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Jude the Obscure

Thomas Hardy (1840–1928) wanted his last novel ‘to deal unaffectedly with the fret and fever, derision and disaster, that may press in the wake of the strongest passion known to humanity, and to point, without a mincing of words, the tragedy of unfulfilled aims’. First published in its present form in 1895 (although post-dated 1896) after appearing as an abridged serial, the work was met with as much opprobrium as admiration. Critics wrote reviews entitled ‘Jude the Obscene’ and ‘Hardy the Degenerate’ because of the novel’s explicit content and deliberate attacks on the education system and marriage laws; even Hardy’s wife took personal offence. Sparse and bleak, the story follows Jude Fawley, a promising self-taught scholar and village stonemason, as he navigates with increasing difficulty between the prejudices of the class system and two very different women: his wife, Arabella, and his ethereal, disturbed love, Sue Bridehead.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-05715-8 - Jude the Obscure
Thomas Hardy
Frontmatter
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Jude the Obscure

THOMAS HARDY



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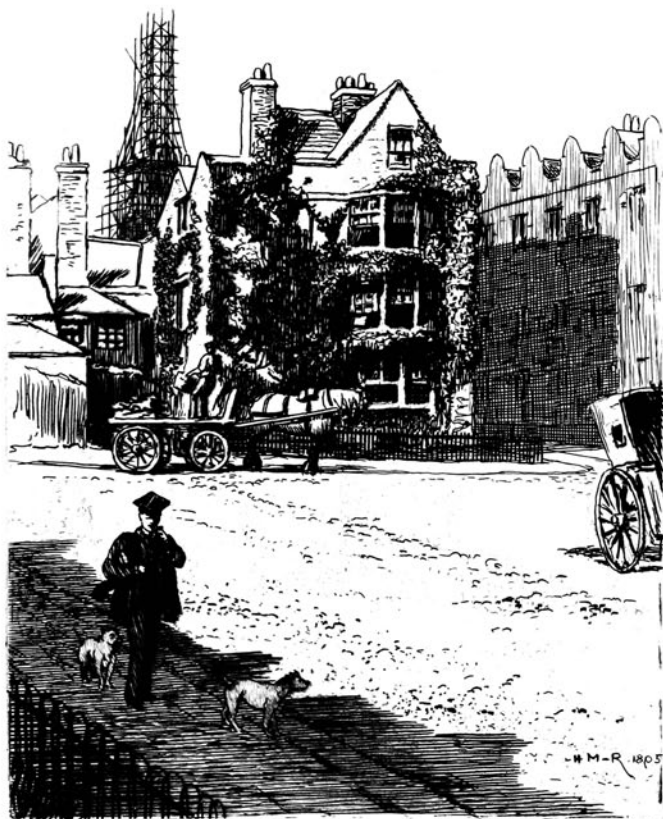
THOMAS HARDY'S WORKS

THE WESSEX NOVELS

VOLUME VIII.

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THE "CHRISTMINSTER"

OF THE STORY

Drawn on the spot

"For many days he haunted the cloisters and quadrangles of the colleges at odd minutes in passing them, surprised by impish echoes of his own footsteps."—
Page 102.

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JUDE THE OBSCURE

BY
THOMAS HARDY

*WITH AN ETCHING BY
H. MACBETH-RAEBURN
AND A MAP OF WESSEX*

“The letter killeth.”



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OSGOOD, M^cILVAINE and CO.,
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1896

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PREFACE

THE history of this novel (whose birth in its present shape has been much retarded by the necessities of periodical publication) is briefly as follows. The scheme was jotted down in 1890, from notes made in 1887 and onwards, some of the circumstances being suggested by the death of a woman in the former year. The scenes were revisited in October 1892; the narrative was written in outline in 1892 and the spring of 1893, and at full length, as it now appears, from August 1893 onwards into the next year; the whole, with the exception of a few chapters, being in the hands of the publisher by the end of 1894. It was begun as a serial story in *Harper's Magazine* at the end of November 1894, and was continued in monthly parts.

But, as in the case of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, the magazine version was for various reasons abridged and modified in some degree, the present edition being the first in which the whole appears as originally written. And in the difficulty of coming to an early decision in the matter of a title, the tale was issued under a provisional name—two such titles having, in fact, been successively adopted. The present and final title, deemed on the whole the best, was one of the earliest thought of.

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PREFACE

For a novel addressed by a man to men and women of full age ; which attempts to deal unaffectedly with the fret and fever, derision and disaster, that may press in the wake of the strongest passion known to humanity, and to point, without a mincing of words, the tragedy of unfulfilled aims, I am not aware that there is anything in the handling to which exception can be taken.

Like former productions of this pen, *Jude the Obscure* is simply an endeavour to give shape and coherence to a series of seemings, or personal impressions, the question of their consistency or their discordance, of their permanence or their transitoriness, being regarded as not of the first moment.

T. H.

August 1895.

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