

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

20 *A Practical Woman*

“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; 5  
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: 10  
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 15  
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. 20

1928

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