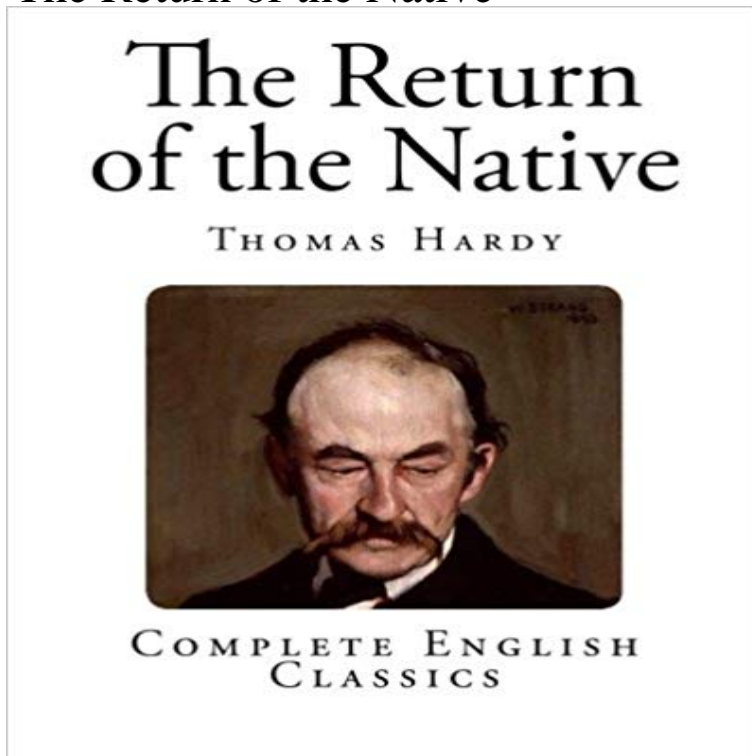


The Return of the Native



The Return of the Native By Thomas Hardy Complete English Classics

The Return of the Native is Thomas Hardy's sixth published novel. It first appeared in the magazine *Belgravia*, a publication known for its sensationalism, and was presented in twelve monthly instalments from January to December 1878. Because of the novel's controversial themes, Hardy had some difficulty finding a publisher; reviews, however, though somewhat mixed, were generally positive. In the twentieth century, *The Return of the Native* became one of Hardy's most popular novels.

Thomas Hardy, OM (2 June 1840 – 11 January 1928) was an English novelist and poet. A Victorian realist in the tradition of George Eliot, he was influenced both in his novels and in his poetry by Romanticism, especially William Wordsworth. Charles Dickens was another important influence. Like Dickens, he was highly critical of much in Victorian society, though Hardy focused more on a declining rural society. While Hardy wrote poetry throughout his life and regarded himself primarily as a poet, his first collection was not published until 1898. Initially, therefore, he gained fame as the author of novels, including *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), and *Jude the Obscure* (1895). However, beginning in the 1950s Hardy has been recognized as a major poet; he had a significant influence on the Movement poets of the 1950s and 1960s, including Phillip Larkin. The date at which the following events are assumed to have occurred may be set down as between 1840 and 1850, when the old watering place herein called Budmouth still retained sufficient afterglow from its Georgian gaiety and prestige to lend it an absorbing attractiveness to the romantic and imaginative soul of a lonely dweller inland. Under the general name of Egdon Heath,

which has been given to the sombre scene of the story, are united or typified heaths of various real names, to the number of at least a dozen; these being virtually one in character and aspect, though their original unity, or partial unity, is now somewhat disguised by intrusive strips and slices brought under the plough with varying degrees of success, or planted to woodland. It is pleasant to dream that some spot in the extensive tract whose southwestern quarter is here described, may be the heath of that traditionary King of Wessex Lear.

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