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sters" throwing clogged dice—is stronger in the radio version than in the novel, and it is strong enough in the novel. That is a legitimate view philosophically, to be sure. But most people will not accede to it—isolated and uncontradicted. If she had stayed five minutes! If he had not been delayed! If the letters had not been mishandled! If she had not refused to meet him! If he had not turned up at that moment!

One who has lived many years has seen men and women for whom nothing does go right, who seem hunted down by vengeful Furies. If they go down with dignity, that is all that can be asked. And Henchard does go down with dignity. Yet, in the radio version, particularly in the later episodes, mere bad luck seems almost the *modus operandi* for the life and death of the "man of character." In that, it shows him as less of a character. But Hardy may have meant his sub-title to be ironical.



AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF THOMAS HARDY

By WALTER PEIRCE

Santa Barbara, California

IN a recent book on the fictional art of Thomas Hardy, Lord David Cecil remarked that the novelist's comparative failure in his presentation of characters above the social level of peasants and yeomen was due to the fact that he was unacquainted with life among the upper classes. Perhaps the letter which I am about to quote will serve to refute this judgment.

Hardy was eighty-five when he wrote this letter, but in it he is recalling an earlier decade of his life, 1895-1905, when "as a comparatively young man" he had attended social parties at Stafford House in London. This edifice stood—it still stands—in the Mall; but since it is now

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known as Leverholme House — after Sir W. H. Lever, M.P., who acquired Stafford House in 1913 and presented it to the nation—and since it was for a while the London County Museum, it may help American readers to fit this letter into the right time and place if a word is first said about the lady to whom the letter was written and about the London house where she once lived.

Born in 1867, Lady Millicent Fanny St. Clair-Erskine was the daughter of Robert, fourth Earl of Rosslyn. At the age of seventeen she married George Leveson-Gower, Marquess of Stafford, son of the third Duke of Sutherland. The first Duke of Sutherland was George Granville Leveson-Gower (1758-1833) who was created duke in the year of his death. He had served two terms in Parliament and from 1799 to 1810 was joint postmaster-general. He it was who purchased Stafford House in London. His son and grandson held the title from 1833 to 1892, when Lady Millicent's husband, the Marquess of Stafford, became the fourth Duke of Sutherland. They moved into Stafford House in 1895; the Duchess was then twenty-eight. (By this date they had three children — two sons and a daughter. Their first-born, another daughter, had died in infancy.)

The Duchess of Sutherland soon became one of the great hostesses of late-Victorian times. At her parties could be met all who were notable in whatever field, and among the literary figures invited to Stafford House was the “comparatively young” author of the then-notorious *Tess* and *Jude the Obscure*. The Duchess of Sutherland did not suffer fools gladly, or at all, and at her parties Hardy could be sure of meeting all that was brilliant in that brilliant period.

It is clear from Hardy's letter that he went to Stafford House more than once, and that he talked with his hostess about “the whirl of the life she was in.” But it is also clear that she was interested in something other than the social whirl. In 1904, when she was thirty-seven, the duchess

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edited a charity volume of poems entitled *Wayfarer's Love*; it was "printed by the Newcastle Cripples' Guild" and was published in London by Archibald Constable & Co. Among the contributors were A. C. Benson, G. K. Chesterton, Austin Dobson, Edmund Gosse, A. E. Housman, Andrew Lang, John Masefield, Arthur Symons, and William Butler Yeats—a list of names which gives some idea as to who the representatives of current literature were at the Stafford House parties. The second poem in *Wayfarer's Love* is a poem by Thomas Hardy, entitled "Life's Opportunity." (When Hardy reclaimed this poem in 1909 and inserted it in his own volume, *Time's Laughingstocks*, he changed the title to read "The Unborn," and rewrote the last stanza of the poem.)

The Duke of Sutherland died in 1913, and in 1914, when World War One broke out, the Duchess founded a hospital at the front and ran it for four years on her own money. In 1919 she married Lieut.-Col. George Ernest Hawes, D.S.O., M.C.; he died in 1945. And now we approach the letter which all this has been leading up to.

In 1925, the Duchess was living in Paris, more or less in retirement, and was now known as Lady Millicent Hawes. In this year she published a book entitled *That Fool of a Woman*—a novel of 184 pages, followed by four other sombre tales. A copy of this book came into the hands of Thomas Hardy. After he had read it, he wrote her the following letter, addressing her, not as Lady Millicent Hawes, but using the title by which he had known her, thirty years before:

MAX GATE, DORCHESTER,

16 Dec. 1925.

Dear Duchess of Sutherland,

(As you still are to me.) At last you have written straight, as you might have done long ago if you had chosen. And I was at the point of writing to you about your remarkable novel, which impressed me much. But I did not quite like to invade your privacy after so long.

Do you remember that when I used to come, as a comparatively

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young man, to your parties at Stafford House, you would tell me that you did not care for the whirl of the life you were in? I would think, "That's what she *says*," and I forgot the matter till I found that you had practically abandoned it, when I thought: "Then, what she said was true," and up you went in my opinion twice as high as before, though you never were low.

But I won't say anything more about this, except that I should like to see you once again, if you ever come this way.

Affectionately yours,

THOMAS HARDY.

Upon her receipt of this letter, the Duchess of Sutherland pasted it into what she calls her treasure book—a bound volume of the autograph letters she has received from notabilities. She is now eighty-four years old, and her "treasures" include letters from members of imperial and royal families in three countries and from all who have been prominent in statecraft, in war, in letters, and in the theatre in the course of her long and active life.

Two or three years ago, when I was in Paris, a friend of mine of thirty years' standing, Yvon Bizardel, took me one day to tea with the Duchess of Sutherland. After greeting him in French, she turned to me and said: "Now tell me who you are and what you are doing in Paris." I told her I was nobody she had ever heard of, that I was an American who just happened—. "But I like Americans! I have been in America nine times. Have you ever been in Waco, Texas? Do you know Professor Armstrong? I gave him the copy of Browning's *Poems* that Robert Browning gave me with his name in it."

I seemed to be flying through time and space. And the conversation of the Duchess has been much of the same pattern ever since. "The last time I was in Canton. . . . One day when I was in Patagonia. . . . I think I got it in India. . . ." Well, I had never been in Waco, Texas, and I had never met Professor Armstrong, but on the strength of my being an American I was accepted. An invitation to luncheon

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soon followed, and a few teas; and last summer I saw a great deal of her, both at Pau and at Paris.

One day she produced her "treasure book," and in showing me the volume, she told me that, of all the letters, the one from Hardy was the one she prized the most. She seemed proud to show the proof that she had acquired the approval as well as the friendship of the great novelist. When I asked permission to copy the letter, she replied: "Why, of course! I am only so regretful not to *give* you the letter, but that would spoil the book. I am now thinking of leaving the Collection to the Edinburgh Museum. I am so very Scottish!" Well, I copied the letter, and here it is, for the benefit of those who share my interest in Thomas Hardy.*



"TWO LADIES CALLED"

By PHILO CALHOUN
Bridgeport, Connecticut

IT is more than fifty years since the death of Queen Victoria closed the book on the great age of literature which bears her name. Perhaps the interval is still insufficient to provide an adequate perspective for critical judgment which can fairly claim to be more than tentative and provisional, but there is a temptation now and again to measure by modern standards the stature of those who once were giants. It is the opinion of the present writer that, among the great Victorian novelists, Charles Dickens, Anthony Trollope and Thomas Hardy alone remain without noticeable shrinkage. Of these three it is Hardy of whom we know the least. The two-volume biography written by the second Mrs. Hardy, the only one which professes to be

* This interest has been recorded on two previous occasions in the pages of this quarterly. See the two articles by Dr. Peirce: "Hardy's Lady Susan," February 1948, pages 77-82, and "A Visit to Max Gate," November 1949, pages 190-195.—*Editor.*