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David Patterson

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about herself than about her famous friends—to the annoyance and distress of several of the reviewers of the book. But one is not justified in carping at such self-interest; in what better place can an author write about herself than in personal letters or in an autobiography?



HARDY'S LETTERS

Reviewed by DAVID PATTERSON

IN a recent book on Shelley, the author remarks: "Our deepest crimes . . . and our best actions . . . are not as a rule the things we record in letters. . . . Hardly anyone quite fails to lie in some degree in every letter that he writes. Letters are fascinating and indispensable tools for scholars, but they are not *all* of scholarship. For one man with the genius for self-revelation of Van Gogh, we have a thousand with the talent for self-concealment that literary men in general possess" (Ivan Roe, *Shelley*, London, 1953, page 11).

No reader of this book of Hardy's letters* will fail to recognize that, while he quite obviously had no "genius for self-revelation," he was singularly free from the "self-concealment that literary men in general possess." He was no actor. Hardy was honest and sincere; he said what he really believed, and his letters contain none of the "small talk," the flippant jests, the straining after rhetorical effect, and none of the petty gossip, the political dia-

her. In 1889 she retired from the stage, married Antonio F. de Navarro, whom she had long known, and settled in England.

Mrs. Humphry Ward's first novel, *Miss Bretherton* (1885) "was suggested to me by the brilliant success in 1883 of Mary Anderson, and by the controversy with regard to her acting—as distinct from her delightful beauty and her attractive personality—which arose between the fastidious few and the enchanted many." Mrs. Humphry Ward, *A Writer's Recollections*, Vol. II, p. 15.

* *The Letters of Thomas Hardy* transcribed from the original autographs in the Colby College Library and edited with an introduction and notes by Carl J. Weber; illustrated. Waterville: Colby College Press, 1954; \$5.

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tribe, or the fanciful ravings that often make the letters of other men interesting. As Professor Weber notes in his introduction, Hardy the letter-writer shows no trace of Hardy the novelist, the man who created such amusing rustics. Hardy the letter-writer makes no attempt to *entertain*: his correspondents found in his letters none of the acrobatics of a Charles Lamb letter and none of the intimacies of a Thackeray communication.

These letters are, then, largely factual and likely to interest the Hardy "fan" more than the general reader. Although the present volume contains only those letters by Hardy which have found their way to the Colby College Library, and although this is admittedly a chance gathering rather than a carefully guided and rational selection, the book does contain letters written to a surprisingly large number of important people. Here are the names, for example, of Sir James M. Barrie and Sir Edmund Gosse, of Sir Frederick Macmillan and Lord Curzon, of publishers like Henry Holt and Harpers, of Frederick Harrison and Artist Abbey, of Editors Shorter and "Jack" Squire—and others! This book is therefore full of information, and some of it of a most unexpected sort: for example, the account of Maurice Evans's debut upon the stage—as a Wessex shepherd boy in a "Hardy play"! Fortunately, wherever Thomas Hardy has not made himself wholly clear to the modern reader, especially the American reader, Hardy has been ably assisted by the researches of his editor. Professor Weber's notes not only inform but correct previous errors. For instance, he amends Mrs. Hardy's mistaken view of Hardy's attitude toward his "Satires." The printer has arranged both the letters and the notes in a most agreeable way on a beautifully printed page. The illustrations all help, too. This book will prove an indispensable "tool" for future Hardy scholars, and its editor has greatly lightened the labors of some future compiler of a definitive collected edition of Hardy's correspondence.

