The dead woman lay in her first night’s grave,
And twilight fell from the clouds’ concave,
And those she had asked to forgive forgave.

The woman passing came to a pause
By the heaped white shapes of wreath and cross,
And looked upon where the other was.

And as she mused there thus spoke she:
“Never your countenance did I see,
But you’ve been a good good friend to me!”

Rose a plaintive voice from the sod below:
“O woman whose accents I do not know,
What is it that makes you approve me so?”

“O dead one, ere my soldier went,
I heard him saying, with warm intent,
To his friend, when won by your blandishment:

“I would change for that lass here and now!
And if I return I may break my vow
To my present Love, and contrive somehow
To call my own this new-found pearl,
Whose eyes have the light, whose lips the curl
I always have looked for in a girl!”

“—And this is why that by ceasing to be—
Though never your countenance did I see—
You prove you a good good friend to me;
“And I pray each hour for your soul’s repose
In gratitude for your joining those
No lover will clasp when his campaigns close.”

Away she turned, when arose to her eye
A martial phantom of gory dye,
That said, with a thin and far-off sigh:

“O sweetheart, neither shall I clasp you!
For the foe this day has pierced me through,
And sent me to where she is. Adieu!—

“And forget not when the night-wind’s whine
Calls over this turf where her limbs recline,
That it travels on to lament by mine.”

There was a cry by the white-flowered mound,
There was a laugh from underground,
There was a deeper gloom around.

1915

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