“O who’ll get me a healthy child: —
I should prefer a son —
Seven have I had in thirteen years,
Sickly every one!

“Three mope about as feeble shapes;
Weak; white; they’ll be no good.
One came deformed; an idiot next;
And two are crass as wood.

“I purpose one not only sound
In flesh, but bright in mind:
And duly for producing him
A means I’ve now to find.”

She went away. She disappeared,
Years, years. Then back she came:
In her hand was a blooming boy
Mentally and in frame.

“I found a father at last who’d suit
The purpose in my head,
And used him till he’d done his job,”
Was all thereon she said.

1928

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