

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

23 *The Ruined Maid*

“O ’Melia, my dear, this does everything crown!
Who could have supposed I should meet you in Town?
And whence such fair garments, such prosperi-ty?” —
“O didn’t you know I’d been ruined?” said she.

— “You left us in tatters, without shoes or socks, 5
Tired of digging potatoes, and spudding up docks;
And now you’ve gay bracelets and bright feathers three!” —
“Yes: that’s how we dress when we’re ruined,” said she.

— “At home in the barton you said ‘thee’ and ‘thou,’
And ‘thik oon,’ and ‘theäs oon,’ and ‘t’other’; but now 10
Your talking quite fits ’ee for high compa-ny!” —
“Some polish is gained with one’s ruin,” said she.

— “Your hands were like paws then, your face blue and bleak
But now I’m bewitched by your delicate cheek,
And your little gloves fit as on any la-dy!” — 15
“We never do work when we’re ruined,” said she.

— “You used to call home-life a hag-ridden dream,
And you’d sigh, and you’d sock; but at present you seem
To know not of megrims or melancho-ly!” —
“True. One’s pretty lively when ruined,” said she. 20

— “I wish I had feathers, a fine sweeping gown,
And a delicate face, and could strut about Town!” —
“My dear — a raw country girl, such as you be,
Cannot quite expect that. You ain’t ruined,” said she.

1866

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