```
judgment, easy motions, proper dress, and general good character.
                                                                                                                                          On Sundays he was a man of misty views, rather given to postponing, and
king days he was a young man of sound
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  hampered by his be
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            st clothes and umbr
ella: upon the whole, one who felt hims
                                                   elf to occupy morally that vast middle space of Laodicean neu
                                                                                                                                         trality which lay between the Communion people of the parish a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                               nd the drunken sectio
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     n,--that is, he went to chui
ch, but yawned privately by the time th
                                                       e congregation reached the Nicene creed, and thought
                                                                                                                                         of what there would be for dinner when he meant to be listening
                                                                                                                                                                                                                            to the sermon. Or, to sta
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   te his character as it stood
n the scale of public opinion, when hi
                                                             s friends and critics were in tantrums, he was
                                                                                                                                       considered rather a bad man; when they were pleased, he was r
                                                                                                                                                                                                                  ather a good man; when they we
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   re neither, he was a man wh
ose moral colour was a kind of pepp
                                                                    er-and-salt mixture. Since he lived si
                                                                                                                                      x times as many working-days as Sundays, Oak's appearance i
                                                                                                                                                                                                                 n his old clothes was most pec
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             uliarly his own--t he mental pict
ure formed by his neighbours in im
                                                                            agining him being alwa
                                                                                                                                    ys dressed in that way. He wore a low-crowned felt hat, spread
                                                                                                                                                                                                                 out at the base b
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        t jamming upon the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       y tigh
head for security in high winds, a
                                                                                                                                  nd a coat like Dr. Johnson's; his lower extremities being encas
                                                                                                                                                                                                                ed in ordinary lea
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       ther leggings an
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             d boo
ts emphatically large, affording
                                                                                                                                to each foot a roomy apartment so construc
                                                                                                                                                                                                               t any wearer mi
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       ght stand in a river all day long and kn
ow nothing of damp--their m
                                                                                                                            ng a conscientious man who endeavoured to com
                                                                                                                                                                                                              pensate for an
                                          aker bei
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         y weakness in his cut by unstinted di
                                         r. Oak carried
                                                                                                                         about him, by way of watch, what may be called a small
mension and solidity. M
                                                                                                                                                                                                            silver clock; in othe
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   r words, it wa
                                      pe and intention, and a
s a watch as to sha
                                                                                                                   small clock as to size. This instrument being several years older
                                                                                                                                                                                                          than Oak's grandfather,
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            had t
he peculiarity
                                     of going either too fast or not at a
                                                                                                            II. The smaller of its hands, too, occasionally slipped round on the pivot, and thus, though the minutes were told
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    with precision, n
                                 ody could be quite certain of the hour they belonged to. The stopping peculiarity of his watch Oak remedied by thump's and shakes, and he escaped any evil consequences from the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  other two defe
                              cts by constant comparisons with and observations of the sun and stars, and by pressing his face close to the glass of his neighbours' windows, till he could discern the hour marked b
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       y the gree
                          n-faced timekeepers within. It may be mentioned that Oak's fob being difficult of access, by reason of its somewhat high s ituation in the waistband of his trousers (which also lay at a rem
                    ote height under his waistcoat), the watch was as a necessity pulled out by throwing the body to one side, compressing the mouth and face to a mere mass of ruddy flesh on account of the ex
             ertion required, and drawing up the watch by its chain, like a bucket from a well. But some thoughtful persons, who had seen him
                                                                                                                                                               walking across one of his fields on a certain December morning-
      -sunny and exceedingly mild--might have regarded Gabriel Oak in other aspects than these. In his face one might notice that many of the
                                                                                                                                                               hues and curves of youth had tarried on to manhood: there eve
n remained in his remoter crannies some relics of the boy. His height and breadth would have been sufficient to make his presence imposing
                                                                                                                                                              had they been exhibited with due consideration. But there is
a way some men have, rural and urban alike, for which the mind is more responsible than flesh and sinew: it is a way of curtailing their dim
                                                                                                                                                           ensions by their manner of showing them. And from a quiet
modesty that would have become a vestal, which seemed con
                                                                       tinually to impress upon him that he had no great claim on the world'
                                                                                                                                                         s room, Oak walked unassumingly and with a faintly perce
ptible bend, yet distinct from a bowing of the shoulders. Thi
                                                                            s may be said to be a defect in an individual if he depends for
                                                                                                                                                        his valuation more upon his appearance than upon hi
s capacity to wear well, which Oak did not. He had just reac
                                                                                 hed the time of life at which "young" is ceasing to be
                                                                                                                                                      the prefix of "man" in speaking of one. He was at
the brightest period of masculine growth, for his intellec
                                                                                       t and his emotions were clearly separated
                                                                                                                                                   he had passed the time during which
the influence of youth indiscriminately mingles them in
                                                                                                 the character of impuls
                                                                                                                                                and he had not yet arrived a
t the stage wherei n they become united again, in th
                                                                    e charact
                                                                                                                                          er of prejudice, by the influ
ence of a wife and fa
                           mily. In short, he was twen
                                                                   ty-eight, and a bac
                                                                                                                                                                                     is morning sl
                                                                Through a spur of this hill ran t
                                                                                                                                                                             nd Chalk-Newt
oped to a ridge called
                                                                                                                        he highway between Emminster a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             on. Casu
                                                           ge, Oak saw coming down the incline before him an ornamental spring waggon, painte
                                                                                                                                                                       d yellow and g
ally glancing over the hed
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             aily mar
ked, drawn by two horses, a w
                                                       aggoner walking alongside bearing a whip perpendicularly. The waggon was laden with
                                                                                                                                                                   household go
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             ods and
                                              apex of the whole sat a woman, young and attractive. Gabriel had not beheld the sight for m
                                                                                                                                                                ore than half a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                               minute, when the vehicle was brought to a standstill ju
          window plants, and on the
               st beneath his eyes. "The tailboard of the waggon is gone, Miss," said the waggoner. "Then I heard it fall," said the g
t account for when we were coming up the hill." "I'll run back." "Do," she answered. The sensible horses sto
                                                                                                                                                            irl, in a soft, th
                                                                                                                                                                                                                             ough not particularly low voice. "I heard a noise I could no
                                                                                                                                                         od--perfectly st
                                                                                                                                                                                                                             ill, and the waggoner's steps sank fainter and fainter in the d
                                                                                                                                                     ed by tables and
                       istance. The girl on the summit of the load sat m
                                                                                                                                                                                                                            chairs with their legs upwards, backed by an oak settle, and o
                                                                                                          otionless, surround
                                                                                                                                                                                                                         tuses, together with a caged canary--all probably from the windo illow basket, from the partly-opened lid of which she gazed with ha
                           rnamented in front by pots of geranium
                                                                                                                                                 s. myrtles, and cac
                                 the house just vacated. There
                                                                                                                                              was also a cat in a w
ws of
lf-closed ey
                                                                            es, and aff
                                                                                                                                       ectionately surveyed the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                        small birds around. The handsome girl waited for some time idly in h
                                                                                                                                                                                                                      anary up and down the perches of its prison. Then she looked attentive
er place, and th
                                                                      e only sound heard in th
                                                                                                                          e stillness was the hopping of the c
ly downwards. It was
                                                                 not at the bird, nor at the cat; it was at an oblong package tied in paper, and lying betwe
                                                                                                                                                                                                                     en them. She turned her head to learn if the waggoner were coming. He w
                                                         r eyes crept back to the package, her thoughts seeming to run upon what was inside it. At len
                                                                                                                                                                                                                    h she drew the article into her lap, and untied the paper covering; a small sw
as not yet in sight; and he
                                                                                                                                                                        gt
                                               , in which she proceeded to survey herself attentively. She parted her lips and smiled. It was a fine m
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 e sun lighted up to a scarlet glow the crimson jacket she wore,
ing looking-glass was disclosed
                                                                                                                                                                      orn
                                                                                                                                                                                                                  t such a le afles s season they invested the whole concern of horses, waggon, fu
and painted a soft lustre upon her bright face and dark hair. The myrtles, geraniums, and cactuses packed around her were fresh and green, a
                                                                                                                                                                    nd a
rniture, and girl with a peculiar vernal charm. What possessed her to indulge in such a performance in the sight of the sparrows, blackbird
                                                                                                                                                                                                                 unperceiv ed farmer who were alone its spectators,--whether the smile began as
                                                                                                                                                                  s, and
a factitious one, to test her capacity in that art,--nobody knows, it ended certainly in a real smile. She blushed at herself, and seeing he
                                                                                                                                                                                                               ction blush, blushed the more. The change from the customary spot and nece
                                                                                                                                                                 r refle
 ssary occasion of such an act--from the dressing hour in a bedroom to a
                                                                                                           time of travelling out of doors
                                                                                                                                                                                                                    the idle deed a novelty it did not intrinsically possess. The picture was a deli
                                                                                                                                                               -lent to
          ate one. Woman's prescriptive infirmity had stalked into
                                                                                                                                                                                                                   light, which h ad clothed it in the freshness
                                                                                                                                                             the sun
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         of an orig
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        inality. A cynical in
                                                                                                                                                                                                   the scene, generous the ou gh he fain wou ld have bee
                 rence was irresistible by Gabriel Oak as he r
                                                                                                                                                          egarded
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         n. There w
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         as no necessity what
                     looking in the glass. She did not ad
                                                                                                                                                                                                or press a dimple into shape, or do one thing to signify the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         at any such intention had been h er
ev
     er for her
                                                                                         just her hat, or pat
                                                                                                                                                        her hair
                              the glass. She simply o
                                                                                 bserved herself as a fair product of
                                                                                                                                                                                               eminine kind, her thought s s ee ming to glide in to far-off though likely dramas in which m en wo
motive in taking up
                                                                                                                                                Nature in the
                                                                                       iumphs--the smiles being of a phase suggesting that hearts we
                                                                                                                                                                                             e imagined as lost and won. St ill, this was but conjecture, and the whole series of actions was so idly
uld play a
                                   stas of proba
                       put forth as t
                                                                                                     o make it rash to assert that intention had any
                                                                                                                                                                                                 part in them at all. The wag go n er's steps were heard returning. She put the glass in the paper, and the
        e whole aga
                             in into
                                                                                                                its place. When the waggon
                                                                                                                                                                                                 nad passed on, Gabrie I withd rew from his point of espial, and descending into the road, followed th
                                                                                                                                                                                                 ke-ga te som e way bey ond the bottom of the hill, where the object of his contemplation now halted for
e ve
            hicle to the
                                                                                                                                                                                            I. A bout twenty steps still remained between him and the gate, when he heard a dispute. It was a difference
the pay
                                       ment of to I
                                                                                                                                                                                                with the waggon and the man at the toll-bar. "Mis'ess's niece is upon the top of the things, and she say
concernin g t
                                          e betwe en the p
                        wopend
                                                                                                                                                                           ere d ye, you g reat miser, and she won't pay any more." These were the waggoner's words. "Very well; then mis'ess's n
           s that's en
                         ough that
          ece can't pass,
                                           the tur
                                                                npike-ke
                                                                                                                                                                ep er, cl osin
                                                                                                                                                                                     g the ga te. Oak looked from one to the other of the disputants, and fell into a reverie. There was something in the
                                                                                                                                                                                nificant. Threepence had a definite value as money--it was an appreciable infringement on a day's wages, and, as such
                  tone of
                                            twopence r
                                                                    emarka
                                                                                                                                                                               stepping forward and handing twopence to the gatekeeper; "let the young woman pass." He looked up at her then; she h
                              a higgling m
                                             atter; but t
                                                                            wopence
                                                             rds, and lo
                                                                                                                                                                  el's features adhered throughout their form so exactly to the middle line between the beauty of St. John and the ugliness of Judas Is
                               eard his wo
                                                                                  oked d
                                             ot, as rep
                                                                                                                                                             the church he attended, that not a single lineament could be selected and called worthy either of distinction or notoriety. The red-jacket
               cari
                                                                  resente
                                                                                            in a w
          ed and dar
                                            k-haired mai
                                                                              den seem
                                                                                             ed to thin
                                                                                                                                  k so t
                                                                                                                                                       she carelessly glanced over him, and told her man to drive on. She might have looked her thanks to Gabriel on a minute scale, but she did not
                                                                                                                                 for in gaining her a passage he had lost her her point, and we know how women take a favour of that kind. The gatekeeper surveyed the retreating vehicl Oak. "But she has her faults," said Gabriel. "True, farmer." "And the greatest of them is--well, what it is always." "Beating people down? ay, 'tis so." "O no d by the comely traveller's indifference, glanced back to where he had witnessed her performance over the hedge, and said, "Vanity." CHAPTER II NIGHT--THE FL
                                                   m; more
         spea
                k t
                      he
                                                                                   prob
                                                                                                ably she f
      e. "T hat
                       's a
                                                                 handsome
                                                                                       mai
                                                                                                            e sa
        "W
                     the n?'
                                                                                                  ps a lit
               hat .
                                                                        Gabriel
                                                                                                               tle piqu
                                                                                          perha
                                                                                                                         nearly m
   OCK -- A NINT ERIOR-
                                                                                NOTHER I
                                                                                                                                       idnight on the eve of St. Thomas's, the shortest day in the year. A desolating wind wandered from the north over the hill whereon Oak had watched the yello
                                           Α
                                                                                                    TERIOR It
   w w agg on and
                      it s o cc
                                          u
                                                                                  pant in the s
                                                                                                          unshi
                                                                                                                           of a few
                                                                                                                                               ays earlier. Norcombe Hill-not far from Ionely Toller-Down-was one of the spots which suggest to a passer-by that he is in the presence of a shape a
                                                                                                                                                   d on earth. It was a featureless convexity of chalk and soil--an ordinary specimen of those smoothly-outlined protuberances of the globe which mg rander heights and dizzy granite precipices topple down. The hill was covered on its northern side by an ancient and decaying plantation
  pproa
            ching the i nd e
                                                                                              ble as nearly as a
                                                                                                                            nv to
                                                                                                                                       be i
                                                                                                                            sion, whe
   a y remai
                n und ist urb
                                   e do
                                                                                            n some great day of confu
                                                                                                                                          n/fai
                                                                               rmed a line over the crest, fringing it's
                                                                                                                                                                gainst the sky, like a mane. To-night these trees sheltered the southern slope from the keenest blasts, which smote the wood and flou
     of beeches, whose upper
                                      verg
                                                                                                                                                 ed curve a
                                                                            f grumbling, or gushed over its crowning
                                                                                                                                                                         moan. The dry leaves in the ditch simmered and boiled in the same breezes, a tongue of air occasionally ferreting out a few, a
     ndered through it w ith a sou nd
                                               as o
                                                                                                                                           in a w
                                                                                                                                                    eakened
     nd sending them spinni ng across the gra
                                                                           ss. A group or two of the latest in date amo
                                                                                                                           ngst the dea d multitu
                                                                                                                                                                                d remained till this very mid-winter time on the twigs which bore them and in falling rattled against the trunks with sma
                                a ps . Betw een t
                                                                           his half-wooded half-naked hill, and the vag
                                                                                                                                                                   izon that
                                                                                                                                                                                     its summit indistinctly commanded, was a mysterious sheet of fathomless shade--the sounds from which suggest
                                                                                                                               ue sti
                                                                                                                                                II hor
                     ed that wh at it concealed bo
                                                                           re some reduced resemblance to features he re. The
                                                                                                                                                    grasses, mo
                                                                                                                                                                                            ting the hill, were touched by the wind in breezes of differing powers, and almost of differing natures--one ru
                                                                                                                                                                    re or less c oa
                                                                            another raking them piercingly, another brush ing t
                                                                                                                                        hem like a soft broom.
                                                                                                                                                                                  The insti
                                                                                                                                                                                                  nctive act of humankind was to stand and listen, and learn how the trees on the right and the trees on t
                      bb ing the blades heavily,
                     he left wailed or chaunte d to
                                                                             each other in the regular antiphonies of a cathedral choir; how hedges and o ther
                                                                                                                                                                                                      d then caught the note, lowering it to the tenderest sob; and how the hurrying gust then plunged int
                                                                                                                                                                          hapes to
                                                                                                                                                                                      leewa
                     o the sout
                                  h, to be hea rd no
                                                                             more. The sky was clear--remarkably clear--and the twinkling of all the stars
                                                                                                                                                                        seemed to
                                                                                                                                                                                              be b
                                                                                                                                                                                                           ut throbs of one body, timed by a common pulse. The North Star was directly in the wind's eye
                                                                            ning the Bear had swung round it outwardly to the east, till he was now at a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                  e meridian. A difference of colour in the stars--oftener read of than seen in England--wa
                                    nd sinc
                                                                                                                                                                                             e wi
                         , a
                                                                                                                                                                                                    r called C
                                                                          perceptible here. The sovereign brilliancy of Sirius pierced the eye with a ste
                                                                                                                                                                                                                         apella was yellow, Aldebaran and Betelgueux shone with a fiery red. To persons s
                                                                                                                                                                 ely glitte r,
                                                                                                                                                                                         he sta
                                                                   nding alone on a hill during a clear midnight such as this, the roll of the world ea
                                                                                                                                                                                                                           ement. The sensation may be caused by the panoramic glide of the stars past
                   ta
                                                                                                                                                                     stw ard is al
                                                                                                                                                                                       mo
                                                                                                                                                                                                st a palpable
                         thl
                                                           y objects, which is perceptible in a few minutes of stillness, or by the better outlook up
                                                                                                                                                                                                                               , or by the wind, or by the solitude; but whatever be its origin, the impressio
                    ar
                                                                                                                                                                                        ace
                                                                                                                                                                                                that a h
                                                                                                                                                                                                              ill aff ords
                                                                                                                                                                             on sp
                                                                                                                                                                                    form of
           n of ridi ng alo
                                                   ng is vivid and abiding. The poetry of motion is a phrase much in use, and to enjoy the epic
                                                                                                                                                                                                that
                                                                                                                                                                                                           gratificati
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      s necessary to stand on a hill at a small hour of the night, and, having
                 expan de d
                                            with a sense of difference from the mass of civilised mankind, who are dreamwrapt and disrega
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           is time, long and quietly watch your stately progress through the
        first
                                                                                                                                                                                rdful of all
                                                                                                                                                                                                         such proc
                                                                                                                                                                                                                     eedings at th
     stars . Af
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 g is de
                                           ch a nocturnal reconnoitre it is hard to get back to earth, and to believe that the consciousne
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                rived from a tiny human frame. Suddenly an unexpected ser
                           er su
                                                                                                                                                                       ss of
                                                                                                                                                                               such
                                                                                                                                                                                              majes
                                                                                                                                                                                                                     ic speedin
                                           eard in this place up against the sky. They had a clearness which was to be found nowher
                                                                                                                                                                                     in the wind, a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    to be found nowhere in nature. They were the notes of I
   es o f soun ds bega
                            n to be h
                                                                                                                                                                                                         nd a seq
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                e which was
                                                                                                                                                                                                                    uenc
                                                                                                                                                                  as altoget
                                                s not floating unhindered into the open air: it seemed muffled in some way, and w
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           wide. It came from the direction of a small dark obj
arm er Oa k's fl ute. The
                                 tune wa
                                                                                                                                                                                 her too curtailed
                                                                                                                                                                                                      in power to
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       ead high
                                                                                                                                                                                                                           spr
ect under the pl a ntation
                                 he d
                                                     -a shepherd's hut--now presenting an outline to which an uninitiated pers
                                                                                                                                                             on might have
                                                                                                                                                                                                        uzzled
                                                                                                                                                                                                                          to attach
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   r meaning or use. The image as a whole wa
                mal I Noah'
                                                            a small Ararat, allowing the traditionary outlines and general form of th
                                                                                                                                                            e Ark which are
                                                                                                                                                                               followed
                                                                                                                                                                                                  by toy-
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      ns are established in men's imagination
sthat of a s
                                s Ar
                                           k on
                                                                                                                                                                                                                  makers-- and by thes
                                                                  arliest impressions--to pass as an approximate pattern. The hut st
                                           se e
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           about a fo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        ot from the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            ground. Such shepherds' huts are
s a m ong th
                 eir firmest, b
                                 ecau
                                                                                                                                                   ood or
                                                                                                                                                                        lit tle wheels, w
                                                                                                                                                                                               hich r
                                                                                                                                                                                                                   aised it
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 s floor
dra gged i nt ot he fields
briel "Far mer" Oak. Du ri
                                                                              lambing season comes on, to shelter the shepherd in h
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  people had begun to call Ga
                                   when
                                           t he
                                                                                                                                                                    nig htly atten
                                                                                                                                                                                                                            ance
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           . It was onl
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         y latterly that
                "Oa k. Du rin g the twelv em
                                                                             on th preceding this time he had been enabled by sust ained
                                                                                                                                                         fforts of indus
                                                                                                                                                                                    v and
                                                                                                                                                                                                                              chron
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             od spirit
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      ease the small sheep-fai
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 ic go
m of wh ich No rcom be Hi
                                II was a port ion
                                                                             , and stock it with two hundred sheep. Previously he ha d been a bailiff for a sh
                                                                                                                                                                                ort tim
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       e, and e
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   ier still a sheph
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           erd only, having fro
                                                                                 tending the flocks of large proprietors, till old Gab
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          re, unaide
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      ths of
m his childh ood assisted
                                                                                                                                          riel s
                                                                                                                                                                                                        This ventu
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       d and alon e, into the pa
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   farming as m
                                           е
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            osition cl early. The
                                                                             e of sheep not yet paid for, was a critical juncture w it
                                                                                                                                                                    h Gabrie
        and not a s man, wi
                                  th an a
                                                                                                                                                                                                       I Oak, and he
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               reco
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           gnised his p
     nt in his
                                                                                             mbing of his ewes, and sheep ha ving
                                                                                                                                                                                                      from his youth
eme
                  new pro g
                                  re ss
                                                                                                                                                                speciality
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                isel
                                                                                                them at this season to a h ireling or a novic e. The lar space of light appeared in the si de of the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              e corners of the hu
fro m d eputin g the tas
                                             of t en din
                                                                            g
ta
                                                                                                                                                                                                       continued to be
tt hef lute-p lay i ng
                                         ea sed. A rec
                                                                                           ngular space of light appeared
                                                                                                                                                                                                       and in the openin
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             g the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       outline of Farmer Oak
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    's f igure.
                                                                               nd, and closing the door behind him, came forward and busied himself a
                                                                                                                                                                                     bout this nook of the field for near
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 ly twenty minutes, the lantern light appear
   He c arried
                                    ern in h
                                                                                                ening him or darkening him as he stood before or beh
                                                                                                                                                                                 ind it. Oak's motions, though the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              y had a quiet-energy, were slow, and the
          and disap
                         pe arin gh
                                                                        d there, and bright
ir de li bera t
                   en ess accor ded w ell with h
                                                                                                 tness being the basis of beauty, nobody could have
                                                                                                                                                                                 denied that his steady's wings an
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           d turns in and about the flock had elements
                                                                      is occupation. Fi
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          manner born, his special power, morally, phy sical
race. Yet, although if occasion demanded he co
                                                                                                   or think a thing with as mercurial a dash as can the
                                                                   uld do
                                                                                                                                                                               men of towns who are more to the
ly, and mentally, was static, owing little or noth ve been casually called a wild slope had been a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         ht only, revealed how a portion of what would ha
                                                                ing t
                                                                                                  o momentum as a rule. A close examination of the gro
                                                                                                                                                                             und hereabout, even by the wan starlig
                                                                                                    ed by Farmer Oak for his great purpose this winter. D
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         e stuck into the ground at various scattered poin
                                                                                                                                                                                     h urdles thatched with straw wer
                                                             ppro
                                                                             priat
ts, amid and under which the whitish forms of h
                                                                                                   es moved and rustled. The ring of the sheep-bell, which
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         n silent during his absence, recommenced, in t ones
                                                           is mee
                                                                                                                                                                                                    h a d bee
that had more mellowness than cl e
                                                                                                   ing to an increasing growth of surrounding wool. This con
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         tinued till Oak withdrew again from the flock. He ret
                                                arn
                                                       ess, ow
                                                     bringing
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         gh for a full-grown sheep, united by a seemin
                                         the hut,
                                                                                               in his arms a new-born lamb, consisting of four legs large enough
                 ne d
                          t o
                                                                                             ble membrane about half the substance of the legs collectively, whi
gly i nco
                                                  nsidera
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         ch constituted the animal's enti re bo dy jus
                                                                                           nt. The little speck of life he placed on a wisp of hay before the small
                                               t at pre
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        tove, where a can of milk
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              was
                                                                                          nguished the lantern by blowing into it and then pinching the snuff, the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            ndle
                                           mering.
                                                           Oak exti
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        ot being lighted by a ca
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     susp
                                                                                         ed wire. A rather hard couch, formed of a few corn sacks thrown carelessly
                                        ended by a twi
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 dow n, covered h
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           loor
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     of t
                                    his little habitation, and here
                                                                                        the young man stretched himself along, loosened his woollen cravat, and clos
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  ed his eyes. In abou t the ti
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    me a
                                person unaccustomed to bodil y l
                                                                                  abour would have decided upon which side to lie, Farmer Oak was asleep. The inside
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   e hut, as
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      it now presented itself
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          was cos y an
                           d alluring, and the scarlet handful o
                                                                                       in addition to the candle, reflecting its own genial colour upon whatever it could r
                                                                                                                                                                                                      ach, flu ng associatio ns of enjoy
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 utensils and
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      ment even
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         over
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    too
                                                                                         k, and along a shelf at one side were ranged bottles and canisters of the simple pr
                                                                                                                                                                                                      eparations pertaining to o vine sur
                       Is. In the corner stood the sheep-croo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      gery and
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         phy
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               sic; s
                     pirits of wine, turpentine, tar, magnes
                                                                                              ia, ginger, and castor-oil being the chief. On a triangular shelf across the corne
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     f or al
                                                                                                                                                                                                       r stood bread, bacon, c heese,
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      nd a cup
                     e or cider, which was supplied from
                                                                                               a flagon beneath. Beside the provisions lay the flute, whose notes had lately b
                                                                                                                                                                                                         een called forth by the lone
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        watch er to begu
                     ile a tedious hour. The house was
                                                                                                  ventilated by two round holes, like the lights of a ship's cabin, with wood slid
                                                                                                                                                                                                        es. The lamb
                                                                                                                                                                                                                           , revived by
                                                                                                     nd entered Gabriel's ears and brain with an instant meaning, as expected so
                                                                                                                                                                                                      unds will. Pas
                                                                                                                                                                                                                           sing from the
                e warmth began to bleat, and the sou
                                                                                                        efulness with the same ease that had accompanied the reverse operation,
             profoundest sleep to the most alert wak
                                                                                                                                                                                                    he looked at his watch, found that th
        e hour-hand had shifted again, put on his h
                                                                                                          at, took the lamb in his arms, and carried it into the darkness. After placin
                                                                                                                                                                                                  g the little creature with its mother, he st
    ood and careful ly examined the sky, to ascert
                                                                                                              ain the time of night from the altitudes of the stars. The Dog-star and Al
                                                                                                                                                                                                 debaran, pointing to the restless Pleiade
                     y up the Southern sky, and betwee
s, were half-wa
                                                                                                                         n them hung Orion, which gorgeous constellation never burnt
                                                                                                                                                                                                 more vividly than now, as it soared forth a
                  f the landscape. Castor
                                                                                                                                      and Pollux with their quiet shine were almost on t
                                                                                                                                                                                                   e meridian: the barren a nd gloom y Square
bove the rim o
of Pegasus
              was creeping round to th
                                                                                                                                          e north-west; far away through the plantation
                                                                                                                                                                                                   Vega sparkled like a lamp suspended amid the leafless trees,
           opeia's chair stood daintily
                                                                                                                                             poised on the uppermost boughs. "One
                                                                                                                                                                                                                   k," said Gabriel. Being a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  man not without a frequent conscio
and Cassi
ness tha t there was so me charm i
                                                                                                                                              n this life he led, he stood still after loo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                   king at the sky as a useful in strument, and regarded it in an appreciative spirit, as a w
          ork of art sup erlatively be
                                                                                                                                                autiful. For a moment he seemed impr
                                                                                                                                                                                                                     essed with the speaking loneliness of the scene, or rather with the complete abstract
         on from all it s compass of
                                                                                                                                                                                                                     n shapes, interferences, troubles, and joys were all as if t
                                                                                                                                                       sights and sounds of man. Huma
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   ey were not,
                                                                                                                                                                emisphere of the globe
                                                                                                                                                                                                                     no sentient being save himself; he could fancy them all gone ro und
            and th
                     ere seemed to
                                                 be on th
                                                                                 e shaded h
                                                                                                                                                                     ak gradually perceiv
                                                                                                                                                                                                                       ed that what he had previously taken to be a star low down behind the outskir ts
e sunny si
                     de. Occupied th
                                                us, with eyes stre
                                                                             tched afar, O
                                                ty no such thing. It was an artificial li
                                                                                                                                                   al
                                                                                                                                                                                                                         To find themselves utterly alone at night where company is desirable and expecte
of the plant
                  ation was in reali
                                                                                                                                                                      most close at hand.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                       erious companionship when intuition, se nsation, memory, analogy, testimony, putte in isolation. Farmer Oak went toward s the plantation and pushed through
d makes so
                me people fearful
                                                ; but a case more trying by far to the
                                                                                                                                                    sto
                                                                                                                                                                     discover some myst
                                                nd of evidence in the logician's list--have united to
                                                                                                                                                    persuade consciousness that it is q
robability, i
              nduction--every ki
                                                    de. A dim mass under the slope reminded him
                                                                                                                                                                                                                             ing a cutting into the slope of the hill, so that at its back part the roof was alm
its lower
            boughs to the windy
                                                                                                                                                    ed occupied a place here, the site
                                                        t it was formed of board nailed to posts and covere
                                                                                                                                                                                                                          es in the roof and side spread streaks and dots of light, a combination of which
ost leve
           I with the ground. In
                                              fron
                                                                                                                           d with tar
                                                                                                                                                   as a preservative. Through crevic
                                                             acted him. Oak stepped up behind, where, lean
                                                                                                                               ing down upon the roof and putting his eye close
                                                                                                                                                                                                                           to a hole, he could see into the interior clearly. The place contained two women
mad
        e the radiance that ha
                                            d attr
        and two cows. By the
                                            side of
                                                                 the latter a steaming bran-mash stood in
                                                                                                                                bucket. One of the women was past middle a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                            ge. Her companion was apparently young and graceful; he could form no deci
                                                                    ition being almost beneath his eye, so that he
                                                                                                                              saw her in a bird's-eye view, as Milton's Sa
                                                                                                                                                                                                                             tan first saw Paradise. She wore no bonnet or hat, but had enveloped herself
      ded opinion upon her lo
                                         oks, her pos
                                                                    er head as a covering. "There, now we'll go home," said the elder of the two, resting her knuckle re frightened in my life, but I don't mind breaking my rest if she recovers." The young woman, wh
   a large cloak, which was carelessly flung over h
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                s upon her hips, and looking at their goings-on as a whole. "I do hope Dais
   will fetch round again now. I have never been mo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  ose eyelids were apparently inclined to fall together on the smallest provo
cation of silence, yawned without parting her lips to
                                                                       any inconvenient extent, whereupon Gabriel caught the infection and slightly yawned in sympat
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    hy. "I wish we were rich enough to pay a man to do these things," she s
aid. "As we are not, we must do them ourselves," said th
such a slight wind catching it." The cow standing erect
                                                                        e other; "for you must help me if you stay." "Well, my hat is gone, how ever," continued the yo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        ent over the hedge, I think. The idea of
                                                                                                                                                         h Indian red, as absolu
                                                                        was of the Devon breed, and was encased in a tight warm hide of ric
                                                                                                                                                                                               tely uniform fro
m eyes to tail as if the animal had been dipped in a dye o
                                                                        f that colour, her long back being mathematically level. The othe
                                                                                                                                                          r was spotted, grey an d white. Beside her Oak now noticed a litt
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             le calf ab
out a day old, looking idiotically at the two women, which
                                                                       showed that it had not long been accustomed to the phenom en
                                                                                                                                                           on of eyesight, and often turning to the lantern, which it apparently mistook for the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         moon, inherited instinct having as yet had little time
for correction by experience. Between the sheep and the c ows Lucina had been busy on Norcombe Hill lately. "I thin s light." "But there's no side-saddle." "I can ride on the other: trust me." Oak, upon hearing these remarks, became more
                                                                    ows Lucina had been busy on Norcombe Hill lately. "I think
                                                                                                                                                          e had better send for some oatmeal, said the elder woman; "there's no more bran.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              "Yes, aunt; and I'll ride over for it as soon as it i
                                                                                                                                            С
                                                                                                                                                          urious to observe her features, but this prospect being denied him by the hood
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   g effect of the cloak, and by his aerial posit
ion, he felt himself drawing upon his fancy for their details. In making even horizontal and clear inspections we colour a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 Had Gabriel b
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  een able from the first to get
                                                                                                                                                          d mould according to the wants within us whatever our eyes bring in.
                                                                                                                                            n
a distinct view of her countenance, his estimate of it as very handsome or slightly so would have been as his soul re
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           ne. Having for some tim
                                                                                                                                                         quired a divinity at the mo
                                                                                                                                                                                        ment or was ready supplied with o
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       e known the want of a sa
tisfactory form to fill an increasing void within him, his position moreover affording the widest scope for his fancy,
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 himsical coincidences in which Natu
                                                                                                                                                         he painted her a beauty. By
                                                                                                                                                                                                     one of those w
busy mother, seems to spare a moment from her unremitting labours to turn and make her children smile, the gir
                                                                                                                                                         now dropped the cloak, and fort
                                                                                                                                                                                                                      h tumbled ropes of black hair over a red jacket. Oak
knew her instantly as the heroine of the yellow waggon, myrtles, and looking-glass: prosily, as the woman who
ng down the hill till it was no more than a nebula. Gabriel Oak returned to his flock. CHAPTER III A GIRL ON
                                                                                                                                                          wed him twopence. They placed the c
                                                                                                                                                                                                          alf beside its mother again, took up the lantern, and went out, the lig
                                                                                                                                    HORSE
                                                                                                                                                         BACK--CONVERSATION The sluggish d
                                                                                                                                                                                                          began to break. Even its position terrestrially is one of the elements of a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       new inter
est, and for no particular reason save that the incident of the night had occurred there Oak went again into t
                                                                                                                                                                                                       rd the steps of a horse at the foot of the hill, and soon there appeared in vie
                                                                                                                                   he plantat
                                                                                                                                                         ion. Lingering and musing here, he hea
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   w an auburn
pony with a girl on its back, ascending by the path leading past the cattle-shed. She was the young woman o
                                                                                                                                                         before. Gabriel instantly thought of the
                                                                                                                                                                                                        hat she had mentioned as having lost in the wind; possibly she had come
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  to look for it. H
e hastily scanned the ditch and after walking about ten yards along it found the hat among the leaves. Gabriel took it in his hand a
                                                                                                                                                         nd returned to his hut. Here he ensconc
                                                                                                                                                                                                                    himself, and peeped through the loophole in th
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               irection of the rid
er's approach. She came up and looked around--then on the other side of the hedge. Gabriel was about to advance and restore th
                                                                                                                                                       e missing article when an unexp
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                ected performance induced h
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              im to suspend the
action for the present. The path, after passing the cowshed, bisected the plantation. It was not a bridle-path--merely a pedestrian's
                                                                                                                                                      track, and the boughs spread hor
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           zontally at a height n
ot greater than seven feet above the ground, which made it impossible to ride erect beneath them. The girl, who wore no riding-habit, looked around for a moment, as if to as
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     rself that
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      all humanity was out of vi
ew, then dexterously dropped backwards flat upon the pony's back, her head over its tail, her feet against its shoulders, and her eyes to the sky. The rapidity of her glide int
                                                                                                                                                                                                o this position was that of a k
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             ingfisher--its no
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    iselessness that of a hawk
Gabriel's eyes had scarcely been able to follow her. The tall lank pony seemed used to such doings, and ambled along unconcerned. Thus she passed untitle bulby here between a horse's cessity for this abnormal attitude having ceased with the passage of the plantation, she began to adopt another, even more obviously convenient than the first. She had no side-saddle, and it was very apparent that a firm seat upon the smooth lead was unattainable sideways. Springing to her accustomed perpendicular like a bowed sapling, and satisfying herself that nobody was in sight, she seated herself in the manner demanded by the saddle, though hardly expected of the woman, an doff in the direction of Tewnell Mill. Oak was amused, perhaps a little astonished, and hanging up the hat in his hut, went again among his ewes. An hour passed, the girl returned, properly seated now, with a bag of bran in front of her. On nearing the cattle-shed she was met by a boy bringing a milking-pail, who held the reins of the pony whilst she slid off. The boy led away the horse, leaving the pail with the young woman. Soon soft spirts alternating with came in regular succession from within the shed, the obvious sounds of a person milking a cow. Gabriel took the lost hat in his hand, and waited beside the path she would follow in leaving the hill. She came, the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   head and its tail, and the ne
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  ther beneath her
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   d trotte
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         loud
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  pail in one hand, hanging aga
inst her knee. The left arm was extended as a balance, enough of it being shown bare to make Oak wish that the event had happened in the summer, when the whole would hav e been revealed. The
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        re was a bright air and manner about
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                a beholder felt it to be, upon the whole, true. I
her now, by which she seemed to imply that the desirability of her existence could not be questioned; and this rather saucy assumption failed in being offensive because
ike exceptional emphasis in the tone of a genius, that which would have made mediocrity ridiculous was an addition to recognised power. It was with some surprise that
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        riel's face rising like the moon behind the hedge. The
adjustment of the farmer's hazy conceptions of her charms to the portrait of herself she now presented him with was less a diminution than a difference. The starting-poi nt selected by the judg ment was her height. See diminutive; hence, making allowance for error by comparison with these, she could have been not above the height to be chosen by women as best. All features of consequence were severe and regular. It may have bee
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  he seemed tall, but the pail was a small one, and the hedge
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 n observed by persons who go about the shires with eyes
or beauty, that in Englishwoman a classically-formed face is seldom found to be united with a figure of the same pattern, the highly-finished features being generally too large for the remainder of the frame; that a grac
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                eful and proportio
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 nate figure of
eight heads usually goes off into random facial curves. Without throwing a Nymphean tissue over a milkmaid, let it be said that here criticism checked itself as out of place, and looked at her proportions with a long
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           sness of ple
sure. From the contours of her figure in its upper part, she must have had a beautiful neck and shoulders; but since her infancy nobody had ever seen them. Had she been put into a low dress she would have a verse was not a shy girl by any means; it was merely her instinct to draw the line dividing the seen from the unseen higher than they do it in towns. That the girl's thoughts hovered about her face and for
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    un and thrust her head into a b
```

Farmer Oak smiled, the corners of his mouth spread till t

his countenance like the rays in a rudimentary sketch of the rising sun. His C

hey were within an

hristian name was

unimportant dist

Gabriel, and on wor

m as soon as she caught Oak's eyes

Far from the Madding Crowd by Thomas Hardy CHAPTER I DESCRIPTION OF FARMER OAK--AN INCIDENT When

ance of his ears, his eyes were reduced to chinks, and diverging wrinkles appeared round them, extending upon