

the meadows along the hocks was necessary to him - & he liked to be at work. Three score & ten did not seem the limit of his working days. He still could & would live - a bowed back is not in predilection, perhaps an advantage at their occupation - He could use a prong in the hay making - he could reap a cut to, & do good service lying up the corn - There were many cut to jobs on the farm that required experience, combined with plodding patience of age & that he would do better than a stronger man - The year went on round again & yet he worked - Indeed the farther back a man's birth dates in the beginning of the present century the more determined he seems to labour - He worked on till every member of his family had gone, not to their last home, & still went out at times when the weather was not so severe. He worked on & pottered round the

Hodge's Last Days.

Richard Jeffries.

— "Is a child he played in the ditch & hedge, or crept through into the meadow & searched in the spring for violets to offer to the passers by; & he swung on the gate in the lane & held open for the farmers in their gigs, in hope of a half penny - — "Is a lad he went forth with his father to work in the fields & came home to the cabbage boiler for the evening meal - It was not a very roomy or comfortable house to return to after so many hours in the field, exposed to rain & wind or snow or summer ^{sun} ~~rain~~ - The stone of the floor were uneven & did not fit at the edges. There was a beam across the lower end to a wall which, as he, saw older the had to bow his head when crossing the apartment. A wooden ladder, & steps - not a staircase proper, behind the white washed partition led to the

bedroom - The steps were worn almost
flat. In the sitting room the narrow
panes of the small window were so over-
grown with woodbine as to admit
but little light - But in summer the
door was wide open & the sun & the soft
air came in - The thick walls & thatch
kept it warm in winter when they
gathered round the fire -

Every day in his manhood he went out to
the field, every stem, a to were of life
centred in that little cottage - In time
he came to occupy it with his wife, &
his children in their turn crept thro'
the hedge & swung upon the gate -
They grew up, & one by one went away till
at last he was left alone -

"He had not taken much conscious
note of the changing aspect of the scene
around him - The violet flowered
year after year - still he went to
plough. The dog bloomed & scented the
hedge - still he went to his work -
The green summer foliage became
brown & the autumnal feel from the dais.

Still he laboured on & saw the ice & snow
& heard the wind roar in the old
familiar trees without much thought
of it - But these old familiar trees -
the particular hedge he had worked
among so many years, the very
turf of the meadows he had walked
so many times, the view down the
road from the garden gate, & the
distant sign post & the red bricked
farmhouse, all these things had
become part of his life.

"There was no ~~longer~~ hope or
joy left to him but he wanted to
stay on among them to the end -
He liked to dig up the little plot of
potatoes - he liked to creep up the
ladder & mend the thatch of the cottage
he liked to cut him self a cabbage
& to gather the small baskets full
of apples - There was a kind of dull
pleasure in cropping the elder hedges
& even in collecting the dead branches
scattered under the trees.
So he about the ~~hedges~~ hedges, in

Hodge died & the very grave digger grumbled as he delved for
thru' the earth, hard bound in iron foot. for it jarred his
hand trying to break the spade.

The low mound will soon be level & the place of the burr
shall not be known — " R. J.

What amount of production did the old man's life & labour
represent? What value must be put upon the service of the
son who fought in India, of the son who worked in Australia,
the daughter ~~at~~ in New Zealand and whose children with help
did up a new nation? These things surely have their value.

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