

The Hardy Society Journal

Summer 2008

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

This is the last Journal before the Summer Conference and Festival. See enclosed leaflet for details of a packed programme, rich as a Christmas cake. Roll up! Roll up! In particular remember that you can always just drop in. Most academic conferences are relatively short and have to be taken whole, like a pill. Ours is different. It lasts a full week and, as the added term 'Festival' implies, is kaleidoscopic in its variety. So if you're in the Dorchester vicinity around the end of July come and sample the wares for a day or two, paying by the individual event. Nourish the Hardy-groupie within, and you may well find yourself coming for the whole show in 2010.



As I've remarked before in these Notes, the Hardy Society receives a regular trickle of surprising inquiries. A particularly intriguing e-mail came last month from India, sent by one Lang Kuper War, to ask whether there would be any copyright issues involved in the translation of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* into Khasi. After responding to the query I looked up Khasi in the invaluable Wikipedia, which reveals that the majority of the 865,000 speakers 'are found in Meghalaya state'. The entry continues: 'Khasi is rich in folklore and folktale, and behind most of the names of hills, mountains, rivers, waterfalls, birds, flowers, and animals there is a story.' How marvellous that a Hardy novel should be translated into so remote, but apparently sympathetic, a tongue.



The March edition of that excellent magazine *The Oldie* (passed on to me by a grizzled friend, if you must know) contained an article by Candida Lycett Green lamenting what she sees as a second destruction of Jericho – in this case the Oxford suburb of that name, where the threat is posed by property-development rather than trumpeting. Hardy was a frequent visitor when working for Arthur Blomfield, the architect of what Lycett Green describes as 'the glorious Byzantine bulk of St Barnabas church ... sailing above the small streets of Jericho'. It was to provide the model for St Silas in *Jude the Obscure*. Now, apparently, developers 'are appealing, for the second time, to build the dreariest and bulkiest of apartment blocks between the canal and St Barnabas', thereby destroying a fine and historic prospect.



One of the friends made by Hardy and Emma during their sojourn in Sturminster Newton (1876-8) was Robert Young, a prosperous local tailor. As 'Rabin Hill', Young was also a successful writer of dialect verse, in the tradition of William Barnes. Born in 1811 he spent by far the greater part of his life in his native town and saw how radically it changed over the course of the nineteenth century. At

the age of ninety-seven he set down his recollections, and these have now been published by the County Museum in Dorchester as the first in a projected series of 'Occasional Papers on Dorset matters'. *Early Years: Recollections of life in Sturminster Newton* is edited by Alan Chedzoy, who also provides an entertaining and informative Introduction. Illustrated with appropriate period photographs, this is a delightful booklet that will be of interest to all lovers of Hardy. In providing first-hand descriptions of nineteenth-century country life and working conditions it makes a perfect companion-piece for 'The Dorsetshire Labourer'. There is a miscellany of vivid recollections – concerning, for example, spinning and weaving, sanitation, practical jokes, a public flogging, church music, a Welsh clairvoyant, a fist fight that ends in death, and an amiable eccentric with a pet toad in his pocket. Young himself emerges as a humorous man of great humanity and optimism. Alan Chedzoy appropriately highlights his refreshing comment: 'As time moves along what wonderful changes are taking place in the world ...' *Early Years* is a bargain at £4. It can be purchased from the Dorset County Museum. See their website: www.dorsetcountymuseum.org

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