Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

18 The Pair He Saw Pass

| O sad man, now a long dead man, To whom it was so real, I picture, as 'twere yesterday, How you would tell the tale! | |
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| Just wived were you, you sad dead man, And "settling down," you'd say, And had rigged the house you had reared for yourself And the mate now yours alway. | 5 |
| You had eyed and tried each door and lock, And cupboard, and bell, and glass, When you glanced across to the road without, And saw a carriage pass. | 10 |
| It bowled along from the old town-gate; Two forms its freight, and those Were a just-joined pair, as you discerned By the favours and the bows. | 15 |
| And one of the pair you saw was a Fair Whom you had wooed awhile, And the other you saw, with a creeping awe, Was yourself, in bridegroom style. | 20 |
| "And there we rode as man and wife In the broad blaze of the sun," Would you aver; yea, you with her You had left for another one. | |
| "The morning," you said, my friend long dead, "Was ordinary and fine; And yet there gleamed, it somehow seemed, At moments, a strange shine." | 25 |

| You hailed a boy from your garden-plot, And sent him along the way To the parish church; whence word was brought No marriage had been that day. | 30 |
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| You mused, you said; till you heard anon | |
| That at that hour she died | |
| Whom once, instead of your living wife, | 35 |
| You had meant to make your bride | |
| You, dead man, dwelt in your new-built house | |
| With no great spirit or will, | |
| And after your soon decease your spouse | |
| Re-mated: she lives there still. | 40 |
| Which should be blamed, if either can, | |
| The teller does not know | |
| For your mismatch, O weird-wed man, | |
| Or what you thought was so. | |
| From an old draft (1925) | |

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