THOMAS HARDY

THE WELL-BELOVED

EXTENDED ANNOTATED EDITION

The Well-Beloved

A Sketch Of A Temperament

Thomas Hardy

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Thomas Hardy – A Biographical Primer

English novelist, was born in Dorsetshire on the 2nd of June 1840. His family was one of the branches of the Dorset Hardys, formerly of influence in and near the valley of the Frome, claiming descent of John Le Hardy of Jersey (son of Clement Le Hardy, lieutenant-governor of that island in 1488), who settled in the west of England. His maternal ancestors were the Swetman, Childs or Child, and kindred families, who before and after 1635 were small landed proprietors in Melbury Osmond, Dorset, and adjoining parishes. He was educated at local schools, 1848–1854, and afterwards privately, and in 1856 was articled to Mr. John Hicks, an ecclesiastical architect of Dorchester. In 1859 he began writing verse and essays, but in 1861 was compelled to apply himself more strictly to architecture, sketching and measuring many old Dorset churches with a view to their restoration. In 1862 he went to London (which he had first visited at the age of nine) and became assistant to the late Sir Arthur Blomfield, R.A. In 1863 he won the medal of the Royal Institute of British Architects for an essay on Coloured Brick and Terra-cotta Architecture, and in the same year won the prize of the Architectural Association for design. In March 1965 his first short story was published in Chamber’s Journal, and during the next two or three years he wrote a great deal of verse, being somewhat uncertain whether to take to architecture or to literature as a profession. In 1867 he left London for Weymouth, and during that and the following year wrote a “purpose” story, which in 1869 was accepted by Messrs Chapman and Hall. The manuscript had been read by Mr. George Meredith, who asked the writer to call on him, and advised him not to print it, but to try another, with more plot. The manuscript was withdrawn and re-written, but never published. In 1870 Mr. Hardy took Mr. Meredith’s advice too literally, and constructed a novel that was all plot, which was published under the title Desperate

Remedies. In 1872 appeared Under the Greenwood Tree, “a rural painting of the Dutch school,” in which Mr. Hardy had already “found himself,” and which he has never surpassed in happy and delicate perfection of art. A Pair of Blue Eyes, in which tragedy and irony come into his work together, was published in 1873. In 1874 Mr. Hardy married Emma Lavinia, daughter of the late T. Attersoll Gifford of Plymouth. His first popular success was made by Far from the Madding Crowd (1874), which, on its appearance anonymously in the Cornhill Magazine, was attributed by many to George Eliot. Then came The Hand of Ethelberta (1876), described, not inaptly, as “a comedy in chapters”; The Return of the Native (1878), the most sombre and, in some ways, the most powerful and characteristic of Mr. Hardy’s novels; The Trumpet-Major (1880); A Laodicean (1881); Two on a Tower (1882), a long excursion in constructive irony; The Mayor of Casterbridge (1886); The Woodlanders (1887); Wessex Tales (1888); A Group of Noble Dames (1891); Tess of the D’ Urbervilles (1891), Mr. Hardy’s most famous novel; Life’s Little Ironies (1894); Jude the Obscure (1895), his most thoughtful and least popular book; The Well-Beloved, a reprint, with some revision, of a story originally published in the Illustrated London News in 1892 (1897); Wessex Poems, written during the previous thirty years, with illustrations by the author; and The Dynasts (2 parts, 1904–1906). In 1909 appeared Time’s Laughing-stocks and other Verses. In all his works Mr. Hardy is concerned with one thing, seen under two aspects; not civilizations, nor manners, but the principle of life itself, invisibly realized in humanity as sex, seen visibly in the world as what we call nature. He is a fatalist, perhaps rather a determinist, and he studies the workings of fate or law (ruling through inexorable moods or humours), in the chief vivifying and disturbing influence in life, women. His view of women is more French than English; it is subtle, a little cruel, not as tolerant as it

seems, thoroughly a man’s point of view, and not, as with Mr. Meredith, man’s and woman’s at once. He sees all that is irresponsible for good and evil in a woman’s character, all that is untrustworthy in her brain and will, all that is alluring in her variability. He is her apologist, but always with a reserve of private judgment. No one has created more attractive women of a certain class, women whom a man would have been more likely to love or regret loving. In his earlier books he is somewhat careful over the reputation of his heroines; gradually, he allows them more liberty, with a franker treatment of instinct and its consequence. Jude the Obscure is perhaps the most unbiased consideration in English fiction of the more complicated question of sex. There is almost no passion in his work, neither the author nor his characters ever seeming to pass beyond the state of curiosity, the most intellectually interesting of limitations, under the influence of any emotion. In his feeling for nature, curiosity sometimes seems to broaden into a more intimate communion. The heath, the village with its peasants, the change of every hour among the fields and on the roads of that English countryside which he made his own—the Dorsetshire and Wiltshire “Wessex”—mean more to him, in a sense, than even the spectacle of man and woman in their blind and painful and absorbing struggle for existence. His knowledge of woman confirms him in a suspension of judgment; his knowledge of nature brings him nearer to the unchanging and consoling element in the world. All the entertainment which he gets out of life comes to him from his contemplation of the peasant, as himself a rooted part of the earth, translating the dumbness of the fields into humour. His peasants have been compared with Shakespeare’s; he has the Shakesperean sense of their placid vegetation by the side of hurrying animal life, to which they act the part of chorus, with an unconscious wisdom in their close, narrow and undistracted view of

things. The order of merit was conferred upon Mr. Hardy in July 1910.

The Well-Beloved

PREFACE

The peninsula carved by Time out of a single stone, whereon most of the following scenes are laid, has been for centuries immemorial the home of a curious and well-nigh distinct people, cherishing strange beliefs and singular customs, now for the most part obsolescent. Fancies, like certain soft-wooded plants which cannot bear the silent inland frosts, but thrive by the sea in the roughest of weather, seem to grow up naturally here, in particular amongst those natives who have no active concern in the labours of the 'Isle.' Hence it is a spot apt to generate a type of personage like the character imperfectly sketched in these pages—a native of natives—whom some may choose to call a fantast (if they honour him with their consideration so far), but whom others may see only as one that gave objective continuity and a name to a delicate dream which in a vaguer form is more or less common to all men, and is by no means new to Platonic philosophers.

To those who know the rocky coign of England here depicted—overlooking the great Channel Highway with all its suggestiveness, and standing out so far into mid-sea that touches of the Gulf Stream soften the air till February—it is matter of surprise that the place has not been more frequently chosen as the retreat of artists and poets in

search of inspiration—for at least a month or two in the year, the tempestuous rather than the fine seasons by preference. To be sure, one nook therein is the retreat, at their country's expense, of other geniuses from a distance; but their presence is hardly discoverable. Yet perhaps it is as well that the artistic visitors do not come, or no more would be heard of little freehold houses being bought and sold there for a couple of hundred pounds—built of solid stone, and dating from the sixteenth century and earlier, with mullions, copings, and corbels complete. These transactions, by the way, are carried out and covenanted, or were till lately, in the parish church, in the face of the congregation, such being the ancient custom of the Isle.

As for the story itself, it may be worth while to remark that, differing from all or most others of the series in that the interest aimed at is of an ideal or subjective nature, and frankly imaginative, verisimilitude in the sequence of events has been subordinated to the said aim.

The first publication of this tale in an independent form was in 1897; but it had appeared in the periodical press in 1892, under the title of 'The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved.' A few chapters of that experimental issue were rewritten for the present and final form of the narrative.

T. H. August 1912.

PART FIRST — A YOUNG MAN OF TWENTY.

—'Now, if Time knows
That Her, whose radiant brows
Weave them a garland of my vows;

Her that dares be
What these lines wish to see:
I seek no further, it is She.'

—R. CRASHAW.

1. I. A SUPPOSITITIOUS PRESENTMENT OF HER

A person who differed from the local wayfarers was climbing the steep road which leads through the sea-skirted townlet definable as the Street of Wells, and forms a pass into that Gibraltar of Wessex, the singular peninsula once an island, and still called such, that stretches out like the head of a bird into the English Channel. It is connected with the mainland by a long thin neck of pebbles 'cast up by rages of the se,' and unparalleled in its kind in Europe.

The pedestrian was what he looked like—a young man from London and the cities of the Continent. Nobody could see at present that his urbanism sat upon him only as a garment. He was just recollecting with something of self-reproach that a whole three years and eight months had flown since he paid his last visit to his father at this lonely rock of his birthplace, the intervening time having been spent amid many contrasting societies, peoples, manners, and scenes.

What had seemed usual in the isle when he lived there always looked quaint and odd after his later impressions. More than ever the spot seemed what it was said once to

have been, the ancient Vindilia Island, and the Home of the Slingers. The towering rock, the houses above houses, one man's doorstep rising behind his neighbour's chimney, the gardens hung up by one edge to the sky, the vegetables growing on apparently almost vertical planes, the unity of the whole island as a solid and single block of limestone four miles long, were no longer familiar and commonplace ideas. All now stood dazzlingly unique and white against the tinted sea, and the sun flashed on infinitely stratified walls of oolite,

> The melancholy ruins
> Of cancelled cycles,...

with a distinctiveness that called the eyes to it as strongly as any spectacle he had beheld afar.

After a laborious clamber he reached the top, and walked along the plateau towards the eastern village. The time being about two o'clock, in the middle of the summer season, the road was glaring and dusty, and drawing near to his father's house he sat down in the sun.

He stretched out his hand upon the rock beside him. It felt warm. That was the island's personal temperature when in its afternoon sleep as now. He listened, and heard sounds: whirr-whirr, saw-saw-saw. Those were the island's snores—the noises of the quarrymen and stone-sawyers.

Opposite to the spot on which he sat was a roomy cottage or homestead. Like the island it was all of stone, not only in walls but in window-frames, roof, chimneys, fence, stile, pigsty and stable, almost door.

He remembered who had used to live there—and probably lived there now—the Caro family; the 'roan-mare' Caros, as

they were called to distinguish them from other branches of the same pedigree, there being but half-a-dozen Christian and surnames in the whole island. He crossed the road and looked in at the open doorway. Yes, there they were still.

Mrs. Caro, who had seen him from the window, met him in the entry, and an old-fashioned greeting took place between them. A moment after a door leading from the back rooms was thrown open, and a young girl about seventeen or eighteen came bounding in.

'Why, 'TIS dear Joce!' she burst out joyfully. And running up to the young man, she kissed him.

The demonstration was sweet enough from the owner of such an affectionate pair of bright hazel eyes and brown tresses of hair. But it was so sudden, so unexpected by a man fresh from towns, that he winced for a moment quite involuntarily; and there was some constraint in the manner in which he returned her kiss, and said, 'My pretty little Avice, how do you do after so long?'

For a few seconds her impulsive innocence hardly noticed his start of surprise; but Mrs. Caro, the girl's mother, had observed it instantly. With a pained flush she turned to her daughter.

'Avice—my dear Avice! Why—what are you doing? Don't you know that you've grown up to be a woman since Jocelyn—Mr. Pierston—was last down here? Of course you mustn't do now as you used to do three or four years ago!'

The awkwardness which had arisen was hardly removed by Pierston's assurance that he quite expected her to keep up the practice of her childhood, followed by several minutes

of conversation on general subjects. He was vexed from his soul that his unaware movement should so have betrayed him. At his leaving he repeated that if Avice regarded him otherwise than as she used to do he would never forgive her; but though they parted good friends her regret at the incident was visible in her face. Jocelyn passed out into the road and onward to his father's house hard by. The mother and daughter were left alone.

'I was quite amazed at 'ee, my child!' exclaimed the elder. 'A young man from London and foreign cities, used now to the strictest company manners, and ladies who almost think it vulgar to smile broad! How could ye do it, Avice?'

'I—I didn't think about how I was altered!' said the conscience-stricken girl. 'I used to kiss him, and he used to kiss me before he went away.'

'But that was years ago, my dear!'

'O yes, and for the moment I forgot! He seemed just the same to me as he used to be.'

'Well, it can't be helped now. You must be careful in the future. He's got lots of young women, I'll warrant, and has few thoughts left for you. He's what they call a sculptor, and he means to be a great genius in that line some day, they do say.'

'Well, I've done it; and it can't be mended!' moaned the girl.

Meanwhile Jocelyn Pierston, the sculptor of budding fame, had gone onward to the house of his father, an inartistic man of trade and commerce merely, from whom, nevertheless, Jocelyn condescended to accept a yearly allowance pending the famous days to come. But the elder,

having received no warning of his son's intended visit, was not at home to receive him. Jocelyn looked round the familiar premises, glanced across the Common at the great yards within which eternal saws were going to and fro upon eternal blocks of stone—the very same saws and the very same blocks that he had seen there when last in the island, so it seemed to him—and then passed through the dwelling into the back garden.

Like all the gardens in the isle it was surrounded by a wall of dry-jointed spawls, and at its further extremity it ran out into a corner, which adjoined the garden of the Caros. He had no sooner reached this spot than he became aware of a murmuring and sobbing on the other side of the wall. The voice he recognized in a moment as Avice's, and she seemed to be confiding her trouble to some young friend of her own sex.

'Oh, what shall I DO! what SHALL I do!' she was saying bitterly. 'So bold as it was—so shameless! How could I think of such a thing! He will never forgive me—never, never like me again! He'll think me a forward hussy, and yet—and yet I quite forgot how much I had grown. But that he'll never believe!' The accents were those of one who had for the first time become conscious of her womanhood, as an unwonted possession which shamed and frightened her.

'Did he seem angry at it?' inquired the friend.

'O no—not angry! Worse. Cold and haughty. O, he's such a fashionable person now—not at all an island man. But there's no use in talking of it. I wish I was dead!'

Pierston retreated as quickly as he could. He grieved at the incident which had brought such pain to this innocent soul; and yet it was beginning to be a source of vague pleasure

to him. He returned to the house, and when his father had come back and welcomed him, and they had shared a meal together, Jocelyn again went out, full of an earnest desire to soothe his young neighbour's sorrow in a way she little expected; though, to tell the truth, his affection for her was rather that of a friend than of a lover, and he felt by no means sure that the migratory, elusive idealization he called his Love who, ever since his boyhood, had flitted from human shell to human shell an indefinite number of times, was going to take up her abode in the body of Avice Caro.

1. II. THE INCARNATION IS ASSUMED TO BE TRUE

It was difficult to meet her again, even though on this lump of rock the difficulty lay as a rule rather in avoidance than in meeting. But Avice had been transformed into a very different kind of young woman by the self-consciousness engendered of her impulsive greeting, and, notwithstanding their near neighbourhood, he could not encounter her, try as he would. No sooner did he appear an inch beyond his father's door than she was to earth like a fox; she bolted upstairs to her room.

Anxious to soothe her after his unintentional slight he could not stand these evasions long. The manners of the isle were primitive and straightforward, even among the well-to-do, and noting her disappearance one day he followed her into the house and onward to the foot of the stairs.

'Avice!' he called.

'Yes, Mr. Pierston.'

'Why do you run upstairs like that?'

'Oh—only because I wanted to come up for something.'

'Well, if you've got it, can't you come down again?'

'No, I can't very well.'

'Come, DEAR Avice. That's what you are, you know.'

There was no response.

'Well, if you won't, you won't!' he continued. 'I don't want to bother you.' And Pierston went away.

He was stopping to look at the old-fashioned flowers under the garden walls when he heard a voice behind him.

'Mr. Pierston—I wasn't angry with you. When you were gone I thought—you might mistake me, and I felt I could do no less than come and assure you of my friendship still.'

Turning he saw the blushing Avice immediately behind him.

'You are a good, dear girl!' said he, and, seizing her hand, set upon her cheek the kind of kiss that should have been the response to hers on the day of his coming.

'Darling Avice, forgive me for the slight that day! Say you do. Come, now! And then I'll say to you what I have never said to any other woman, living or dead: "Will you have me as your husband?"'

'Ah!—mother says I am only one of many!'

'You are not, dear. You knew me when I was young, and others didn't.'

Somehow or other her objections were got over, and though she did not give an immediate assent, she agreed to meet him later in the afternoon, when she walked with him to the southern point of the island called the Beal, or, by strangers, the Bill, pausing over the treacherous cavern known as Cave Hole, into which the sea roared and splashed now as it had done when they visited it together as children. To steady herself while looking in he offered her his arm, and she took it, for the first time as a woman, for the hundredth time as his companion.

They rambled on to the lighthouse, where they would have lingered longer if Avice had not suddenly remembered an engagement to recite poetry from a platform that very evening at the Street of Wells, the village commanding the entrance to the island—the village that has now advanced to be a town.

'Recite!' said he. 'Who'd have thought anybody or anything could recite down here except the reciter we hear away there—the never speechless sea.'

'O but we are quite intellectual now. In the winter particularly. But, Jocelyn—don't come to the recitation, will you? It would spoil my performance if you were there, and I want to be as good as the rest.'

'I won't if you really wish me not to. But I shall meet you at the door and bring you home.'

'Yes!' she said, looking up into his face. Avice was perfectly happy now; she could never have believed on that mortifying day of his coming that she would be so happy

with him. When they reached the east side of the isle they parted, that she might be soon enough to take her place on the platform. Pierston went home, and after dark, when it was about the hour for accompanying her back, he went along the middle road northward to the Street of Wells.

He was full of misgiving. He had known Avice Caro so well of old that his feeling for her now was rather comradeship than love; and what he had said to her in a moment of impulse that morning rather appalled him in its consequences. Not that any of the more sophisticated and accomplished women who had attracted him successively would be likely to rise inconveniently between them. For he had quite disabused his mind of the assumption that the idol of his fancy was an integral part of the personality in which it had sojourned for a long or a short while.

* * *

To his Well-Beloved he had always been faithful; but she had had many embodiments. Each individuality known as Lucy, Jane, Flora, Evangeline, or what-not, had been merely a transient condition of her. He did not recognize this as an excuse or as a defence, but as a fact simply. Essentially she was perhaps of no tangible substance; a spirit, a dream, a frenzy, a conception, an aroma, an epitomized sex, a light of the eye, a parting of the lips. God only knew what she really was; Pierston did not. She was indescribable.

Never much considering that she was a subjective phenomenon vivified by the weird influences of his descent and birthplace, the discovery of her ghostliness, of her independence of physical laws and failings, had occasionally given him a sense of fear. He never knew where she next would be, whither she would lead him, having herself instant access to all ranks and classes, to

every abode of men. Sometimes at night he dreamt that she was 'the wile-weaving Daughter of high Zeus' in person, bent on tormenting him for his sins against her beauty in his art—the implacable Aphrodite herself indeed. He knew that he loved the masquerading creature wherever he found her, whether with blue eyes, black eyes, or brown; whether presenting herself as tall, fragile, or plump. She was never in two places at once; but hitherto she had never been in one place long.

By making this clear to his mind some time before to-day, he had escaped a good deal of ugly self-reproach. It was simply that she who always attracted him, and led him whither she would as by a silken thread, had not remained the occupant of the same fleshly tabernacle in her career so far. Whether she would ultimately settle down to one he could not say.

Had he felt that she was becoming manifest in Avice, he would have tried to believe that this was the terminal spot of her migrations, and have been content to abide by his words. But did he see the Well-Beloved in Avice at all? The question was somewhat disturbing.

He had reached the brow of the hill, and descended towards the village, where in the long straight Roman street he soon found the lighted hall. The performance was not yet over; and by going round to the side of the building and standing on a mound he could see the interior as far down as the platform level. Avice's turn, or second turn, came on almost immediately. Her pretty embarrassment on facing the audience rather won him away from his doubts. She was, in truth, what is called a 'nice' girl; attractive, certainly, but above all things nice—one of the class with whom the risks of matrimony approximate most nearly to zero. Her intelligent eyes, her broad forehead, her

thoughtful carriage, ensured one thing, that of all the girls he had known he had never met one with more charming and solid qualities than Avice Caro's. This was not a mere conjecture—he had known her long and thoroughly; her every mood and temper.

A heavy wagon passing without drowned her small soft voice for him; but the audience were pleased, and she blushed at their applause. He now took his station at the door, and when the people had done pouring out he found her within awaiting him.

They climbed homeward slowly by the Old Road, Pierston dragging himself up the steep by the wayside hand-rail and pulling Avice after him upon his arm. At the top they turned and stood still. To the left of them the sky was streaked like a fan with the lighthouse rays, and under their front, at periods of a quarter of a minute, there arose a deep, hollow stroke like the single beat of a drum, the intervals being filled with a long-drawn rattling, as of bones between huge canine jaws. It came from the vast concave of Deadman's Bay, rising and falling against the pebble dyke.

The evening and night winds here were, to Pierston's mind, charged with a something that did not burden them elsewhere. They brought it up from that sinister Bay to the west, whose movement she and he were hearing now. It was a presence—an imaginary shape or essence from the human multitude lying below: those who had gone down in vessels of war, East Indiamen, barges, brigs, and ships of the Armada—select people, common, and debased, whose interests and hopes had been as wide asunder as the poles, but who had rolled each other to oneness on that restless sea-bed. There could almost be felt the brush of their huge composite ghost as it ran a shapeless figure over the isle, shrieking for some good god who would disunite it again.

The twain wandered a long way that night amid these influences—so far as to the old Hope Churchyard, which lay in a ravine formed by a landslip ages ago. The church had slipped down with the rest of the cliff, and had long been a ruin. It seemed to say that in this last local stronghold of the Pagan divinities, where Pagan customs lingered yet, Christianity had established itself precariously at best. In that solemn spot Pierston kissed her.

The kiss was by no means on Avice's initiative this time. Her former demonstrativeness seemed to have increased her present reserve.

* * *

That day was the beginning of a pleasant month passed mainly in each other's society. He found that she could not only recite poetry at intellectual gatherings, but play the piano fairly, and sing to her own accompaniment.

He observed that every aim of those who had brought her up had been to get her away mentally as far as possible from her natural and individual life as an inhabitant of a peculiar island: to make her an exact copy of tens of thousands of other people, in whose circumstances there was nothing special, distinctive, or picturesque; to teach her to forget all the experiences of her ancestors; to drown the local ballads by songs purchased at the Budmouth fashionable music-sellers', and the local vocabulary by a governess-tongue of no country at all. She lived in a house that would have been the fortune of an artist, and learnt to draw London suburban villas from printed copies.

Avice had seen all this before he pointed it out, but, with a girl's tractability, had acquiesced. By constitution she was

local to the bone, but she could not escape the tendency of the age.

The time for Jocelyn's departure drew near, and she looked forward to it sadly, but serenely, their engagement being now a settled thing. Pierston thought of the native custom on such occasions, which had prevailed in his and her family for centuries, both being of the old stock of the isle. The influx of 'kimberlins,' or 'foreigners' (as strangers from the mainland of Wessex were called), had led in a large measure to its discontinuance; but underneath the veneer of Avice's education many an old-fashioned idea lay slumbering, and he wondered if, in her natural melancholy at his leaving, she regretted the changing manners which made unpopular the formal ratification of a betrothal, according to the precedent of their sires and grandsires.

1. III. THE APPOINTMENT

'Well,' said he, 'here we are, arrived at the fag-end of my holiday. What a pleasant surprise my old home, which I have not thought worth coming to see for three or four years, had in store for me!'

'You must go to-morrow?' she asked uneasily.

'Yes.'

Something seemed to overweigh them; something more than the natural sadness of a parting which was not to be long; and he decided that instead of leaving in the daytime as he had intended, he would defer his departure till night, and go by the mail-train from Budmouth. This would give him time to look into his father's quarries, and enable her, if she chose, to walk with him along the beach as far as to

Henry the Eighth's Castle above the sands, where they could linger and watch the moon rise over the sea. She said she thought she could come.

So after spending the next day with his father in the quarries Jocelyn prepared to leave, and at the time appointed set out from the stone house of his birth in this stone isle to walk to Budmouth-Regis by the path along the beach, Avice having some time earlier gone down to see some friends in the Street of Wells, which was halfway towards the spot of their tryst. The descent soon brought him to the pebble bank, and leaving behind him the last houses of the isle, and the ruins of the village destroyed by the November gale of 1824, he struck out along the narrow thread of land. When he had walked a hundred yards he stopped, turned aside to the pebble ridge which walled out the sea, and sat down to wait for her.

Between him and the lights of the ships riding at anchor in the roadstead two men passed slowly in the direction he intended to pursue. One of them recognized Jocelyn, and bade him good-night, adding, 'Wish you joy, sir, of your choice, and hope the wedden will be soon!'

'Thank you, Seaborn. Well—we shall see what Christmas will do towards bringing it about.'

'My wife opened upon it this mornen: "Please God, I'll up and see that there wedden," says she, "knowing 'em both from their crawling days."'

The men moved on, and when they were out of Pierston's hearing the one who had not spoken said to his friend, 'Who was that young kimberlin? He don't seem one o' we.'

'Oh, he is, though, every inch o' en. He's Mr. Jocelyn Pierston, the stwone-merchant's only son up at East Quarriers. He's to be married to a stylish young body; her mother, a widow woman, carries on the same business as well as she can; but their trade is not a twentieth part of Pierston's. He's worth thousands and thousands, they say, though 'a do live on in the same wold way up in the same wold house. This son is doen great things in London as a' image-carver; and I can mind when, as a boy, 'a first took to carving soldiers out o' bits o' stwone from the soft-bed of his father's quarries; and then 'a made a set o' stwonen chess-men, and so 'a got on. He's quite the gent in London, they tell me; and the wonder is that 'a cared to come back here and pick up little Avice Caro—nice maid as she is notwithstanding.... Hullo! there's to be a change in the weather soon.'

Meanwhile the subject of their remarks waited at the appointed place till seven o'clock, the hour named between himself and his affianced, had struck. Almost at the moment he saw a figure coming forward from the last lamp at the bottom of the hill. But the figure speedily resolved itself into that of a boy, who, advancing to Jocelyn, inquired if he were Mr. Pierston, and handed him a note.

1. IV. A LONELY PEDESTRIAN

When the boy had gone Jocelyn retraced his steps to the last lamp, and read, in Avice's hand:

'MY DEAREST,—I shall be sorry if I grieve you at all in what I am going to say about our arrangement to meet to-night in the Sandsfoot ruin. But I have fancied that my seeing you again and again lately is inclining your father to insist, and you as his heir to feel, that we ought to carry out Island