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Preface

In reprinting this story for a new edition I am reminded that it was in the chapters of *Far from the Madding Crowd*, as they appeared month by month in a popular magazine,* that I first ventured to adopt the word “Wessex”* from the pages of early English history, and give it a fictitious significance as the existing name of the district once included in that extinct kingdom. The series of novels I projected being mainly of the kind called local, they seemed to require a territorial definition of some sort to lend unity to their scene. Finding that the area of a single county did not afford a canvas large enough for this purpose, and that there were objections to an invented name, I disinterred the old one. The region designated was known but vaguely, and I was often asked even by educated people where it lay. However, the press and the public were kind enough to welcome the fanciful plan, and willingly joined me in the anachronism of imagining a Wessex population living under Queen Victoria – a modern Wessex of railways, the penny post,* mowing and reaping machines, union workhouses,* lucifer matches,* labourers who could read and write and National schoolchildren.* But I believe I am correct in stating that, until the existence of this contemporaneous Wessex in place of the usual counties was announced in the present story, in 1874, it had never been heard of in fiction and current speech, if at all, and that the expression “a Wessex peasant” or “a Wessex custom” would theretofore have been taken to refer to nothing later in date than the Norman Conquest.*

I did not anticipate that this application of the word to modern story would extend outside the chapters of these particular chronicles. But it was soon taken up elsewhere, the first to adopt it being the now defunct *Examiner*,* which, in the impression bearing date 15th July 1876, entitled one of its articles ‘The Wessex Labourer’, the article turning out to be no dissertation on farming during the Heptarchy,* but on the modern peasant of the south-west counties.

Since then the appellation which I had thought to reserve to the horizons and landscapes of a partly real, partly dream country has become

more and more popular as a practical provincial definition, and the dream country has, by degrees, solidified into a utilitarian region which people can go to, take a house in and write to the papers from. But I ask all good and idealistic readers to forget this, and to refuse steadfastly to believe that there are any inhabitants of a Victorian Wessex outside these volumes in which their lives and conversations are detailed.

Moreover, the village called Weatherbury, wherein the scenes of the present story of the series are for the most part laid, would perhaps be hardly discernible by the explorer, without help, in any existing place nowadays; though at the time, comparatively recent, at which the tale was written, a sufficient reality to meet the descriptions, both of backgrounds and personages, might have been traced easily enough. The church remains, by great good fortune, unrestored and intact,* and a few of the old houses, but the ancient malthouse,* which was formerly so characteristic of the parish, has been pulled down these twenty years; also most of the thatched and dormered cottages that were once lifeholds.* The heroine's fine old Jacobean house would be found in the story to have taken a witch's ride of a mile or more from its actual position, though with that difference its features are described as they still show themselves to the sun and moonlight. The game of prisoner's base,* which not so long ago seemed to enjoy a perennial vitality in front of the worn-out stocks, may, so far as I can say, be entirely unknown to the rising generation of schoolboys there. The practice of divination by Bible and key,* the regarding of valentines as things of serious import, the shearing supper, the long smock-frocks and the harvest home,* have, too, nearly disappeared in the wake of the old houses, and with them has gone, it is said, much of that love of fuddling to which the village at one time was notoriously prone. The change at the root of this has been the recent supplanting of the class of stationary cottagers, who carried on the local traditions and humours, by a population of more or less migratory labourers, which has led to a break of continuity in local history, more fatal than any other thing to the preservation of legend, folklore, close inter-social relations and eccentric individualities. For these the indispensable conditions of existence are attachment to the soil of one particular spot by generation after generation.

1895-1902.*

T.H.

*Far from the
Madding Crowd*

1

Description of Farmer Oak. An Incident

WHEN FARMER OAK SMILED, the corners of his mouth spread till they were within an unimportant distance of his ears, his eyes were reduced to chinks, and diverging wrinkles appeared round them, extending upon his countenance like the rays in a rudimentary sketch of the rising sun.

His Christian name was Gabriel, and on working days he was a young man of sound judgement, easy motions, proper dress and general good character. On Sundays he was a man of misty views, rather given to postponing, and hampered by his best clothes and corpulent umbrella: upon the whole one who felt himself to occupy morally that vast middle space of Laodicean* neutrality which lay between the Communion people* of the parish and the drunken section – that is, he went to church, but yawned privately by the time the congregation reached the Nicene Creed* and thought of what there would be for dinner when he meant to be listening to the sermon. Or, to state his character as it stood in the scale of public opinion, when his friends and critics were in tantrums he was considered rather a bad man; when they were pleased he was rather a good man; when they were neither he was a man whose moral colour was a kind of pepper and salt mixture.

Since he lived six times as many working days as Sundays, Oak's appearance in his working clothes was most peculiarly his own – the mental picture formed by his neighbours in imagining him being always dressed in that way. He wore a low-crowned felt hat, spread out at the base by tight jamming upon the head for security in high winds, and a coat like Doctor Johnson's,* his lower extremities being encased in ordinary leather leggings and boots emphatically large, affording to each foot a roomy apartment so constructed that any wearer might stand in a river all day long and know nothing of damp – their maker being a conscientious man who endeavoured to compensate for any weakness in his cut by unstinted dimension and solidity.

Mr Oak carried about him by way of watch what may be called a small silver clock: in other words it was a watch as to shape and intention, and a small clock as to size. This instrument, being several years older than Oak's grandfather, had the peculiarity of going either too fast or not at all: the smaller of its hands, too, occasionally slipped round on the pivot, and thus, though the minutes were told with precision, nobody could be quite certain of the hour they belonged to. The stopping peculiarity of his watch Oak remedied by thumps and shakes, and he escaped any evil consequences from the other two defects by constant comparisons with and observations of the sun and stars, and by pressing his face close to the glass of his neighbours' windows, till he could discern the hour marked by the green-faced timekeepers within. It may be mentioned that Oak's fob, being difficult of access by reason of its somewhat high situation in the waistband of his trousers (which also lay at a remote height under his waistcoat), the watch was as a necessity pulled out by throwing the body to one side, compressing the mouth and face to a ruddy mass significant of the exertion and drawing up the watch by its chain, like a bucket from a well.

But some thoughtful persons, who had seen him walking across one of his fields on a certain December morning – sunny, and exceedingly mild – might have regarded Gabriel Oak in other aspects than these. In his face one might notice that many of the hues and curves of youth had tarried on to manhood: there even remained in his remoter crannies some relics of the boy. His height and breadth would have been sufficient to make his presence imposing had they been exhibited with due consideration. But there is a way some men have, rural and urban alike, for which the mind is more responsible than flesh and sinew: it is a way of curtailing their dimensions by their manner of showing them, and from a quiet modesty that would have become a vestal,* which seemed continually to impress upon him that he had no great claim on the world's room, Oak walked unassumingly, and with a faintly perceptible bend, yet distinct from a bowing of the shoulders. This may be said to be a defect in an individual if he depends for his valuation more upon his appearance than upon his capacity to wear well, which Oak did not. He had just reached the time of life at which “young” is ceasing to be the prefix of “man” in speaking of such a one. He was at the brightest period of masculine growth, for his intellect and his emotions were

clearly separated: he had passed the time during which the influence of youth indiscriminately mingles them in the character of impulse, and he had not yet arrived at the stage wherein they become united again, in the character of prejudice, by the influence of a wife and family. In short he was twenty-eight and a bachelor.

The field he was in this morning sloped to a ridge called Norcombe Hill. Through a spur of this hill ran the highway between Emminster and Chalk Newton.* Casually glancing over the hedge, Oak saw coming down the incline before him an ornamental spring wagon painted yellow and gaily marked, drawn by two horses, a wagoner walking alongside, bearing a whip perpendicularly. The wagon was laden with household goods and window plants, and on the apex of the whole sat a woman, young and attractive. Gabriel had not beheld the sight for more than half a minute when the vehicle was brought to a standstill just beneath his eyes.

“The tailboard of the wagon is gone, miss,” said the wagoner.

“Then I heard it fall,” said the girl in a soft though decided voice. “I heard a noise I could not account for when we were coming up the hill.”

“I’ll run back.”

“Do,” she answered.

The sensible horses stood perfectly still, and the wagoner’s steps sank fainter and fainter in the distance.

The girl on the summit of the load sat motionless, surrounded by tables and chairs with their legs upwards, backed by an oak settle and ornamented in front by pots of geraniums, myrtles and cactuses, together with a caged canary – all probably from the house just vacated. There was also a cat in a willow basket, from the partly opened lid of which she gazed with half-closed eyes, and affectionately surveyed the small birds around.

The handsome girl waited for some time idly in her place, and the only sound heard in the stillness was the hopping of the canary up and down the perches of its prison. Then she looked attentively downwards: it was not at the bird, nor at the cat: it was at an oblong package tied in paper, and lying between them. She turned her head to learn if the wagoner were coming; he was not yet in sight; and her eyes crept back to the package, her thoughts seeming to run upon what was inside it. At length she drew the article into her lap and untied the paper covering

– a small swing looking glass was disclosed, in which she proceeded to survey herself attentively. She parted her lips, and smiled.

It was a fine morning, and the sun lighted up to a scarlet glow the crimson jacket she wore, and painted a soft lustre upon her bright face and dark hair. The myrtles, geraniums and cactuses packed around her were fresh and green, and at such a leafless season they invested the whole concern of horses, wagon, furniture and girl with a peculiar vernal charm. What possessed her to indulge in such a performance in the sight of the sparrows, blackbirds and unperceived farmer, who were alone its spectators – whether the smile began as a factitious one to test her capacity in that art – nobody knows: it ended certainly in a real smile; she blushed at herself, and seeing her reflection blush, blushed the more.

The change from the customary spot and necessary occasion of such an act – from the dressing hour in a bedroom to a time of travelling out of doors – lent to the idle deed a novelty it did not intrinsically possess. The picture was a delicate one. Woman's prescriptive infirmity had stalked into the sunlight, which had clothed it in the freshness of an originality. A cynical inference was irresistible by Gabriel Oak as he regarded the scene, generous though he fain would have been. There was no necessity whatever for her looking in the glass. She did not adjust her hat, or pat her hair, or press a dimple into shape, or do one thing to signify that any such intention had been her motive in taking up the glass. She simply observed herself as a fair product of Nature in the feminine kind, her thoughts seeming to glide into far-off though likely dramas in which men would play a part – vistas of probable triumphs – the smiles being of a phase suggesting that hearts were imagined as lost and won. Still, this was but conjecture, and the whole series of actions was so idly put forth as to make it rash to assert that intention had any part in them at all.

The wagoner's steps were heard returning: she put the glass in the paper, and the whole again into its place.

When the wagon had passed on Gabriel withdrew from his point of espial, and descending into the road followed the vehicle to the turnpike gate some way beyond the bottom of the hill, where the object of his contemplation now halted for the payment of toll. About twenty steps still remained between him and the gate when he heard a dispute. It was a difference concerning twopence between the persons with the wagon and the man at the toll bar.

“Mis’ess’s niece is upon the top of the things, and she says that’s enough that I’ve offered ye, you gr’t miser, and she won’t pay any more.” These were the wagoner’s words.

“Very well, then mis’ess’s niece can’t pass,” said the turnpike keeper, closing the gate.

Oak looked from one to the other of the disputants, and fell into a reverie. There was something in the tone of twopence remarkably insignificant: threepence had a definite value as money – it was an appreciable infringement on a day’s wages, and, as such, a higgling matter; but twopence – “Here,” he said stepping forward and handing twopence to the gatekeeper, “let the young woman pass.” He looked up at her then – she heard his words, and looked down.

Gabriel’s features adhered throughout their form so exactly to the middle line between the beauty of St John and the ugliness of Judas Iscariot* as represented in a window of the church he attended, that not a single lineament could be selected and called worthy either of distinction or notoriety. The red-jacketed and dark-haired maiden seemed to think so too, for she carelessly glanced over him and told her man to drive on. She might have looked her thanks to Gabriel on a minute scale, but she did not speak them: more probably she felt none, for in gaining her a passage he had lost her her point, and we know how women take a favour of that kind.

The gatekeeper surveyed the retreating vehicle. “That’s a handsome maid,” he said to Oak.

“But she has her faults,” said Gabriel.

“True, farmer.”

“And the greatest of them is – well, what it is always.”

“Beating people down – ay, ’tis so.”

“Oh no.”

“What, then?”

Gabriel, perhaps a little piqued by the comely traveller’s indifference, glanced back to where he had witnessed her performance over the hedge, and said, “Vanity.”

2

Night. The Flock. An Interior. Another Interior

IT WAS NEARLY MIDNIGHT on the eve of St Thomas,* the shortest day in the year. A desolating wind wandered from the north over the hill whereon Oak had watched the yellow wagon and its occupant in the sunshine of a few days earlier.

Norcombe Hill – forming part of Norcombe Ewelease, and lying to the north-east of the little town of Emminster – was one of the spots which suggest to a passer-by that he is in the presence of a shape approaching the indestructible as nearly as any to be found on earth. It was a featureless convexity of chalk and soil – an ordinary specimen of those smoothly outlined protuberances of the globe which may remain undisturbed on some great day of confusion when far grander heights and dizzy granite precipices topple down.

The hill was covered on its northern side by an ancient and decaying plantation of beeches whose upper verge formed a line over the crest fringing its arched curve against the sky, like a mane. Tonight, these trees sheltered the southern slope from the keenest blasts, which smote the wood and floundered through it with a sound as of grumbling, or gushed over its crowning boughs in a weakened moan. The dry leaves in the ditch simmered and boiled in the same breezes, a tongue of air occasionally ferreting out a few, and sending them spinning across the grass. A group or two of the latest in date amongst the dead multitude had remained till this very midwinter time on the twigs which bore them, and in falling rattled against the trunks with smart taps.

Between this half-wooded, half-naked hill and the vague still horizon that its summit indistinctly commanded was a mysterious sheet of fathomless shade – the sounds from which suggested that what it concealed bore some reduced resemblance to features here. The thin grasses, more or less coating the hill, were touched by the wind in breezes of differing powers, and almost of differing natures – one rubbing the blades

heavily, another raking them piercingly, another brushing them like a soft broom. The instinctive act of humankind was to stand, and listen, and learn how the trees on the right and the trees on the left wailed or chanted to each other in the regular antiphonies of a cathedral choir; how hedges and other shapes to leeward then caught the note, lowering it to the tenderest sob; and how the hurrying gust then plunged into the south to be heard no more.

The sky was clear – remarkably clear – and the twinkling of all the stars seemed to be but throbs of one body, timed by a common pulse. The North Star was directly in the wind’s eye, and since evening the Bear had swung round it outwardly to the east, till he was now at a right angle with the meridian.* A difference of colour in the stars – oftener read of than seen in England – was really perceptible here. The sovereign brilliancy of Sirius pierced the eye with a steely glitter, the star called Capella was yellow, Aldebaran and Betelgeuse shone with a fiery red.*

To persons standing alone on a hill during a clear midnight such as this, the roll of the world eastward is almost a palpable movement. The sensation may be caused by the panoramic glide of the stars past earthly objects, which is perceptible in a few minutes of stillness, or by the better outlook upon space that a hill affords, or by the wind, or by the solitude, but whatever be its origin the impression of riding along is vivid and abiding. The poetry of motion is a phrase much in use, and to enjoy the epic form of that gratification it is necessary to stand on a hill at a small hour of the night, and, having first expanded with a sense of difference from the mass of civilized mankind, who are dreamwrap and disregardful of all such proceedings at this time, long and quietly watch your stately progress through the stars. After such a nocturnal reconnoitre it is hard to get back to earth, and to believe that the consciousness of such majestic speeding is derived from a tiny human frame.

Suddenly an unexpected series of sounds began to be heard in this place up against the sky. They had a clearness which was to be found nowhere in the wind, and a sequence which was to be found nowhere in nature. They were the notes of Farmer Oak’s flute.

The tune was not floating unhindered into the open air: it seemed muffled in some way, and was altogether too curtailed in power to spread high or wide. It came from the direction of a small dark object under the plantation hedge – a shepherd’s hut now presenting an outline to which

an uninitiated person might have been puzzled to attach either meaning or use. The image as a whole was that of a small Noah's Ark on a small Ararat,* allowing the traditionary outlines and general form of the Ark which are followed by toymakers, and by these means are established in men's imaginations among their firmest, because earliest, impressions, to pass as an approximate pattern. The hut stood on little wheels which raised its floor about a foot from the ground. Such shepherd's huts are dragged into the fields when the lambing season comes on, to shelter the shepherd in his enforced nightly attendance.

It was only latterly that people had begun to call Gabriel "Farmer" Oak. During the twelvemonth preceding this time he had been enabled by sustained efforts of industry and chronic good spirits to lease the small sheep farm of which Norcombe Hill was a portion, and stock it with two hundred sheep. Previously he had been a bailiff* for a short time, and earlier still a shepherd only, having from his childhood assisted his father in tending the flocks of large proprietors, till old Gabriel sank to rest.

This venture, unaided and alone, into the paths of farming as master and not as man, with an advance of sheep not yet paid for, was a critical juncture with Gabriel Oak, and he recognized his position clearly. The first movement in his new progress was the lambing of his ewes, and sheep having been his speciality from his youth, he wisely refrained from deputing the task of tending them at this season to a hireling or a novice.

The wind continued to beat about the corners of the hut, but the flute-playing ceased. A rectangular space of light appeared in the side of the hut, and in the opening the outline of Farmer Oak's figure. He carried a lantern in his hand, and closing the door behind him came forward and busied himself about this nook of the field for nearly twenty minutes, the lantern light appearing and disappearing here and there, and brightening him or darkening him as he stood before or behind it.

Oak's motions, though they had a quiet energy, were slow, and their deliberateness accorded well with his occupation. Fitness being the basis of beauty, nobody could have denied that his steady swings and turns in and about the flock had elements of grace. Yet, although if occasion demanded he could do or think a thing with as mercurial a dash as can the men of towns who are more to the manner born, his special power, morally, physically and mentally, was static, owing little or nothing to momentum, as a rule.

A close examination of the ground hereabout, even by the wan starlight only, revealed how a portion of what would have been casually called a wild slope had been appropriated by Farmer Oak for his great purpose this winter. Detached hurdles thatched with straw were stuck into the ground at various scattered points, amid and under which the whitish forms of his meek ewes moved and rustled. The ring of the sheep bell, which had been silent during his absence, recommenced, in tones that had more mellowness than clearness, owing to an increasing growth of surrounding wool. This continued till Oak withdrew again from the flock. He returned to the hut, bringing in his arms a newborn lamb, consisting of four legs large enough for a full-grown sheep united by a seemingly inconsiderable membrane about half the substance of the legs collectively, which constituted the animal's entire body just at present.

The little speck of life he placed on a wisp of hay before the small stove, where a can of milk was simmering. Oak extinguished the lantern by blowing into it and then pinching the snuff, the cot being lighted by a candle suspended by a twisted wire. A rather hard couch, formed of a few corn sacks thrown carelessly down covered half the floor of this little habitation, and here the young man stretched himself along, loosened his woollen cravat and closed his eyes. In about the time a person unaccustomed to bodily labour would have decided upon which side to lie, Farmer Oak was asleep.

The inside of the hut as it now presented itself, was cosy and alluring, and the scarlet handful of fire, in addition to the candle, reflecting its own genial colour upon whatever it could reach, flung associations of enjoyment even over utensils and tools. In the corner stood the sheep crook, and along a shelf at one side were ranged bottles and canisters of the simple preparations pertaining to ovine surgery and physic – spirits of wine, turpentine, tar, magnesia, ginger and castor oil being the chief. On a triangular shelf across the corner stood bread, bacon, cheese and a cup for ale or cider, which was supplied from a flagon beneath. Beside the provisions lay the flute, whose notes had lately been called forth by the lonely watcher to beguile a tedious hour. The house was ventilated by two round holes, like the lights of a ship's cabin, with wood slides.

The lamb, revived by the warmth, began to bleat, and the sound entered Gabriel's ears and brain with an instant meaning, as expected sounds will. Passing from the profoundest sleep to the most alert wakefulness

with the same ease that had accompanied the reverse operation, he looked at his watch, found that the hour hand had shifted again, put on his hat, took the lamb in his arms and carried it into the darkness. After placing the little creature with its mother he stood and carefully examined the sky to ascertain the time of night from the altitudes of the stars.

The Dog Star and Aldebaran, pointing to the restless Pleiades, were halfway up the southern sky, and between them hung Orion which gorgeous constellation never burned more vividly than now as it soared forth above the rim of the landscape. Castor and Pollux with their quiet shine were almost on the meridian; the barren and gloomy Square of Pegasus was creeping round to the north-west; far away through the plantation Vega sparkled like a lamp suspended amid the leafless trees; and Cassiopeia's Chair stood daintily poised on the uppermost boughs.*

“One o'clock,” said Gabriel.

Being a man not without a frequent consciousness that there was some charm in this life he led, he stood still after looking at the sky as a useful instrument, and regarded it in an appreciative spirit, as a work of art superlatively beautiful. For a moment he seemed impressed with the speaking loneliness of the scene, or rather with the complete abstraction from all its compass of the sights and sounds of man. Human shapes, interferences, troubles and joys were all as if they were not, and there seemed to be on the shaded hemisphere of the globe no sentient being save himself: he could fancy them all gone round to the sunny side.

Occupied thus, with eyes stretched afar, Oak gradually perceived that what he had previously taken to be a star low down behind the outskirts of the plantation was in reality no such thing. It was an artificial light, almost close at hand.

To find themselves utterly alone at night where company is desirable and expected makes some people fearful; but a case more trying by far to the nerves is to discover some mysterious companionship when intuition, sensation, memory, analogy, testimony, probability, induction – every kind of evidence in the logician's list – have united to persuade consciousness that it is quite in isolation.

Farmer Oak went towards the plantation and pushed through its lower boughs to the windy side. A dim mass under the slope reminded him that a shed occupied a place here – the site being a cutting into the slope of the hill, so that at its back part the roof was almost level with

the ground. In front it was formed of boards nailed to posts and covered with tar as a preservative. Through crevices in the roof and side spread streaks and dots of light, a combination of which made the radiance that had attracted him. Oak stepped up behind, where, leaning down upon the roof and putting his eye close to a hole, he could see into the interior clearly.

The place contained two women and two cows. By the side of the latter a steaming bran mash stood in a bucket. One of the women was past middle age. Her companion was apparently young and graceful: he could form no decided opinion upon her looks, her position being almost beneath his eye, so that he saw her in a bird's-eye view, as Milton's Satan first saw Paradise.* She wore no bonnet or hat, but had enveloped herself in a large cloak, which was carelessly flung over her head as a covering.

"There, now we'll go home," said the elder of the two, resting her knuckles upon her hips and looking at their proceedings as a whole. "I do hope Daisy will fetch round again now. I have never been more frightened in my life, but I don't mind breaking my rest if she recovers."

The young woman, whose eyelids were apparently inclined to fall together on the smallest provocation of silence, yawned without parting her lips to any inconvenient extent, whereupon Gabriel caught the infection and slightly yawned in sympathy. "I wish we were rich enough to pay a man to do these things," she said.

"As we are not we must do them ourselves," said the other. "For you must help me if you stay."

"Well – my hat is gone, however," continued the younger. "It went over the hedge, I think. The idea of such a slight wind catching it."

The cow standing erect was of the Devon breed, and was encased in a tight, warm hide of rich Indian red, as uniform from eyes to tail as if the animal had been dipped in a dye of that colour, her long back being mathematically level. The other was spotted – grey and white. Beside her Oak now noticed a little calf about a day old, looking idiotically at the two women, which showed that it had not long been accustomed to the phenomenon of eyesight, and often turning to the lantern, which it apparently mistook for the moon, inherited instinct having as yet had little time for correction by experience. Between the sheep and the cows, Lucina* had been busy on Norcombe Hill lately.

“I think we had better send for some oatmeal,” said the elder woman. “There’s no more bran.”

“Yes, aunt. And I’ll ride over for it to Tewnell Mill as soon as it is light.”

“But there’s no side-saddle.”

“I can ride on the other – trust me.”

Oak, upon hearing these remarks, became more curious to observe her features, but this prospect being denied him by the hooding effect of the cloak, and by his aerial position, he felt himself drawing upon his fancy for their details. In making even horizontal and clear inspections we colour and mould according to the wants within us whatever our eyes bring in: had Gabriel been able from the first to get a distinct view of her countenance his estimate of it as very handsome or slightly so would have been as his soul required a divinity at the moment or was ready supplied with one. Having for some time known the want of a satisfactory form to fill an increasing void within him, his position moreover affording the widest scope for his fancy, he painted her a beauty.

By one of those whimsical coincidences in which Nature, like a busy mother, seems to spare a moment from her unremitting labours to turn and make her children smile, the girl now dropped the cloak, and forth tumbled ropes of black hair over a red jacket. Oak knew her instantly as the heroine of the yellow wagon, myrtles and looking glass: prosily, as the woman who owed him twopence.

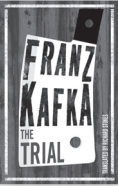
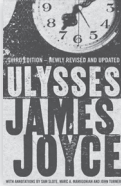
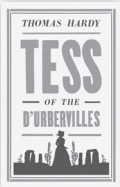
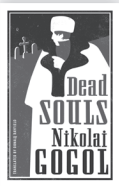
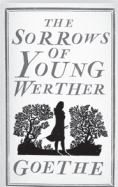
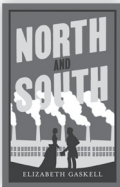
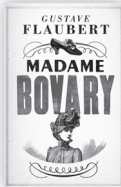
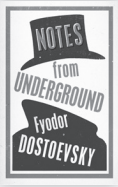
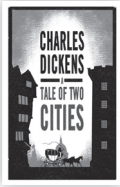
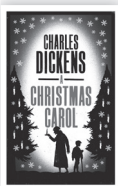
They placed the calf beside its mother again, took up the lantern and went out, the light sinking down the hill till it was no more than a nebula. Gabriel Oak returned to his flock.

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