16 The Moth-Signal

(On Egdon Heath)

"What are you still, still thinking," He asked in vague surmise, "That you stare at the wick unblinking With those deep lost luminous eyes?" 5 "O, I see a poor moth burning In the candle flame," said she, "Its wings and legs are turning To a cinder rapidly." "Moths fly in from the heather," He said, "now the days decline." 10 "I know," said she. "The weather, I hope, will at last be fine. "I think," she added lightly, "I'll look out at the door. The ring the moon wears nightly 15 May be visible now no more." She rose, and, little heeding, Her life-mate then went on With his mute and museful reading In the annals of ages gone. 20 Outside the house a figure Came from the tumulus near, And speedily waxed bigger, And clasped and called her Dear.

25

"I saw the pale-winged token

"That moth is burnt and broken

With which you lured out me.

You sent through the crack," sighed she.

"And were I as the moth is

It might be better far 30

For one whose marriage troth is

Shattered as potsherds are!"

Then grinned the Ancient Briton
From the tumulus treed with pine:
"So, hearts are thwartly smitten 35
In these days as in mine!"

1914

(From *The Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy*. London: Macmillan, 1930)