of the fact that the tablet he had erected was not a memorial to an 'earthless essence' but to a woman of flesh and blood. ¹¹⁸

Four years later at the age of eighty Hardy made another pilgrimage to stinsford to 'lay roses - on her monument - upon the luxuriant green.' ¹¹⁹ 'What might have moved you', he asks himself in the poem, 'if you had known? Now that old age had made travel more difficult for him so he used to sit before the fire and let his imagination do the travelling for him. In a poem called 'The Seven Times' he reviews all his trips to St.Juliot. But he-

....Caught no customed signal, heard no

voice call,

Nor found her there. ¹²⁰

Hardy again went to Stinsford after ten years of Emma's death and In 'Ten Years Since' recorded other marks of the passage of time. The trees at Max Gate had grown ten feet

taller,

And the piano wires are rustier,
The smell of bindings mustier,
And lofts and lumber dustier
Than when, with casual look
And ear, light note I took
of what shut like a book.
Those ten years since!¹²¹

We get a perfect summary of Hardy's Cornish romance in a poem entitled 'She Opened the Door'. The better description of what Emma Lavinia Gifford had meant to him is given in this poem.

She opened the door of the West to me,
With its loud Sea-lashings,
And Cliff-side clashings
Of waters rife with revelry.
She opened the door of Romance to me,
The door from a cell,
I had known too well,
Too long, till then, and was fain to flee.
She opened the door of a Love to me,
That passed the wry
World-welters by

As far as the arching blue the lea.
She opens the door of the Past to me,
 Its magic lights,
 Its heavenly heights,
When forward little is to see.¹²²

Hardy died on 11 January 1928, and Emma opened one more door for him - the door of her tomb. Her grave in the Stinsford Churchyard now carries a stone on which these words appear : 'Here lies the heart of Thomas Hardy'.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

BOOK REFERRED : HARDY'S LOVE POEMS ED.BY.CARL J.WEBER

1. 'When I set out for Lyonesse' P.105.
2. Ibid. P-105
3. The Wind's Prophecy P.106.
4. 'A Man Was Drawing Near to Me' P.108.
5. The Discovery P.109.
6. Green Slates P.111.
7. St.Launce's Revisited P.110.
8. At Castle Boterel P.112.
9. A Dream or No.P.114.
10. A Duetist To her Pianoforte.P.115.
11. Beeny Cliff.P.117.
12. The Phantom Horsewoman P.118.
13. Places P.120.
14. The Old Gown P.121.
15. The Frozen Greenhouse P.122
16. At the Word 'Farewell'. P.123.
17. 'AS' Twere To - Night P.124.
18. A Week P.125.
19. Ibid.P.125
20. When I set out for Lyonesse P.105.
21. Ditty (E.L.G.)P.126
22. Lines to a Movement in Mozart's E-flat
Symphony P.128.
23. Under the Waterfall P.129.

24. Where the Picnic Was, 131
25. The figure in the Scene P.132.
26. Why Did I Sketch? P.133
27. It Never Looks Like Summer P.134.
28. Self-Unconscious P.136.
29. The Sun On the Bookcase P.137.
30. The Minute Before Meeting P.138.
31. In the Seventies P.139.
32. I Rose And Went to Rou'tor Town P.140.
33. Near Lanivet, 1872 P.141.
34. The Change P.144.
35. The Place on the Map. P.145.
36. At a Fashionable Dinner P.146.
37. We sat at the Window P.147.
38. The Rift P.148.
39. Once At Swanage P.149.
40. A Two-Years' Idyll P.150.
41. Overlooking the River Stour P.151.
42. The Musical Box P.152.
43. A January Night P.153.
44. Everything comes P.155.
45. The Tree and the Lady P.156.
46. Fetching Her P.157.
47. The Self-Unseeing P.158.
48. The Division P.159.
50. Without, Not Within Her P.161

51. I Look Into My Glass P.162
52. Memory and I P.164.
53. You Were the Sort that Men forget P.165.
54. I said to Love P.166.
55. Lost Love P.167
56. I Thought, My Heart P.168.
57. The End of the Episode P.169.
58. The Wound P.171.
59. Tolerance P.170.
60. When Oats Were Reaped P.172.
61. Read By Moonlight. P.173
62. The Last Performance P.174.
63. Ibid. P.174
64. The Peace-Offering P.175.
65. An Upbraiding P.176.
66. Penance P.177
67. I Look In Her Face P.178.
68. The Prophetess P.179.
69. The Strange House P.180.
70. The Walk P.182.
71. Your Last Drive P.183
72. Best Times P.184.
73. The Going P.186.
74. Without Ceremony P.187.
75. A Circular P.189.
77. Two Lips P.190.
78. The Last Time P.191.
79. A Leaving P.192.

80. Rain On A Grave P.194.
81. My Spirit Will Not Haunt the Mound P.195.
82. I found Her Out There P.196.
83. The Riddle P.198.
84. Louie P.199.
85. The Dream is - Which? P.200.
86. Lament P.201.
87. The Curtains Now Are Drawn.203.
88. Something Tapped.204.
89. The Voice.P.205.
90. When Dead P.206.
91. The Prospect P.207.
92. End of the Year 1912' P.208.
93. Old Excursions P.209.
94. Looking at a Picture On an Anniversary P.210.
95. Joys of Memory P.211.
96. Beeny Cliff P.117.
97. After A Journey P.212
98. The Haunter P.214.
99. The West-of-Wessex Girl.215.
100. Places P.120.
101. The Marble-Streeted Town-P.216.
102. The Clock of the Years P.217.
103. His Visitor P.218.
104. The Spell of the Rose P.219.
105. Paths of former time P.221.
106. This Summer and Last P.222.

107. A Forgotten Miniature P.223.
108. On a Discovered Curl of Hair' P.224.
109. A Death - Day Recalled P.225.
110. A Night in November P.226.
111. At the Piano P.227.
112. On the Doorstep P.228.
113. A Woman Driving P.229.
114. The Shadow on the stone P.230.
115. The Marble Tablet P.231.
116. The Monument-Maker P.232.
117. Her Haunting-Ground P.233.
118. He Prefers Her Earthly P.234.
119. If You Had known P.235.
120. The Seven Times P.236.
121. Ten Years Since P.238.
122. She Opened the Door P.239.

SAVIE 90

SAVIE 90