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being a fatalistic pessimist, was actually a man of deep faith. He points to lines in Hardy's poetry such as "Wait we in trust what time's fulness will show" (from The Going of the Battery), and "Yet a thrilling fills the air, Like to sounds of joyance there" (from the last few lines of The Dynasus). Hardy, says Mr. Harker, was indeed a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, but (even though he lived in a very dimly lit Gethsemane) he was never quite torn away from a deep, abiding faith in the ultimate triumph of man.

Mr. Harker's poem is illuminated by his marginal notes. Opposite the line, "But you I met in Sinai's grim game," he has written: "Desert fighting near Sinai, 1917." Again the poem reads:

Aye! when was hardest pressed my weary frame,
When fever-phantoms goaded every power
To shatter faith, you with life's facts then came
And exorcised pale leering Schopenhauer.

This, says the author, refers to his grim, fever-ridden days during the campaign at Gallipoli.

HARDY'S "MAN OF CHARACTER" ON THE AIR

By Cecil A. Rollins

THROUGH the kind and efficient help of Mr. E. N. Sanders, of Parkstone, Dorset, there has come to the Colby College Library a complete typescript of the West-of-England wireless [radio] presentation of Hardy's The Mayor of Casterbridge. The Library has been indebted to Mr. Sanders often before this, and his gifts and benefactions have been the subject of grateful acknowledgment on more than one page of this Quarterly.

This wireless version of The Mayor was given by English actors in ten installments, from January 7 to March 11, 1951. Desmond Hawkins made the adaptation, which de-
lighted the articulate listeners. Translating a novel to a dramatic form brings its dangers. Many a reader has gone to the theatre to see a story that pleased him and found a distorted, emasculated thing, quite false to the spirit and scope of the novel. Cutting down in size means either excising transitions and commentary or frankly leaving out incidents and background. In Hardy, the commentary is vital and integral. Furthermore, cutting down almost inevitably means neglecting many descriptive passages and minor happenings that serve to give major matters “a local habitation and a name.” It may remove all suggestions of environment and local customs that root the novel to its sod and time. For *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, these local and rural comments and incidents are of much importance. Though a universal story, it is, far more than most novels, of its own place and time. To present, in ten scripts of half an hour each, a story that would take perhaps ten hours to read aloud does mean some loss. The marvel is that environment, local color, time and place are so fully and exactly retained.

Mr. Hawkins’ first task was to find centers of effect that would make ten good broadcasts. To anyone familiar with the novel, half a dozen dramatic centers would appear at once. The first episode—“The Sale of a Wife”—is drama as Hardy wrote it, almost without a change. By the use of silence . . . continuing footsteps faltering and slow after a hard day’s journey . . . desultory and sudden talk . . . the sounds of the Weyden Fair, the stop in the tent of the Furmity Woman . . . the quarrel rising to the drunken auction, half savage jest and half savage resentment of the ties of marriage . . . the stupor ensuing—this radio version produces its powerful effect with economy and address. Here would be, obviously, the drama and the climax. But it is not the climax! The climax is the result on the “man of character” (as the sub-title calls the man who is to be Mayor)—on Henchard himself.
THOMAS HARDY IN 1889
(from a photograph taken while he was at work on *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*)
THOMAS HARDY IN 1913

(Shortly after writing "When I set out for Lyonesse," published in 1914)
The script takes him, awakened and appalled by his act, through countryside and town, tracing his wife and daughter and the sailor-purchaser Newson finally to a seaport whence they have, apparently, sailed for the new world. Bits of dialogue from people of varying ages, sex, and conditions—sounds, and the cumulative building of repetition (which radio does well)—keep the interest unflagging. Now, as real climax, not of plot and incident, but of character, comes a sudden shift to a churchyard and talk with the verger (a character not in the novel). We hear the entrance to the unpeopled church and the solemn oath: “I will avoid all strong liquors for the space of twenty-one years, being a year for every year that I have lived . . ., and may I be strook dumb, blind, and helpless, if I break this my oath!” The episode is excellent.

Throughout, the dialogue is taken directly from the novel, with few changes. Telescoping, cutting, sharpening have been the adapter’s methods. He has pointed up climactic effects by fading-in thought: voices repeating a promise, or a warning. It is an effective device. Much of the background he has suggested by snatches of workmen or neighbors talking (Hardy’s superb dialect and local knowledge), or by sounds—a yellowhammer’s trills, a robin’s autumn song, or carriage-wheels rapidly fading.

It is easy to feel the cumulative force when reading the scripts in order, but one wonders if the same force would accumulate in broadcasts a week apart. Possibly; in similar American serials (though few are of such high quality), the weight of past episodes carries over to persistent listeners. The continuity is supplied by using Elizabeth-Jane as narrator—the Elizabeth-Jane as of later life, when the stress and storm has passed, when she “knows all and forgives all.”

The narrator understands the “man of character” and tells of the tempests beating upon his mind, the contrary currents of impulse. And that is certainly a weakness, for
drama should show, not tell. It is a forgivable weakness, perhaps, but the method weakens the portrayal of the character of Henchard. In the novel, again and again, he appears as a man of violent impulses and drastic acts. But he is better than his acts. He goes to great lengths to undo the wrongs he has caused, to repair the damage, if he can. The two-fold nature is superbly shown, for instance, in the first episode, already outlined at some length. But as the radio story proceeds, it concentrates more and more upon incidents and less and less upon character.

As an example, after the "skimmity ride" and the subsequent death of Lucetta, after Henchard's disgrace is known to all, and his fall accomplished, events turn in his favor. He has a small, successful business; he has become resigned to his lot, and Elizabeth-Jane is sharing his life again as his daughter. She is his, and he is content, even happy. Then, pat upon the cue, Newson appears, her real father, to ask after his "wife" and her (and his) daughter. It is a crisis Henchard is not prepared for. He lies, sends Newson off with the belief that the daughter died soon after the mother, and sleeps beside her in the churchyard. The bitter irony is Hardy; the lie is Henchard. But it is, in the novel, a lie of desperation, a hopeless lie to save the one good thing left in the wreckage of his hopes. And the regret that follows is also Henchard. Newson Later accepts the whole incident so, berating himself for his naïve belief, and extenuating Henchard. Elizabeth-Jane does not, and that is Henchard's punishment. The novel shows this clearly; the radio version, imperfectly. It gives less than his due to the "man of character."

In addition, the long arm of coincidence and contrived misfortune reaches into life too, too freely. That is Hardy, of course, who speaks for himself as well as for Susan in "deeming anything possible at the hands of Time and Chance, except, perhaps, fair play." The impression of a man playing against a hostile universe—"purblind Doom-
sters” throwing caged 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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