

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

35 *The Widow Betrothed*

I passed the lodge and avenue
 To her fair tenement,
And sunset on her window-panes
 Reflected our intent.

The creeper on the gable nigh 5
 Was fired to more than red,
And when I came to halt thereby
 “Bright as my joy!” I said.

Of late days it had been her aim 10
 To meet me in the hall;
Now at my footsteps no one came,
 And no one to my call.

Again I knocked, and tardily
 An inner tread was heard,
And I was shown her presence then 15
 With a mere answering word.

She met me, and but barely took
 My proffered warm embrace;
Preoccupation weighed her look,
 And hardened her sweet face. 20

“To-morrow — could you — would you call?
 Abridge your present stay?
My child is ill — my one, my all! —
 And can’t be left to-day.”

And then she turns, and gives commands 25
 As I were out of sound,
Or were no more to her and hers
 Than any neighbour round. . . .

