CHAPTER II

HARDFY'S BACKGROUND

Man is mostly a product of his environment and so is a writer. A writer, particularly a sensitive writer, even if he tries, cannot be wholly free from his age or from his environment. The impact of his age and environment must be upon him in varying degrees. Although Hardy was for the most part aloof from the main current of Victorian thought and outlook, nevertheless the prevailing tendencies of his age had their impact upon him. Naturally any discussion on Thomas Hardy should always precede a discussion on the age in which he was born and bred.

Indeed, Hardy's age had a great bearing upon him, upon his conception, particularly upon his predilection to pessimism. The prevailing conditions of the nineteenth century have been correctly summed up by G. A. Sambrook. In the first half of the century the English Nation adapted itself to revolutionary changes which gave great wealth and power to one section of the community, while the labouring classes were near starvation. The state of unemployment, misery and want which resulted from the Napoleonic Wars was aggravated due to changes in agricultural methods, and large scale enclosure. Fluctuating prices and serious unemployment followed. The hardships and sufferings of the working class encouraged suspicion and distrust, which were fomented into despair and resentment. Violence and crime were everywhere. They reached climax in the "Hungry Forties". "In one
parish in Dorchester thirty-six persons dwelt, on an average, in each house. It was no wonder that people living in such conditions were ignorant and vicious.

These conditions were really disturbing for the sensitive minds. "The Industrial Revolution was in the process of destroying the old agricultural England; the population was shifting; the old ties which had united the small communities of the past were breaking bit by bit".

Before the industrial revolution, most of the people lived in villages, and the most thickly populated parts of England were in the countries of the South and the East. The North of England was thinly populated. The growth of industries in the Coal and Iron Regions of the North resulted in migration of population towards the North. Increasing proportion of population started moving towards the cities. The increasing urbanisation followed, and it brought about the ruin of the old rural institutions and the rural society itself. Under these changed conditions a new social relationship and a new psychology developed. "In England, in the early nineteenth century, Cobbett and others looked on the Industrial Revolution as 'a fall from grace', and wished to restore the rural conditions of pre-1760".

In fact, the contrast between dire poverty and vast wealth became more marked in the nineteenth century than in any period of

history since the decay of Roman Empire. Naturally the public conscience woke up to the fact that there was social problem within the limits of which the individual was helpless against the forces of modern industrialism.

As a matter of fact, industrial revolution caused serious economic repercussions of the village community because of the concentration of factories in urban areas and the destruction of the two kinds of village industries, mentioned by G.M. Trevelyan. "It destroyed first the spinning and other by-employments of the wives and children of agricultural families; and secondly the full time employment of villagers in such various trades as clock-making, basket-weaving, carriage and wagon building, tanning, milling and brewing, saddlery, cobbling, tailoring and the great national industry of cloth-weaving". Thus the two industries, which the Industrial Revolution gradually made an end of in the village sector, were the spinning industry and a set of cottage and small scale industries of handicrafts type including the weaving industry.

According to Sir Llewellyn Woodward, the creative exuberance of the industrial age had passed out of times by the middle of nineteenth century. There were no doubt certain improvements in material conditions; but they simply left the thoughtful minds more free to consider problems of conduct and belief which went beyond organisation of social life. The thoughtful people began to attack the vast and obvious

social abuses. At the same time, the Biblical criticism as well as the materialistic thoughts of Spencer and Buckle started shaking the middle class mind seriously. In other words, the disintegration of ideas went side by side with the disintegration of the old social and economic structure.

"Eighteenth century rationalism had united with the new romantic spirit of rebellion against convention, to shake the fundamental basis of belief — religious, social, political — which the people of the old England had unquestionably accepted. Since the beginning of the century, leaders of thought were, more often than not, unorthodox. The mental atmosphere of the reflective minds tended to be overcast by clouds of doubts". 1.

Besides the higher criticism of the Bible towards the middle of the century, the Darwinian theory of evolution also contributed much to precipitate the disintegration of ideas and to throw the reflective minds into doubts. The Darwinian theory may be summed up in Herbert Spencer's phrase as 'the survival of the fittest'. "The Darwinian theory abolished the dividing line between men and animals, denied any sudden creation of man, and therefore any literal interpretation of the fall of man, with its theological consequences". 2. It was indeed a great shock to the orthodox interpretation of Christian belief, and it was not at all

2. Sir Llewellyn Woodward: The Age of Reform (1815-1870) (Oxford University Press 1962) P. 875
surprising that the first attitude of the Church Leaders was entirely hostile to it. In 1859 the *Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection* was published. Its publication coincided with another attack upon orthodox opinion, starting from a different angle, and based upon different types of evidence. The seven writers, including Temple, Jowett, Mark Pattison, Baden-Powell, C. W. Godwin and others contributed to "Essays and Reviews" and their conclusion was almost the same as Darwin's. These writers insisted upon a less rigid interpretation of the Bible, and a revision of the Historical Doctrines based upon the literal meaning of biblical and patristic texts.

Thus, the philosophic basis of Christianity became a subject of controversy. So was the case with the historical facts on which Christianity rested. Such disintegration of ideas not only struck a blow at Christianity but also at all religious and ideal interpretation of the Universe. When Christianity and the conception of Divine Justice were proved to be untrue, the age-old moral and spiritual values which men in the past had come to regard as the most precious things in life were reduced into insignificance. Among the new thinkers, some rationalists, some romantics, there was no unanimity. They were uncertain as to what creed should take the place of the old faith. The thoughtful persons were swept by the crisis of faith. In this atmosphere of doubt and disintegration, particularly the sensitive artists were affected to a very great extent. Guided by personal religious
experience some discovered strength in old faith. By dint of sheer imagination some also took refuge in the world of beauty. But there was also the third group who had no consolation for themselves. And for the first time there was the expression of conscious and well reasoned pessimism. Arnold, Fitz Gerald, Thompson and Thomas Hardy belonged to this group. “Hardy was especially open to the melancholy implications of the new outlook”. 1 As a product of rural England Hardy belonged to the world that was passing. It was hallowed for him by every childish sentiment; but unfortunately it was beginning to crumble before his eyes. To his utter regret Hardy noticed that old habits were being discontinued every year. The old stories and songs were being forgotten every moment. The families settled up in certain places for generations were being uprooted every year. In such a state life seemed unbearable; it seemed precarious too.

The disintegration of the old ideas seemed to have affected Thomas Hardy all the more. He was rooted in the old Christian tradition, for he was brought up in a society in which the tradition of mediaeval Christianity had lingered long. Instinctively he respected the Christian ideal of virtue. But he was not however a mystic; he had also no personal sense of spiritual world that would prompt him to support Christianity against any attack. According to him, mere material improvement would never satisfy the demand of man’s soul. Christianity could have once satisfied

the heart; but now that Christianity was lost. There was very little hope for man in this world. Naturally his philosophy began to appear confirmedly gloomy. "The Universe was a huge impersonal mechanism, directed by some automatic principle of life unknown, pursuing its mysterious end, utterly indifferent to the feelings of mortals". 1. Thus, Hardy's pessimistic attitude is not at all difficult to understand, if we remember that he was living in an age of sudden scientific development and a rapid change in the old, accepted values. By the age of twentyseven Hardy had already lost the religious faith of his youth, and he came more and more to believe in the doctrine of impersonal fate or law of life, an attitude he maintained until the day of his death.

While age and environment contribute to the development of one's imaginative sensibility, origin and upbringing contribute to the growth of one's instinctive and emotional faculties. Therefore, to understand Thomas Hardy, apart from his age and environment, we should also understand his origin, his upbringing and the circumstances in which he was born and brought up. David Cecil rightly observes in his evaluation of Thomas Hardy: "First of all, we must acquaint ourselves with his creative range. We have to do this before making a judgement on any novelist". 2.

2. Ibid: P.13
This prolific writer of human dramas was born on June 2, 1840, in a lonely and silent spot between woodland and Heathland, his birthplace being the seven-roomed house that stood easternmost of the few scattered dwellings called Higher Bockhampton, in the parish of Stinsford, Dorset. "The domiciles were quaint, brass-knockered, and green-shuttered then, some with green garden doors and white walls on the posts, and mainly occupied by lifeholders of substantial footing like the Hardys themselves". During the days of Hardy's birth most of the inhabitants of the place were elderly people, and as such the place was also nicknamed "veterans' valley". At the same time, it was also locally called "Cherry Alley", for the lane leading through it was planted with an avenue of cherry trees. In those days the railway communication was yet not available to these country places. These places were linked up with railway only when Hardy was six or seven years old.

Dorchester, "the capital of Dorset, a town of great antiquity on the Frome", was widely known for its excellent ale and was also proud of possessing "the most perfect Roman amphitheatre in the Kingdom". The capital town had paved streets and its houses were usually built of stone. Upon the wide meadows and downslands of Dorchester, vast flocks of sheep used to graze. Among country seats, as mentioned in the road book for London-Shirdport road, the most important one was "Stinsford House, Lady Susan O'Brien". Hardy's father

was reported to have practised violin playing at that very house. The Pitts were the most famous public spirited family of Dorchester.

Nevertheless rural Dorset was a remote place, far remoter in the early years of Thomas Hardy than it is at present. "Feudal and sequestered, centring round church and village inn and squire's manor house, its life—little touched by the changes of the great world—revolved in the same slow rhythm as for hundreds of years past. It was predominantly an agricultural life in which almost all, except the clergy and the schoolmaster, lived by land. The cottages were clay-built and cramped, in which people struggled for existence year after year against the uncharitable wind, the sun and the rain to support a wife and family with a very meagre income of 7 s. a week. It was thus a hard life; yet such a life had its dignity and stability. In the grey old Churches people used to meet, as their ancestors had done for generations. Along with the sublime meditations of Prayer Book and authorised versions, the community also talked on the joys and sorrows in their lives. In that bucolic atmosphere and environment life also provided ample scope for light relief in the form of home-made traditional pleasures, such as, harvest celebrations, Christmas gaieties, birth and marriage celebrations etc. In those celebrations people used to dance to their hearts' content, drink ale and tell many tales. Hardy, who as a

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second fiddle to his father, (who was a famous musician in the neighbourhood) went off to fiddle in those celebrations, and must have heard those tales and was verily impressed.

The year of his birth had an accidental coincidence with certain events which, whether pleasing or displeasing, might have indirectly affected Thomas Hardy. There was the marriage of Queen Victoria with Prince Albert in February. A pot-boy named Edward Oxford made an attempt to shoot the couple as their carriage was climbing up the Constitution Hill in June. It was indeed a new era in Postal business in as much as there was circulation of a Penny Postage Stamp designed by Mulready. War broke out against China. Prince Louis Napoleon was sentenced to perpetual imprisonment for his failure to invade Boulogne. The foundation stone of Nelson Monument was laid at Trafalgar Square. There was the second funeral of Emperor Napoleon at the Invalids, Paris. Fanny Burney who was then eighty-eight died. Browning's Sordello and Dicken's Master Humphrey's Clock were published. Like these there were many other events that might be mentioned. Nevertheless life at Bockhampton went on much as usual.

If not affected by the outside events, the rural Bockhampton had however its own drama. It was the strange simple drama arising out of the narrow poverty struck circumstances in which its inhabitants carried their miserable existence. Love was often lost, and lovers were often parted. A lover having left the village in search of a livelihood, would return only to find its betrothed
wedded to another. Indeed, in such a confined and elemental world, passions would often grow to obsessions. Men were often wronged in the form of injustice and exploitation. They brooded and brooded on their wrongs until these seemed intolerable and ultimately they gave vent to their emotions in crime. In those days the laws were very stern, and the offenders were even awarded capital punishment.

David Cecil rightly observes that Hardy "was fascinated by the idea of heredity". Indeed, there was in him a reticent pride that he was one with a lineage. Indeed the Hardys of Dorset were a quite ancient and interesting race, "formerly of influence". According to the available evidences, all the Hardys of the South-West were of the origin of the Jersey le Hardys who had migrated to Dorset some centuries ago. Hardy even intended to add the "le" to his name and be called "Thomas le Hardy", but that did not ultimately materialize. The Dorset Hardys were in fact the descendants of one Clement Le Hardy who was Lieutenant Governor of the Island of Jersey in 1488. Thomas Hardy was aware that his more recent ancestors had played their parts well and truly in the life of that honourable country world, Wessex.

Indeed, the Hardys had the characteristics of an old family of spent social energies, which for generations dwelt in or near the valley of the river Frome or Froom. Its diverse Dorset section included many memorable figures like Elizabethan Thomas Hardy, the founder of Dorchester Grammar

1. David Cecil : Hardy - The Novelist
   (Lay all Book Depot, Ludhiana-1, 1967) p.19
School; the Thomas Hardy, Captain of the "Victory at Trafalgar"; Thomas Hardy of Wareham, an influential burgess; Thomas Hardy of Chaldon; and others of local note. But the family had considerably declined by the time the subject of our discussion was born; and literally he hailed from a poor family, his parents being just above the status of labouring class. Theirs was a thatched house, and in Buckhampton hamlet Hardy's father had only a field, and some sand-pits useful for his business.

Hardy's father, the elder Hardy, was a stone mason by profession, who in his world "spoke with authority". Though he was successful in his own trade, he had not the soul or the ambition of a tradesman. He was tolerant, humorous, probably an indolent man of integrity and general friendliness. The mother of Thomas Hardy was more determined, critical and farseeing; she was also capable of sharp comments, and her sense of realities was essentially human. Had the elder Hardy been more worldly and materialistic, he would have obeyed his wife's judgement and transferred his business and builder's yards and four children into some more conspicuous and profitable place than Stinsford. But he never did so, and Mrs. Hardy could understand it. One thing the elder Hardy often did was going up on the heath on a hot weather, and then "lying on a bank of thyme or camomile with the grasshoppers leaping over him".

interest was violin-playing, while his wife's was reading. Thomas Hardy inherited his love of music and the countryside from his father, while the love of reading from his mother.

Nothing much is known about the infancy of Thomas Hardy. The only authentic version in this regard is perhaps 'The life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1928' by his second wife Florence Emily Hardy. It shows that Hardy had not the physique of his father, and was very weak in constitution. Perhaps he would have never seen this world, but for the commonsense of the experienced woman who attended his mother as a monthly nurse, while she was in the family way. He was declared to be still-born by the attending surgeon and was thrown aside as dead until rescued by the attending nurse who exclaimed to the Surgeon, "Dead! Stop a minute: he is alive enough sure!" 1.

Another most interesting incident of his infancy was the curious fact that while Thomas Hardy as an infant was asleep in his cradle, his mother returning from out of doors one hot afternoon found a large snake curled up upon his breast, comfortably asleep like himself. Perhaps the snake had crept into the house from the nearby heath which was the abode of many such reptiles.

Although he was generally healthy, yet he was fragile and precocious in the sense that he was able to read even before he could walk and to tune a violin even in his early

childhood. His father was reported to have given him a toy-accordian and taught him to fiddle. Being extra-ordinarily sensitive to music, the child was of ecstatic temperament. Among the endless jigs, hornpipes, reels, waltzes and country dances which his father often played in his early married years and to which the child often danced, there were at least three or four that invariably moved him to tears, though he tried to hide them with efforts. "This peculiarity in himself troubled the mind of 'Tommy' as he was called, and set him wondering at a phenomenon to which he ventured not to confess. He used to say in later life that, like Calantha in Ford's *Broken Heart*, he danced on at these times to conceal his weeping. He was not over four years of age at this date". 1.

In those days the staircase at Bockhampton was coloured ventian red and was so situated that the rays of the setting sun added to its colour a great intensity for about fifteen minutes or so. Tommy watching this chromatic effect of which he was very much fond, used to utter to himself with great fervency from Dr. Watt's Hymns that another day was now gone. It was perhaps not due to any religious sense but from a sense that the scene itself was most suitable to such a recital. Another note-worthy feature of his character during this time or thereabout was his lack of social ambition which followed him all through his life even when he was in health and happiness. Giving his back to the sun

and covering his face with his straw hat, he often began to think how useless he was. Upon the reflection of his experiences of the world he had gathered so far, he had not the desire to grow up at all. While other boys talked off becoming men, Hardy for one did not want to be a man at all. Nor did he desire to possess anything at all. On the contrary he wanted to remain as he was, in the same spot, and to know no more men than about half a dozen he already knew. This lack of social ambition was perhaps the characteristic of the Bockhampton Hardys.

It was no wonder that the boy of such a temperament should have a genuine interest in the Church services. Even on wet Sunday mornings he wrapped himself in a table cloth, stood on a chair and used to read the morning prayer. Everybody opined that Tommy would be a parson, being good for no other practical pursuits. Such an opinion caused his mother many a misgiving.

Since his very birth Hardy was so frail and delicate in health that up to his fifth or sixth year, his parents were sceptical about his survival. Who then knew that he would not only survive but survive to be the immortal author of the immortal dramas of country life and passions? But to their great amusement he survived, and gradually when the need arose for the education of the boy Tom, it was his mother who dealt with it. At his eighth year he was sent to the village School to learn the rudiments before being sent further afield. Here, in his Bockhampton School, he was set
to work at Walkingame's Arithmetic and at Geography, in both of which he excelled. But his chief ability led towards classical reading. For, his mother gave him Dryden's Virgil, Johnson's Rasselas and Paul and Virginia. Hardy also discovered a periodical—A History of the Wars—dealing with the wars with Napoleon. Its contributor was his own grandfather, who also volunteered himself to the Napoleonic wars. "The torn pages of these contemporary numbers with their melodramatic prints of serried ranks, crossed bayonets, huge knapsacks, and dead bodies, were the first to set him on the train of ideas that led to The Trumpet Major and The Dynasts."

At his eighth or ninth year, Hardy had his first experience of travel when he accompanied his mother on a visit to her sister at Hertfordshire. Because their stay prolonged for three to four weeks, Tommy was sent to a private school in which he was mercilessly tyrannised by the bigger boys whom he could beat in Arithmetic and Geography. During their return journey the mother and the son had to put up for the night in the Cross Keys, St. John Street, Clerkenwell. It was the famous inn at which Shelley and Mary Godwin had been accustomed to meet at week ends. The mother and the son were perhaps sheltered in the same room as had, perhaps, sheltered the most marvellous lyrist of English Literature.

After the lapse of a year or so when Thomas Hardy was found to be strong enough to walk further than to the village School, he was admitted into Dorchester Day School whose

Headmaster, as viewed by his mother, was an exceptionally able man and a good teacher of Latin. The lady of the manor who erected the Bockhampton School was very much shocked at the removal of Tommy to the Dorchester Day School. He was then only nine or ten, while she was then about forty. Nevertheless, his feeling for her was almost that of a lover. Naturally, the boy must have secretly mourned his separation from the lady of his childhood passion, to whom he had been very much attached. So, one day, on the prospect of a meeting with her, Tom attended a harvest supper in the company of a young woman, a small farmer's daughter. After the supper, there was singing and dancing. Some non-commissioned officers were also invited to the dancing as partners for the country dancing girls. This event, perhaps, got him extensively acquainted with soldiers of the old uniforms and long service. It must have helped him much when he came to write The Trumpet Major and The Dynasts. Herein Hardy not only met his intimate old friend, but also danced to his heart's content. Only at three in the next morning he returned home just to be reprimanded by his parents. "It may be worthy of note that this harvest home was among the last at which the old traditional ballads were sung, the railway having been extended to Dorchester just then, and the orally transmitted ditties of centuries being slain at a stroke by the London comic songs that were introduced". 1.

The other childhood memories of Thomas Hardy were those of seeing men in stocks, corn-law agitations, mail-coaches, road wagons, tinder boxes, candle snuffing etc. He was, as a small boy, taken by his father to witness the burning of the effigy of the Pope and the Cardinal Wiseman in the old Roman Amphitheatre at Dorchester. The sight was quite lurid to young Hardy, and he never forgot it. Two or three years later, his another memory was connected with the Corn-Law Agitation. His father made for him a small wooden sword; he often dipped it into the blood of a pig just killed and walked about the garden with a slogan "Free trade or blood".

At the age of twelve Thomas Hardy was put through the "venerable Etonian Introduction to the Latin Tongue". 1. This laid the foundations of such grammatical mastery of Hardy as even the brilliant classical men could not always display. But despite his love of classics and his general wishfulness, Hardy at least during his young manhood, was very much found of adventures with his fiddles. It was however strange that his mother although a "progressive" woman and was ambitious on his account, did not object to these musical performances. It was perhaps from a feeling that they would help to teach him what life meant. So little Thomas played sometimes at village weddings.

Among his school fellows young Hardy was quite popular. At times his too much popularity even proved burdensome to him.

 Hardy loved being alone; he was by nature so inclined; but to his utter discomfort some of the school fellows often volunteered to accompany him on his way home to Bockhampton. This was really irksome to him. Another of his peculiarities was that, he always avoided being touched by his playmates. This peculiarity remained with him even in his old age.

When Hardy was a boy of fourteen he fell in love with a pretty girl near the South Walk, Dorchester. It was a sort of green sickness. She was riding, while Hardy was coming home from his school. For some unaccountable reasons she smiled at him. Next day Hardy saw her in the company of an old gentleman, perhaps her father. Then for several days she was not found, though the boy wandered about miserably for her. After some days she was found once again. This time she was riding with a young man. Since then she was not to be found any more. Hardy's attachment was too strong to be easily shaken off.

About this time Hardy formed a trio to teach in the Sunday School of the Parish, the other two being the Vicar's sons. Hardy had a dairy maid as her pupil. She was four years older than himself. She appeared in Tess of the d'Urbervilles as Marian, a direct portrait drawn from real life.

Again young Hardy lost his heart for a few days to a young girl. She came from Windsor, just after he had finished his reading Ainsworth's "Windsor Castle". But Hardy was disappointed to find that she had no interest either in Herne the Hunter or Anne Bolyen. Another young girl, a gamekeeper's daughter with beautiful bay-red hairs became an object of his
boyish admiration. But she despised him, for she was senior to him by two to three years and married early.

Another deep attachment of his was for Lousia, a farmer's daughter. Hardy felt that his attachment to her was being reciprocated. So one evening on his way back home from Dorchester, when he met her, he longed to speak. But bashfulness overcame him. He could only utter "Good Evening", while poor Lousia uttered nothing. Thereafter Hardy even went to Weymouth Boarding School in search of Lousia. But all his efforts resulted in no more than a shy smile from her. That "Good Evening" was the only word passed between the two. The young and sensitive Tom must have been deeply touched by these failures in his childhood attachments; and this is perhaps one of the clues to his predisposition to tragic themes.

At the age of sixteen Hardy had just begun to be immensely interested in French and Latin Classics. Then arose the question of Tom's getting into the world. His father negotiated with Mr. John Hicks. He was an architect and Church Restorer originally in practice in Bristol, and now in Dorchester. Young Hardy became Hicks's pupil, leaving the old British School at Dorchester and the strict discipline of Isaac Last. The professional task in Hicks's office did not prevent other studies. Hicks was an educated, jovial and kindly-natured man, who allowed his boys some leisure for other than architectural studies. Soon Hardy got through several books of the Iliad, the Aeneid, some Horace and Ovid; and in this way he had the chance of getting into the Greek
as well as Latin Classics. In those days and in that particular office a notion of theology was also inevitably involved with the rest. At that time Mr. Barnes, the Dorset poet and philologist kept his school next door. Hardy often used to run to him for his decision on some knotty points of dispute between him and his fellow pupil. Hardy said of Mr. Barnes:

"A more notable instance of self-help has seldom been recorded". 1

Bastow, the other fellow in Hick's office, also impressed young Hardy so much that his baptism made young Hardy feel the need of baptism again as an adult. The two were the companions not only in architectural but also in literary and theological studies. During his pupillage at Hicks's, the young Hardy also came in touch with the Baptist Minister Perkins and his argumentative family, including his two sons, friends of Bastow. They often debated on highly controversial matters of Classics and theology; and often Hardy had to fight alone against three. He was undoubtedly junior to his companions; yet he seemed to possess a breadth of mind which they had not. "It was through these Scotch people that Thomas Hardy first became impressed with the necessity for 'Plain living and high thinking', which stood him in such a good stead in later years. Among the few portraits of actual persons in Hardy's novels, that of the Baptist Minister in A Laodicean is one—being a recognisable drawing of Perkins the father as he appeared to Hardy at this time,

though the incidents are invented". 1.

During this time young Hardy had two more literary friends in Dorchester, Hooper Talbot and Horace Moule of Queen's College, Cambridge. Hardy often walked in the fields with these young men and was biased still further in the direction of Classics. From them Hardy also learnt much about contemporary problems and thoughts. It was Horace Moule who advised Hardy to devote more time to architecture than to Classics, though he secretly wished that he should have been advised otherwise.

Later on when Hardy entered on a literary career, his architectural training was certainly of great help to him. It supplied him with the architectonic quality of the plots of his novels - the symmetry and the pattern. What he learnt as an architect was later on applied to his literary creations.

These two young people with whom Hardy mixed, such as, Hooper Talbot and Horace Moule and over and above Mr. Hicks himself, were all contributors to Hardy's education. Although unusual for a young man, yet in Hicks's office his twenty-four hours of a day marked off a triple existence - the professional life, the scholar's life and the rustic life. It was due to this accident that he worked in a country town already advanced by Rlys., Telegraphs and Daily London Papers but stayed in a world of shepherds and ploughmen in a hamlet three miles off, where modern improvements were looked upon as wonders, Hardy could see the doings in of the rural and the urban areas and

of the ancient and the modern simultaneously.

Having completed the apprenticeship under Hicks, Hardy left alone for London at the age of twentytwo to pursue the art and science of architecture on more advanced lines. On the afternoon of his arrival in London, he was on the lookout for lodgings. He got in touch with a fellow, some ten years older than himself, whose cousin was known to him. This acquaintance was sceptical about Hardy and advised him to be more practical. Hardy was disheartened and wished he should have thought less of the classics and more of iron girders. Now perhaps he could realise, at least to some extent, the wisdom behind Houle's suggestion to him. However, through the patronage of one Mr. Norton, a friend of Hicks, Hardy got an anchorage, which he never forgot. Mr. Norton strongly recommended Hardy to Arthur Bloomfield who accepted the recommendations. Accordingly, Hardy got employed under Mr. Bloomfield at St. Martin's Place. Within a couple of months the drawing office was shifted to 8, Adelphi Terrace. Its ground floor was then under the occupation of the Reform League, while Hardy had his office overhead. The Reform League, as Hardy said, was a body of extreme reformers who even solicited him to sit in Parliament as the representative of more advanced democratic or republican opinions.

In course of his stay in London Hardy became familiar with certain foreign singers like Mario, Tietjens, Nilsson, Patti, Giuglini, Parapa and others of the time. At that time an English Opera Company was also in existence. Hardy patronised it by often visiting operas produced by Balfe,
wallace and others. He was also very much shocked to hear
the gradual decadence of the once fine voice of William
Harrison. It was in defiance of fate that Harrison used to
sing night after night his favourite songs which ultimately
moved the sensitive listeners to tears. Harrison struggled on,
hoping against hope, and it caused him to be remembered
longer than his greatest success.

At Bloomsfield's Hardy again revived his literary
pursuits which he was forced to abandon in 1861. He, however,
developed a growing tendency towards poetry. It was suggested
to him that he might combine literature with architecture by
becoming an art critic. But he abandoned the idea and began
to write verses for the magazines. His verses were however
rejected by the editors. At that time he delivered short
lectures on poets and poetry to his fellow pupils at
Bloomsfield's. The only thing he was able to get published at
that time was: How I Built myself a House. It was primarily
written to amuse the pupils of Bloomsfield. This little success
perhaps had turned his mind in the direction of prose. He was
supposed to be happy at Bloomsfield's; but in reality he was
not. For, his self-confession in his diary at his twenty-fifth
birthday bears testimony to it: "June 2. My 25th birthday not
very cheerful. Feel as if I have lived a long time and done
very little". L. Hardy's mental remorse was perhaps more due to
his incompatibility with his architectural occupation. Further,

1. Florence Emily Hardy: The Life of Thomas Hardy
(1840-1928)
in that alien atmosphere of the city of London, Hardy must have felt like a fish out of water.

By the summer of 1867 Hardy's health began to breakdown. He thought in terms of returning back to his native soil, by shrinking himself from the business of social advancement in London. To him, life was after all an emotion rather a science of climbing. Hardy returned to his native soil in July 1867 and again got employed as an assistant to his former employer, Mr. Dicks. Within a few weeks of his return and with the resumption of his old habit of walking from Bockhampton to Dorchester and vice-versa, Hardy regained his former health and vigour.

Thus, Hardy had the experience of the rural and the urban, of the country and the city, and of the primitive and the modern. But it was indeed his country world that imparted him his greatest education. "There stayed his canon of life, of beauty, of merit; thence without effort he drew from fountains that had run clear for his forefathers, and still flowed in sun and shade with eternal attraction, variousness and blessings". 1. It was a rural life, sad, cruel and callous particularly for land labourers. It's a life in the raw, dependent and ignorant, exposed to the oppressions of the unjust social system and the caprice of the weather. Wages were then only a few shillings a week. The poor were made to feel ashamed at being poor, and were treated with condescension or pity, which was hard to put up with. Poverty led to crime;

people were still hanged and hanged in public. When Thomas Hardy was in his teens he saw a woman hanged in Dorchester. After some two years or so another man was hanged in Dorchester prison. Hardy climbed on to the heath at the back of the house and focussed his father's telescope on the prison and the gallows. When he had just placed the telescope to his eyes, the white figured victim dropped downwards, and the town clock struck eight. "The whole thing had been so sudden that the glass nearly fell from Hardy's hands. He seemed alone on the heath with the hanged man, and crept homeward wishing he had not been so curious". 1. Hardy as a sensitive boy, responded precociously to his experiences. The rural life in which he was born and bred deeply stamped his imagination with its moving spirit. When he reached the creative stage of development he conceived his picture of life in these terms. In short, Hardy's interest was always rural England. Timothy O'Sullivan observes that every feature of his rural surroundings spoke to Hardy throughout his life. He was reported to have told Clive Holland in his seventies that "ideas frequently presented themselves in his mind in the first instance more as mental pictures than as subjects for writing down". 1. In visual terms Hardy's surroundings were hardly richer or more varied. To Hardy, his surroundings consisting of downland, forest, meadowland, and heath ornamented by earthworks, churches and manor-houses, were but the marks of man's slow

progress against nature. "Hardy believed in the oneness in essence of nature and man". 1.

With a tender heart usually responsive to the spectacle of human suffering Hardy could perceive the tragedy implicit in the life of Wessex labourers, with its poverty and passion. Being too much sensitive and tender he could not even stand the boughs being lopped off the trees. He was struck with a chill of appalling horror when he saw a dead bird for the first time. When he was merely fifteen years old, he perceived that a shadow had already fallen across his vision of life. "He fancied, he says, 'that a figure stood in his van, with an arm uplifted to knock him back from any pleasant prospect he indulged in as probable'. and not only him. It was the enemy of mankind in general". 2.

The material changes that took place during the Victorian age, such as, the revolution in commercial enterprises, the evils of Industrial Revolution, the appalling social conditions of the new cities, the squalid slums, the soaring prices, the serious unemployment problems, the exploitation of cheap labour, the exploitation of children in mines and factories, the desertion of villages, the higher criticism of the Bible and above all the Darwinianism, did not much affect most of the prominent Victorian writers.

They must have noticed these changes, but they left them unheeded to. Hardy, however, could not leave them as such either like his predecessors or like his contemporaries. It was for him to pull aside the Victorian veils and shutters and to come up with an open revolt against the smug complacency and the convention of the age he belonged to. Although he was a Victorian by birth, yet going much ahead of his age, Hardy felt that these material changes were likely to bring far reaching changes in the pattern of human life and thinking. Unlike his predecessors or his contemporaries he became pessimistic in his thinking which, in the context of these material changes, constitutes the basis of modernism in Hardy.