

# Colby



Colby Quarterly

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Volume 9  
Issue 11 *September*

Article 5

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September 1972

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### Recommended Citation

Colby Library Quarterly, series 9, no.11, September 1972, p.582-585

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"crown," he now looks down at simply "his head." Appropriately the poem closes in darkness.

It obviously becomes necessary, then, to see Richard Cory certainly in more heroic proportions but also as more of a catalyst than focal point. "Richard Cory" is not a painting of a gentleman, but a portrait of the portraiteer. The poem serves as an indictment of those who study at a distance, of those who fail to get a feel of their subject, and of those who let petty personal emotions deprive themselves of human companionship. While Robinson's temporal assessment may be exaggerated, his remark to Esther Willard Bates while walking up West Peterborough that he was "perhaps, two hundred years in advance of his time . . . in . . . his absorption in the unconscious and semi-conscious feelings and impulses of his characters"<sup>10</sup> points to our need not to judge by appearances either when we examine his poetry.

10 Esther Willard Bates, *Edwin Arlington Robinson and His Manuscripts* (Waterville, Maine, 1944), 3.



### HARDY'S "THE MIDNIGHT BAPTISM"

By NORMAN PAGE

THE HISTORY of Hardy's cynical dismemberment of the original version of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* in deference to public prudery and editorial timidity is a familiar one. Most accounts of the earliest appearance of this novel, as serialized in the weekly *Graphic* between July 4 and December 26, 1891, refer to the publication as separate sketches of two portions deemed likely to cause special offense and accordingly removed from the magazine version. Both portions were, however, published elsewhere. They describe, respectively, the seduction of Tess and the midnight baptism of her dying baby. The precise relationship of these two sketches, as originally set before the public, to the corresponding sections of the novel as we know it has at various times been alluded to in terms that are often vague and sometimes inaccurate. What follows is an attempt to clarify the steps taken by the novelist in presenting one of these extirpated episodes to its first readers.

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"The Midnight Baptism. A Study in Christianity" is based on Chapter 14 of the novel; it was published in the *Fortnightly Review* for May 1891, and was thus the first part to be offered to the public. In his "Explanatory Note to the First Edition," dated November 1891, Hardy pointed out that the two "episodic sketches" which had been published separately and were now restored to the parent novel had been "more especially addressed to adult readers" on the occasion of their first appearance. Long afterwards, he gave a slightly fuller account of his decision "to publish them, or much of them, elsewhere, if practicable, as episodic adventures of anonymous personages (which in fact was done, with the omission of a few paragraphs)."<sup>1</sup> Hardy's memory seems to be at fault here, for, as we shall see, his casual reference to "the omission of a few paragraphs" considerably understates the truth. Even so, the hint he threw out has often been disregarded by later writers. Richard L. Purdy, for instance, states that "new material was added to meet the demands of an independent sketch," and adds that Hardy removed "indications of the real origin of the episode, particularly the name 'Tess'"; but his implication that the additions were relatively substantial and the omissions slight is misleading. Carl J. Weber contents himself with saying simply that "Part of Chapter XIV (in which Tess's baby appears) was extracted and sent to the editor of the *Fortnightly Review*"; and a recent commentator, R. G. Cox, declares that "The baptism scene was published in full by itself in the *Fortnightly Review*," thereby disregarding the novelist's own statement as well as the evidence of the texts.<sup>2</sup> In the face of such confusing and contradictory accounts, the evidence seems to call for closer attention, bearing as it does upon an important episode in one of the most widely-read of Victorian novels.

To begin with, it is clear from Hardy's correspondence that the sketch for the *Fortnightly* was not produced (as Weber implies) by the simple process of lifting a chapter, or a portion of a chapter, from the novel intact, but involved a certain amount of deliberation and revision. In a letter dated April 13,

1 Florence Emily Hardy, *The Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1928* (London, 1962), 222.

2 Richard Little Purdy, *Thomas Hardy, A Bibliographical Study* (London, 1954), 69; Carl J. Weber, *Hardy of Wessex* (New York, 1965), 175-176; R. G. Cox, editor, *Thomas Hardy, The Critical Heritage* (London, 1970), xxviii.

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1891, he told his wife that he had been working at the revision which was to produce an independent sketch "all morning"; three days later we learn that it has been sent to the editor.<sup>3</sup> Comparison of the texts of the magazine sketch and the relevant chapter of the novel in the first edition (in three volumes) of 1891 confirms the implications of Hardy's reference to a full morning's work as the minimum time spent on the task of revision. A very large number of differences are to be found, ranging from the alteration or insertion of a single word to the omission of a whole page. No attempt will here be made to list them exhaustively,<sup>4</sup> but attention may be drawn to some of the more interesting revisions and omissions. First, however, it should be pointed out that their overall effect is to reduce the length of the passage by about thirty per cent, most of the more substantial cuts occurring in the first half (the description of Tess labouring, and then suckling her child, in the harvest-field) rather than in the second (the bedroom scene of the "baptism," and its epilogue).

These omissions are much more striking than the "new material" referred to by Purdy, which is small in quantity; and they extend much further than the elimination of such proper names as "Tess Durbeyfield" and "Rolliver's Inn." Two of the most significant may be noted. One of the most important paragraphs in the novel occurs when the reader is invited to contemplate the nature of Tess's disgrace and despair, and the narrator's comment at this point includes the following reflection:

alone in a desert island would she have been wretched at what had happened to her? Not greatly. If she could have been but just created, to discover herself as a spouseless mother, with no experience of life except as the parent of a nameless child, would the position have caused her to despair? No, she would have taken it calmly, and found pleasures therein. Most of the misery had been generated by her conventional aspect, and not by her innate sensations.

The whole paragraph, as well as the four preceding and the one

3. Carl J. Weber, editor, *"Dearest Emmie": Thomas Hardy's Letters to His First Wife* (London, 1963), 16, 17.

4. The significant differences, some thirty in number, may be briefly characterized as falling into two classes: those serving merely to disguise the origins of the episode as part of a full-length novel which was soon to appear elsewhere (e.g., the substitution of such circumlocutions as "the pink girl" and "the youthful one with the baby" for the name "Tess"), and, more interestingly, those which seem intended to soften the harshness or unconventionality of the moral generalizations, or to lower the proportion of comment and reflection to narrative and dialogue.

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following it, disappear in the magazine version: possibly Hardy felt that the reader of a short piece would not tolerate moral reflection at such length, and that in any case the allusion to Tess's "misery" would lose most of its point out of the context of the complete novel. Later, Tess consults the vicar concerning the sufficiency of the rite she has performed, and the novel text shows Hardy indulging in a mild but characteristic gibe at organized religion: when she asks whether her amateur "baptism" will be as efficacious as that performed in church, the comment follows that "Having the natural feelings of a tradesman at finding that a job he should have been called in for had been unskilfully botched by his customers among themselves, he was disposed to say no." For the purposes of the sketch, this sentence is carefully removed. Apparently Hardy had reservations about the broadmindedness of the "adult readers" for whom it was designed.

A few examples may be given, more briefly, of revisions the purpose of which is less obvious. One of the chorus of women in the harvest-field quotes Tess as wishing that she and her baby were "underground" — the word giving place, in the novel text, to "in the churchyard"; when the baby dies, Tess's young sisters and brothers beg their sister "to try to find another" — or, more effectively in the later version, "to have another pretty baby"; and the vicar declines to give the baby a Christian burial "for parochial reasons," the epithet later appearing as "liturgical" and, in a still later revision, as "certain."

All the evidence suggests that, so far from approaching the task of extracting an independent sketch from the forbidden chapter with cynical perfunctoriness, Hardy took it seriously and performed it with conscientious thoroughness. He exercised care in shaping its general proportions and in modifying its details. He was, however, wary in offering some of the more controversial passages, and evidently took into account the limits of tolerance of the readers of the *Fortnightly Review*, even though these may have been less narrow than those of the readers of the *Graphic*.

