



THE FALLOW DEER

AT THE LONELY HOUSE

One without looks in to-night
Through the curtain-chink
From the sheet of glistening white;
One without looks in tonight
As we sit and think
By the fender brink.

We do not discern those eyes
Watching in the snow;
Lit by lamps of rosy dyes
We do not discern those eyes
Wondering, aglow,
Fourfooted, tiptoe.

Thomas Hardy



by Walter William Oules
oil on canvas, 1922

THOMAS HARDY

(1840 – 1928)

Although he is more famous for his novels, Thomas Hardy wrote poetry throughout his life, and thought of it as a superior art form. After *Jude the Obscure* caused an uproar (it was ‘burnt by a bishop,’ said Hardy, ‘probably in his despair at not being able to burn me’), he gave up fiction altogether and concentrated on writing poems.

His eight volumes of poetry (beginning with *Wessex Poems* in 1898 and ending with *Winter Words* in 1928) were received without enthusiasm, except by the discerning few. The most remarkable are in the group of poems written in recollection of his first wife, Emma. Hardy had fallen out of love with her, and she took to the attic room, like a latter-day Mrs Rochester. After her death in 1912 he rediscovered his love for her (even though he soon married Florence Dugdale, 39 years his junior). He wrote a whole series of poems of heartbreak, regret, grief, guilt and longing for the passion that he had once felt, and the wife he had neglected.

Hardy is now regarded as a great poet as well as a great novelist.