

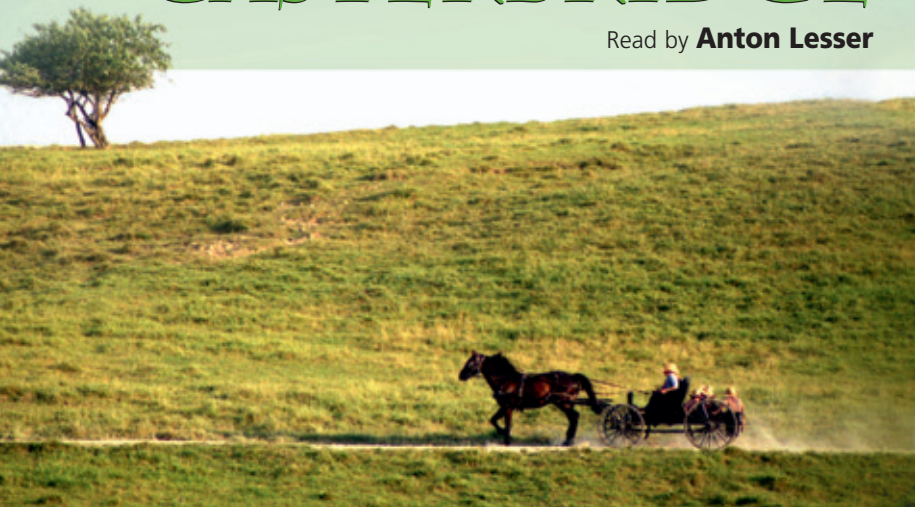
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COMPLETE
CLASSICS
UNABRIDGED

Thomas Hardy

THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE

Read by **Anton Lesser**



1	The Mayor of Casterbridge by Thomas Hardy – Chapter 1	4:20
2	The wife mostly kept her eyes fixed ahead...	4:54
3	A rather numerous company appeared within...	4:49
4	The auctioneer selling the old horses in the field outside...	4:57
5	'Five shillings,' said someone, at which there was a laugh.	4:35
6	'Very well, she shall have the child...'	5:00
7	Chapter 2 The morning sun was streaming through...	3:36
8	This seemed to accord with his desire.	3:26
9	'I, Michael Henchard, on this morning...'	2:39
10	Chapter 3 The highroad into the village...	3:03
11	'Why did we hinder our time by coming in here?'	3:20
12	'She was here at that time,' resumed Mrs Newson...	4:41
13	Chapter 4 Henchard's wife acted for the best...	5:24
14	The sailor, drowned or no, was probably now lost...	5:53
15	The lamplights now glimmered through the engirdling trees...	5:17
16	Chapter 5 A few score yards brought them to the spot...	2:40
17	The interior of the hotel dining-room was spread out...	4:06
18	Elizabeth-Jane had never been so much interested...	4:00
19	The band now struck up another melody...	3:26
20	Chapter 6 Now the group outside the window...	4:46

21	As her mother did not reply Elizabeth-Jane's mind...	5:15
22	Chapter 7 Elizabeth-Jane and her mother had arrived...	4:49
23	When she entered nobody was present but the young man...	4:17
24	'You're wrong!' said the young man.	3:39
25	Donald Farfrae was grateful – said he feared...	3:54
26	Chapter 8 Thus they parted; and Elizabeth-Jane...	4:29
27	Young Farfrae repeated the last verse. It was plain...	4:18
28	The silent landlord came and leant over the settle...	3:22
29	Though it was still early the young Scotchman expressed...	3:21
30	Chapter 9 When Elizabeth-Jane opened the hinged casement...	4:12
31	The discussion was continued during breakfast...	4:36
32	Horses for sale were tied in rows...	5:39
33	When the two new acquaintances had passed out of sight...	4:20
34	Chapter 10 While she still sat under the Scotchman's eyes...	5:07
35	Henchard winced at the word 'father,' thus applied.	4:45
36	Chapter 11 The Ring at Casterbridge was merely the local name...	5:03
37	It was related that there still remained under the south entrance...	4:32
38	'We'll go away at once. I only came to see –'	3:33
39	Chapter 12 On entering his own door after watching his wife...	4:34
40	Henchard paused a moment, threw himself back...	4:16

41	Donald showed his deep concern at a complication...	3:58
42	Chapter 13 The cottage which Michael Henchard hired...	2:50
43	Henchard's visits here grew so frequent and so regular...	4:02
44	Turning, he saw a circular disc reticulated with creases...	3:52
45	Chapter 14 A Martinmas summer of Mrs Henchard's life set in ..	5:26
46	The three members of the family were sitting at breakfast...	4:43
47	Her quiet eye discerned that Henchard's tigerish affection...	5:21
48	This situation began to be very awkward...	5:04
49	Chapter 15 At first Miss Newson's budding beauty...	3:56
50	It was about six o'clock; the men were dropping off...	4:18
51	Just at this time Farfrae, who had been to Henchard's house...	3:20
52	Morally he was; there could be no doubt of it.	4:04
53	Chapter 16 On this account Henchard's manner...	4:54
54	The morning came. The sky, which had been remarkably clear...	4:23
55	All the town crowded to the Walk, such a delightful idea...	4:52
56	Chapter 17 Elizabeth-Jane had perceived from Henchard's manner...	4:07
57	They parted, Farfrae returning into the dark...	3:54
58	Henchard, who had been hurt at finding that Farfrae...	4:23
59	So determined was he to do nothing...	3:43
60	Chapter 18 There came a shock which had been foreseen...	3:49

61	The contingency that he had in his mind was...	4:12
62	Some little time later on Farfrae was passing...	3:10
63	Chapter 19 Henchard and Elizabeth sat conversing by the fire.	4:04
64	She tried to stand up and comfort him trustfully...	3:54
65	Among the other papers had been placed the contents...	5:08
66	This ironical sequence of things angered him...	5:09
67	Chapter 20 Of all the enigmas which ever confronted a girl...	4:22
68	These domestic exhibitions were the small protruding...	4:25
69	Thus she lived on, a dumb, deep-feeling, great-eyed creature...	3:32
70	The stranger presently moved from the tombstone...	3:26
71	The morrow, being fairly fine, found Elizabeth-Jane...	3:24
72	Elizabeth-Jane looked wistfully at her questioner.	3:05
73	Chapter 21 As a maxim glibly repeated from childhood...	4:58
74	The position of the queer old door and the odd presence...	4:09
75	The day and the hour came; but a drizzling rain fell.	3:48
76	Elizabeth-Jane had been thinking of the door in the alley.	3:43
77	Chapter 22 We go back for a moment to the preceding night...	4:04
78	He was in this interested stage of the inquiry...	4:26
79	On Elizabeth-Jane's arrival she had been phlegmatically asked...	4:30
80	It could not, however, have been broken in safer company.	3:24

81	Elizabeth replied vaguely, for an incident checked...	3:09
82	Lucetta looked blank, twitched up her lovely eyebrows...	3:56
83	Chapter 23 A conjecture that her visitor might be...	4:30
84	'Where did ye come from, ma'am?'	3:19
85	The fair without the windows was now raging thick...	5:23
86	He looked anxiously at the farmer who was seeking him...	5:16
87	Chapter 24 Poor Elizabeth-Jane, little thinking...	4:45
88	Elizabeth-Jane's bonnet and shawl were pitchforked...	4:40
89	In the silence which followed Farfrae appeared...	4:57
90	It was all true as she had pictured – she could have sworn it.	5:07
91	Chapter 25 The next phase of the supersession of Henchard...	3:43
92	'It is full early yet,' she said evasively.	3:43
93	'That's the way the wind blows, is it?' he said at last...	4:29
94	Chapter 26 It chanced that on a fine spring morning...	4:24
95	They sat stiffly side by side at the darkening table...	4:10
96	That characters deteriorated in time of need...	4:57
97	In a lonely hamlet a few miles from the town...	4:32
98	'I've worked it out already, and you can know at once...'	5:29
99	Chapter 27 It was the eve of harvest.	4:28
100	However, according to the strict rule of the road...	4:16

101	Candle-lights were flitting in and out of her bedroom...	5:19
102	She sank into a chair, and turned pale.	5:16
103	Chapter 28 The next morning Henchard went to the Town Hall...	5:46
104	But Henchard stared, and quite forgot what was evidence...	4:52
105	Chapter 29 At this hour Lucetta was bounding along...	4:24
106	They looked round for some shelter or hiding-place...	3:17
107	Henchard supporting Lucetta on one side...	4:41
108	Henchard remained in thought. He had evidently not expected...	3:21
109	Henchard stood as if idiotized. She was so alarmed...	2:47
110	Chapter 30 Farfrae's words to his landlady...	4:06
111	'I must go rather a long way back,' said Lucetta...	3:38
112	Lucetta covered her eyes with her right hand...	3:58
113	Chapter 31 The retort of the furmity-woman...	5:04
114	'Well,' said the senior Commissioner, addressing Henchard...	5:12
115	Chapter 32 Two bridges stood near the lower part of Casterbridge.	4:16
116	To this bridge came Henchard, as other unfortunates...	3:59
117	'Ha, ha, true!' cried Henchard, throwing himself...	4:21
118	The effect, either of her ministrations or of her mere presence...	5:33
119	Chapter 33 At this date there prevailed in Casterbridge...	4:21
120	Chancing to look out of the window at that moment...	4:44

121	It was at this time that Elizabeth-Jane, having heard...	4:32
122	'I beg your pardon, ma'am?' said Henchard...	4:43
123	Chapter 34 Next morning, accordingly, she rose at five o'clock...	4:01
124	'Yes, yes; so I've heard; and there's nothing to say...'	5:01
125	Farfrae seemed seriously disposed to discuss this move...	4:12
126	The next morning he went to the corn-yard as usual...	3:11
127	Farfrae, willing to humour Henchard, though quite uninterested...	3:24
128	Chapter 35 As Donald stated, Lucetta had retired early...	5:44
129	With this view she made a toilette which differed...	5:05
130	Chapter 36 Returning from her appointment Lucetta...	4:07
131	His path was by the river-side at the foot of the town.	4:31
132	Yet amid so much that was bad...	4:19
133	'I might have had 'ee days afore that,' said the keeper.	3:33
134	The cry was repeated. They pushed the lantern...	4:39
135	Chapter 37 Such was the state of things...	3:56
136	The eventful morning was bright, a full-faced sun...	4:24
137	At length a man stationed at the furthest turn of the high road...	3:21
138	In the crowd stood Coney, Buzzford, and Longways...	3:34
139	Chapter 38 The proceedings had been brief – too brief...	4:59
140	Farfrae came on with one hand in his pocket, and humming...	4:44

141	By a whirl Henchard brought Donald dangerously near...	5:16
142	Chapter 39 When Farfrae descended out of the loft...	4:49
143	Without waiting for Lucetta's reply she crossed quickly...	4:39
144	'What can we two poor lammigers do against such a multitude!'	5:47
145	Chapter 40 Long before this time Henchard...	4:34
146	The very agitation and abruptness of Henchard increased...	3:45
147	Jopp was just going to bed when Henchard got home.	4:36
148	Chapter 41 Henchard went home.	3:04
149	Henchard's face and eyes seemed to die.	4:10
150	Henchard, without answering, shook his head...	4:19
151	He returned to the house half expecting that she would...	5:00
152	Henchard, however, leaving the town by the east road...	2:42
153	'I don't quite think there are any miracles nowadays,' she said.	3:51
154	Chapter 42 But the emotional conviction that he was in...	5:17
155	But as a memory, notwithstanding such conditions...	4:42
156	Time had been when such instinctive opposition...	4:24
157	'Thank you for those new books, Mr Farfrae,' she added shyly.	3:17
158	Chapter 43 What Henchard saw thus early...	3:54
159	But what if he were mistaken in his views...	4:00
160	The question of his remaining in Casterbridge was...	4:49

161	He went on till he came to the first milestone...	4:11
162	'Well, Captain Newson, I will be glad to see ye here...'	4:50
163	Chapter 44 Meanwhile, the man of their talk...	4:17
164	He intended to go on from this place – visited as an act...	4:53
165	The remembrance would continually revive in him...	4:32
166	Henchard did not care to ride any further with his chattering...	4:18
167	The gaiety jarred upon Henchard's spirits...	4:57
168	Chapter 45 It was about a month after the day...	5:06
169	This was enough to set Elizabeth thinking...	4:15
170	His face showed marks of deep sadness, his eyes lighting...	3:37
171	'What are we to do?' said Donald...	3:38

Total time: 12:20:41

Thomas Hardy

(1840–1928)

THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE

What has Providence done to Mr Hardy that he should rise up in the arable land of Wessex and shake his fist at his Creator?

So wrote Hardy's friend Edmund Gosse at the end of a review of *Jude the Obscure*. It's a fair question. What made Hardy see the world as such a dark and unforgiving place? He grew up in a loving family, studied and worked at a job he enjoyed, lived in a part of the country he loved, went on to make his living as a writer, and became (and remains) one of the greatest English novelists. His life had its tragedies – the suicide of a close friend, a childless and ultimately unhappy marriage – as well as its philosophical darkneses (he found the conventional notion of a benevolent God impossible). But surely these are not sufficient to explain an almost malevolently

disinterested Fate that wreaks its heedless damage upon the central characters of his books. For Hardy, coincidences are not merely plot devices: they are the wheels of a juggernaut that will crush everything that has any association with it; and to which the characters seem tied by virtue of their flawed human-ness.

Hardy was compulsively interested in how people's characteristics shaped their lives; in local history; and in recognising the social shifts that were changing the landscape, workscape, philosophy and very tenor of the world he knew. As a writer, he bridged the span between the high Victorian of the 1860s and the era of Modernism in the 1920s. Around him, the rigorous certainties of the former gave way to the intellectual and spiritual doubts

of the latter, and the shift was registered everywhere, from the literary cliques of London to the labourers in Dorset – everything was undergoing a profound upheaval. And Hardy was caught between the two extremes.

He was born to a builder and master stonemason in Bockhampton, Dorset, and although educated at home until he was eight, he was a capable student and by the time he was 13 was learning French and Latin. He was also a lover of music, something he shared with his father, playing the violin and joining the choir. But his family's social status and lack of funds meant any further education was out of the question, so at 16 he went to study under the architect John Hicks, and at about the same time, met Horatio (Horace) Moule. For the next 15 years or so, Moule was to be a friend and mentor, introducing Hardy to the contemporary authors and the Greek writers, whose sense of the tragic was to be echoed in much of Hardy's work. Moule was a man of profound charm, charisma, intellect and personality, blighted with melancholia and a tendency to alcohol. He eventually

committed suicide in 1873. There is no evidence to suggest a sexual element to their closeness, but Moule's life (and death) had the same depth of effect on Thomas Hardy as Arthur Hallam's had on Tennyson – something at the very root of life was expressed by the friendship; something crushingly destroyed by the death.

Before that tragedy, however, Hardy was making a living as an architect, and in 1862 he took a post in a practice in London. Here his pained sensitivity to the niceties of the English class system and his belief that reform in all areas of English social life (philosophical, religious and political) was necessary were honed by his exposure to wider culture and to other writers and philosophers. But his health was never strong; and the urge to live in the countryside he loved so much meant he returned to Dorset five years later. He had been writing poetry for some time, but it was felt that the publishers wanted prose. So he started writing novels, though at first the publishers didn't want them, either. He destroyed his first one, but was persuaded to carry on, and between 1872 (*Under the Greenwood*

Tree) and 1898 (*The Well-Beloved*) he wrote 18 novels, including six or seven of the greatest works in English fiction. These are tragedies that bring together strong characters and an implacable Fate (often one that seems to pass judgement on the basis of conventional morality) in an area of south-west England that Hardy knew, loved, understood – and mythologised as Wessex. One of these was *The Mayor of Casterbridge*.

It explores many of his core themes: the traps of convention; the ramifications of character; class and social structure; the conflicts between love and loyalty, self and the greater good; fate; religion; and many other issues, all laced within a story that – for all its apparent improbability – has its starting point in fact. Hardy collected items that matched his view of the way life treated people, and incorporated them in his works; and he noticed a story in a local paper about a man selling his wife at a fair. It seemed a perfect springboard for the characters he had in mind. Henchard is not just a victim of circumstance – his fate is rooted in his inherent characteristics and the decisions he makes are based on

his nature. The same is true of Farfrae, Elizabeth-Jane (although she was somewhat softened in later editions, which rather reduced her strength of character) and even Susan and Newson. This is why the novel has the subtitle *A Story of a Man of Character* (although which man is meant by this is not completely clear). The lives that are played out are not merely at the whim of fate, God or even, to some extent, the novelist. They are the natural extensions of the characters themselves.

The novel was serialised in the *Graphic* with some trepidation, since Hardy was developing a reputation for controversy that would only grow over the remaining 10 years of his life as a novelist. His opposition to many of the standard mores put him at odds with the establishment, and the reception afforded his later works – one Bishop actually burned a copy of *Jude the Obscure* and, as Hardy pointed out, that was probably only because he couldn't burn the novelist – decided him to give up the form altogether and return to his first love, poetry.

Between 1898 and the end of his life, Hardy published no more novels, but

concentrated on poems and epic verse. He was awarded the Order of Merit in 1910, having earlier refused a knighthood, and a major edition of his works was published in 1912. But the same year, his wife – from whom he had been essentially estranged for almost two decades – died; and her death proved a wellspring of profound emotion and inspiration as he remembered their earlier happiness. He married his secretary Florence Dugdale two years later, and continued to publish verse and autobiography until his death in 1928.

So what had Providence done to Mr Hardy? Nothing of itself, perhaps. It was his fate to be gifted with a sense of the effects of character on life, of the capacity for unhappiness, of the shifts undermining the social world; his fate to have a poetic imagination, a deep understanding of irony and a mind that could not accept a conventional theology. And it was his fate to act upon these inherent gifts and flaws, just as his heroes and heroines did.

Notes by Roy McMillan



One of Britain's leading classical actors, **Anton Lesser** has worked extensively at the National Theatre, and is an associate artist of the Royal Shakespeare Company. His many television appearances include roles in *The Cherry Orchard*, *King Lear*, *The Politician's Wife*, *Vanity Fair*, *Perfect Strangers*, and *Dickens*. Films in which he has appeared include *Charlotte Gray*, *Fairytale – A True Story*, *Imagining Argentina*, *River Queen* and *Miss Potter*. He is a familiar voice on radio, and has become particularly associated with his award-winning readings of Dickens and Milton for Naxos AudioBooks.

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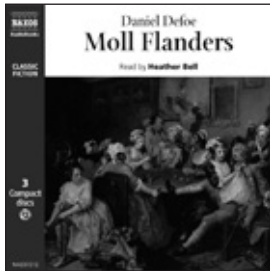


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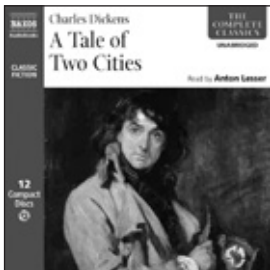
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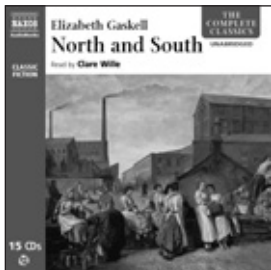
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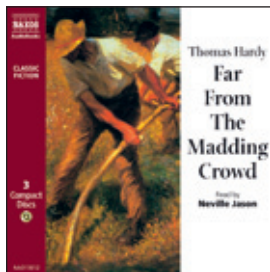
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NAXOS
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COMPLETE
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Thomas Hardy

THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE

Read by **Anton Lesser**

Michael Henchard, drunk at a country fair, sells his wife and baby daughter for five guineas. The following day, in despair and remorse, he forswears alcohol and sets out to redeem himself. In time, he becomes a respected merchant and eventually the mayor of the town.

But Fate is not to be so easily appeased, and Henchard finds his past actions resonate through and destroy his plans for the future.

One of the greatest novels in the English language, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* sees Thomas Hardy at his best, bringing landscape and richly imagined characters to life, and setting the hope of love against the forces of Providence.



One of Britain's leading classical actors, **Anton Lesser** is an associate artist of the Royal Shakespeare Company. A familiar voice on radio, he has become particularly associated with his award-winning readings of Dickens and Milton for Naxos AudioBooks.

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