

paralyzed everything except criticism. The Irish party were condemned to lag superfluous on the scene; their work, the purpose of their being, was achieved in theory; no new duties were created for them. Had the rebellion occurred with an Irish government in being, popular opinion, which, as Mr. Wells points out, was against the rebellion, would have rallied actively to the native authority. But to support an English military Governor in inflicting penalties on Irishmen without consultation of any elected Irish

The Telegraph

government, was more than Irish public opinion would do; and Redmond could only look on. The malignity of fate could have devised no worse embarrassment.

Mr. Wells concludes on a note of optimism. No sincere effort is wasted, he thinks. Those who helped in building up so laboriously what was so swiftly and so recklessly destroyed may be pardoned if they feel their response slow in coming to his confidence that ultimately all is best for Ireland in the best possible of worlds.

THE POETRY OF THOMAS HARDY

BY A. NAIRNE

IN 1898 Mr. Hardy published *Wessex Poems*, 1902 *Poems of the Past and Present*, in 1904-8 came that mighty drama *The Dynasts*, in 1904 and 1914 *Time's Laughing-Stocks* and *Satires of Circumstance*. Now the veteran gives us *Moments of Vision*, and will, we hope, still give us more. A year earlier Messrs. Macmillan added to their 'Golden Treasury' series an excellent selection of 120 poems (including some which appear in this last volume) — an invitation to those who know not the master, and a thrice-welcome companion for the myriads who revere him.

The Woodlanders is perhaps the best of the novels; *The Well-beloved* is one of the happiest of all their happy titles, for it gives the key to the author's wide sway over hearts. 'I shall still read Anatole France and Thomas Hardy,' said Wilamowitz-Moellendorf

when he despaired of the restoration of literary friendship after the war. What is the deepest impression left by these two last volumes? Surely this, that Thomas Hardy is such a lover of men.

I lipp'd rough rhymes of chance not choice;
I thought not what my words might be;
There came into my ear a voice
That turned a tenderer verse for me.

And this voice comes not only from the one faint figure of that midsummer eve, but from all sorts of men, women, and children throughout the poems, from kings and squires and farmers with their wives, from the fat, death-doomed, ever-walking student, the lovers and mourners, enemies and friends, ladies and glass-stainers, laborers and soldiers; even from those 'primest foglemen' of his own line 'fogged in far antiqueness past surmise and reason's reach' of whom at

last he learns himself to be 'mere continuator and counterfeit'—and yet, 'Love lures life on,' and this kind, simple heart finds something admirable in all its fellows and chastens us by tenderness. Well, he too, has won the love of his readers, and something more, as he tells us in many a brave lyric:

Whatever his message — glad or grim —
Two bright-souled women clave to him;
Stand and say that while day decays,
It will be word enough of praise.

In poems as in novels he is very close to nature:

When the Present has latched its postern
behind my tremulous stay,
And the May month flaps its glad green
leaves like wings,
Delicate-filmed as new-spun silk, will the
people say,
'He was a man who used to notice such
things'?

If I pass during some nocturnal blackness,
mothy and warm,
When the hedgehog travels furtively
over the lawn,
Will they say, 'He strove that such inno-
cent creatures should come to no
harm,
But he could do little for them; and now
he is gone'?

The innocent creatures he partly understands. Behind and about them and himself is the enveloping mystery with which he has lived so continuously in his practical country life that he knows he can never really know it. It touches, interpenetrates, absorbs him; but at the centre there is something alien, something not yet to be trusted. Nature surrounds him as his fathers' worship does: the ultimate meaning of each is obscure. All the more he accepts the use and wont of each, kindly, reverently. Churches to this architect, choirs and the old village orchestras are dear to this son of the violinist. The cool failings of the country clergy he takes without

blame, as a laborer would. Read *The Choirmaster's Burial*:-

We would with our lutes
Play over him
By his grave-brim
The psalm he liked best —
The one whose sense suits
'Mount Ephraim' —
And perhaps we should seem
To him in Death's dream,
Like the seraphim.

But the Vicar said,

That old-fashioned way
Requires a fine day,
And it seems to me
It had better not be.

So 'they buried the master without any tune,' and at dead of next night a ghostly band made up for all.

Those ghosts of Mr. Hardy's! Not fanciful, not blends of the mind with phenomena, too real — we would almost say, too sacred — to discuss. These, too, have their substance in his love for men and for the 'innocent creatures' which, like men, suffer the mystery of life, and cheerfully play in it their unasked-for, inevitable part. Read — you will scarcely do so without tears of remorse and thankfulness — *The Blinded Bird*.

Mr. Hardy's faith is indeed severe. It was, he says, a relief to him when he deemed it reasonable to suppose that the Immanent Will is unconscious. If that Will should ever open conscious eyes, 'How wilt thou bear thyself in thy surprise?' he asks.

Wilt thou destroy, in one wild shock of shame,
Thy whole high-heaving firmamental frame
Or patiently adjust, amend, and heal?

In Tenebris (with its motto, *Considerabam ad dexteram et videbam; ei non erat qui cognosceret me. . . . Non est qui requirat animam meam*) is a confession that among 'the many and the strong' there is no place for one who cannot discern their vision.

Let him in whose ears the low-voiced Best
is killed by the clash of the First,
Who holds that, if way to the better there
be, it exacts a full look at the Worst,
Who feels that delight is a delicate growth
cramped by crookedness, custom, and fear,
Get him up and begone as one shaped awry:
he disturbs the order here.

Let him stay and let him speak if he
can speak with Thomas Hardy's
charity. We need such a one to face
the worst of truth. Without his pains
we shall never reach the best of truth.
And he perhaps will come with us.
Certainly he will if he honestly can.
The volume of selections ends with
that chorus from *The Dynasts* in which
hope is sung:

Consciousness the Will informing, till It
fashion all things fair!

Would Mr. Hardy have allowed it
that emphatic position if he did not
incline to that side? We must not make
too much of that sign. But in *Moments
of Vision* there are others. When
he 'wonders about himself,' he asks a
pregnant question:

Part is mine of the general Will,
Cannot my share in the sum of sources
Bend a digit the poise of forces,
And a fair desire fulfill?

The war has called from him solemn
notes which resound determiningly,
not determinedly. These allow us to
put a meaning deeper than the first
that offers itself on that tremendous
oracle among the *Poems of War and
Patriotism* which begins:

I met a man when night was nigh,
Who said, with shining face and eye
Like Moses' after Sinai:

'I have seen the Moulder of Monarchies,
Realms, peoples, plains, and hills,
Sitting upon the sunlit seas! —
And, as He sat, soliloquies
Fell from Him like an antiphonic breeze
That pricks the waves to thrills.'

VOL. 15-NO. 744

And all through a light glimmers and
gathers from 'the something that
saved him,' when

The clock rang;
The hour brought a hand to deliver;
I upsprang
And looked back at den, ditch, and river,
And sang.

What hand this was, may be partly
guessed from quotations already given.
The constant reader will guess more
precisely; then he will change his mind
and be less ready to define. Whatever
the deliverance, it has left its happy
mark on three pages out of every four
in these books. 'Life laughs onward,'
and 'the too regretful mood' is always
dying on the poet's tongue. 'Mornings
beryl-bespread, And evenings golden-
red' return after the gray. 'Lalage's
coming'; there is no melancholy there.
And yet, more grateful still to ears
attuned, is such a piece (so clever, too,
in its echo of the lilt of the minuet) as
the wistfully gay *Lines to a Move-
ment in Mozart's E-flat Symphony*:

Show me again the time
When in the June-tide's prime
We flew by meads and mountains
northerly!—
Yea, to such freshness, fairness, fullness,
fineness, freeness,
Love lures life on.

Show me again the day
When from the sandy bay
We looked together upon the pestered
sea!—
Yea, to such surging, swaying, sighing,
swelling, shrinking,
Love lures life on.

There is no room to quote the rest.
This review is belated. The reviewer
found at first that these poems were
almost too tersely, masterfully carved,
too naked, if the word may be allowed,
for him. He shrank from writing,
kept them in his pocket and at his
bedside, and read and read. Now his
trouble is that he wants to quote a

hundred passages, so rare is the work-
manship, so intimately do they speak.
Here is just one more, the *Student's*
Love-Song, which seems to gather many
characteristics of the poet into a tiny
space.

Once more the cauldron of the sun
Smears the bookcase with winy red,
And here my page is, and there by bed,
And the apple-tree shadows travel along.

The Church Quarterly Review

Soon their intangible track will be run,
And dusk grow strong
And they be fled.

Yes: now the boiling ball is gone.
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 alway?

THE GATE

BY MAY O'ROURKE

A CLUMSY thing that bars my way —
Dull, unintelligible wood!
Yet once a proud young tree she stood
Feeling her own green children sway.

Leaves made a shining mail for this
Decrepit trunk we roughly clang —
Her limbs from dreamy grasses sprang —
She cannot speak, but can she *miss*?

The merry talk of winds astir,
The boughs she suckled with her sap,
The squirrels playing in her lap —
Do these lost loves come back to her?