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Richard L. Purdy

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"How heavy and cold is the fear in such hearts for the dear one! How time drags, and crawls, and creeps,—and yet will *not* stand still! — until some news of him, of the one boy, the one man, comes to you. A mother, a father, a woman in love dies a thousand deaths a day while waiting and listening, listening and waiting for the news — of him.

"Other women who have known the strange, cruel pain of the long vigils that now face you can only tell you this: Believe in God, and accept His will, with love. Your man is fighting well for his country. His weapons are of the best. His leaders in the field are tough and wise. The mathematical odds are all with him.

"The one thing he would want, at this moment, is for you at home to be of good cheer. He wants you to set as fine an example of courage to the family and among your neighbors, as he is setting among his own comrades in arms. God bless you, and be with you, and make His face to shine upon your man."



### THOMAS HARDY AND FLORENCE HENNIKER

THE WRITING OF "THE SPECTRE OF THE REAL"

BY RICHARD L. PURDY

WHEN Hardy and Mrs. Henniker undertook to collaborate in the writing of a short story in the autumn of 1893, it was not six months since their first meeting. That meeting had taken place at the Viceregal Lodge, Dublin, where Hardy and his wife had been invited for Whitsuntide and where Mrs. Henniker was then staying as hostess for her younger brother, the second Lord Houghton, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. The details of this Whitsun visit, May 19-25, are given from Hardy's diary in his biography, but there is little suggestion in the commonplace entries of the deep and immediate impression Mrs. Henniker made on him. She was thirty-eight at the time, a woman of warm

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sympathies and unfailing charm, with something of those "bland-smiling, semi-quizzical, affectionate, high-bred" qualities Carlyle had seen in her father, Monckton Milnes. She had published three novels with some success; her interests were literary and humanitarian; save for delicate health she might already have formed the salon for which she was so surely fitted. Hardy was at work on *Jude the Obscure*. His own career as novelist was drawing to a close, and his married life no longer held the happiness of the "Sturminster Newton idyll" of fifteen years before. One memorable word sufficed for his first impression of Mrs. Henniker. "A charming, *intuitive* woman apparently," he wrote in his diary. It was the beginning of a friendship of thirty years, a friendship that meant much to Hardy at a dark and embittered time and lends meaning to his last novel and a number of his poems. Mrs. Henniker's novels are quite forgotten today.<sup>1</sup> Her place in *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy* is inconspicuous. It is not without irony that such a friendship should have for sole monument, "The Spectre of the Real."

The story belongs, then, to the autumn of 1893 and the first months of their friendship. Quite properly the two agreed to keep their respective shares in it a secret to themselves, and no MS. is known to have survived. From Hardy's letters, however, and from the story itself, it is not difficult to reconstruct their procedure. The work was largely Hardy's. The story has familiar features, the clandestine romance and marriage of a "noble lady" and a poor officer, the return of the vanished husband on the eve of his wife's remarriage, the removal of a troublesome character by drowning in a water-meadow. The style is Hardy's, and the repellent

<sup>1</sup> Florence Ellen Hungerford Milnes; *b.* 1855; *yr. d.* of Richard Monckton Milnes, Lord Houghton; *m.* 1882, Arthur Henniker (Major-General the Hon. Arthur Henry Henniker-Major, C.B., 1855-1912); *pub.* (novels), *Sir George* (1891), *Bid Me Good-bye* (1892), *Foiled* (1892), *Sowing the Sand* (1898), *Our Fatal Shadows* (1907), *Second Fiddle* (1912); (short stories), *Outlines* (1894), *In Scarlet and Grey* (1896), *Contrasts* (1903); (play), *The Courage of Silence* (produced 1905); *d. s. p.* 1923.

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details are reminiscent of *A Group of Noble Dames*. Indeed, one could easily imagine the story as discarded from that collection. Mrs. Henniker had a hand in constructing the plot and in revising the text. Beyond that her contribution was limited to a few descriptive passages. In short, the collaboration consisted in Hardy's discussing the outlines of his story with Mrs. Henniker and incorporating in the finished work some brief passages of her devising.

Several of Hardy's letters to her at this time throw a good deal of light on the work.<sup>2</sup> It had been laid aside while he finished collecting the stories for *Life's Little Ironies*, and he wrote, October 22, 1893, "I could not take the 'Desire' in hand till today, having been hunting up the tales I told you of ('Two Ambitions' being one of them).<sup>3</sup> They are now fastened together to be dispatched to the publisher, & I turn to the 'Desire'—which by the bye, is the 'Desire' no longer.—For I have planned to carry out Ending II—since you like it so much better: I feel I ought not to force the other upon you—wh. is too uncompromising for one of the pretty sex to have a hand in. The question now is, what shall we call it?—"The resurrection [*sic*] of a Love?" Again, three days later, "A word as to our story: in working it out I find it may possibly be necessary to effect a compromise between the two endings: for on no account must it end weakly." And finally he wrote, October 28, "I must let you know that the story is finished virtually, & that the MS. was sent early this morning to Miss Tigan. I have told her to return me the original (in case I should want to insert a little more detail from it) & to send to you direct the type-written copy. Will you please read it from the beginning (*without* glancing first

<sup>2</sup> Hardy's letters to Mrs. Henniker were returned to him at her death in 1923 and are now with his papers in the Dorset County Museum, Dorchester. The passages here quoted were transcribed by permission of the late Mrs. Florence Hardy, for use in the official bibliography of her husband. The present article is drawn from the unpublished MS. of that bibliography.

<sup>3</sup> The drowning in the water-meadow in "The Spectre of the Real" is highly reminiscent of a similar episode in "A Tragedy of Two Ambitions."

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at the end!) so as to get the intended effect, & judge of its strength or weakness. It is, as you wished, very tragic; a modified form of Ending II— which I think better than any we thought of before. If anything in it is what you don't like please tell me quite freely — & it shall be modified. As I said last time, all the wickedness (if it has any) will be laid on my unfortunate head, while all the tender & proper parts will be attributed to you. Without wishing to make you promise, I suggest that we keep it a secret to our two selves which is my work & which yours. We may be amusingly bothered by friends & others to confess.

“In reading it over, particularly the bride's doings in the morning from dawn till the wedding-hour, please insert in pencil any details that I have omitted, & that would only be known to a woman. I may not be quite correct in what I have hastily written, never having had the pleasure of being a bride-elect myself. If you will then send me the copy I will go through it for final corrections, & send it off.

“The ending, good or bad, has the merit of being in exact keeping with Lord P.'s character. . . . I will send you back the pages of detail omitted, if you wd. like to have them, as they may be useful. You will *quite* understand that they were not omitted because they weren't good; but because the scale of the story was too small to admit them without injury to the proportions of the whole. I refer particularly to the description of the pool, & the bird tracks; which I *much* wished to retain.<sup>4</sup>

“I did not mean to flow over into another sheet with literary affairs, but there are one or two things more to say under that head. One is the title. Our old title was in itself rather good, but as it does not quite apply, I have provisionally substituted ‘The Spectre of the Real.’ — ‘The Looming of the Real’ is perhaps almost better. I have also thought of ‘A passion & after’: ‘To-day's kiss & yesterday's’, — ‘Husband's Corpse & husband's kiss’, ‘A shattering of Ideals’.

<sup>4</sup> This passage was apparently retained after all. See *In Scarlet and Grey* (London, 1896), p. 191.

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When you have read the modifications you will be able to choose; or suggest."

The finishing touches were given the "weird story" in London in December, but it was almost a year before it was printed. Then it appeared, as the leading contribution and with five illustrations by H. R. Millar, in the special Winter Number of Jerome K. Jerome's weekly, *To-Day*, November 17, 1894. Mrs. Henniker collected it two years later in her volume *In Scarlet and Grey* (London, 1896). This final text shows a number of verbal alterations and a considerable improvement in the taste of several passages (notably at the end of Chapter VI and the beginning of Chapter VII). The story, nevertheless, was not well received. Mrs. Henniker's own work, which made up the bulk of the volume, was considered decidedly superior, and she was not commended for the collaborator she had chosen. The *Academy* found the story "marred by those deflections from good taste which seem to have become characteristic of Mr. Hardy's later art." The *Athenaeum* thought it "might well have been omitted," and the *Spectator* called it "undoubtedly very effective and indeed gruesome, but also superfluously repulsive" and concluded, "Mr. Thomas Hardy, in his later phases, is hardly a judicious literary counsellor." All this was three years after the story had been written. Poor as it was, it was being read, it must be recalled, in the shadow of *Jude the Obscure* and the obloquy that attended that novel.



### "THE SPECTRE" AFTER FIFTY YEARS

THE date of the first appearance of "The Spectre of the Real" is November 17, 1894. On the fiftieth anniversary of this event the Colby College Library will exhibit, from its Hardy Collection, supplemented with one book borrowed for the occasion, a group of "Spectral" volumes