

## Hardy's First Experiences with American Publishers

The publishing house of Henry Holt & Co. was the first to issue an American edition of a novel by Thomas Hardy. Upon the recommendation of Frederick Macmillan and without consulting Hardy about their intentions Holt included *Under the Greenwood Tree* in their Leisure Hour Series in 1873. On 29 May Henry Holt informed Hardy:

... I have caused "Under the Greenwood Tree" to be prepared for publication, which soon will take place.

Should it be successful, you shall participate in the profits. I would then want to publish "A Pair of Blue Eyes," and it would be to the mutual advantage if you would let me know at once how much longer "A Pair of Blue Eyes" will run in *Tinsley* and, if practicable, send me at once proofs of all later than the May number.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike the British first edition of *Under the Greenwood Tree* the American first edition was not published anonymously but named "T. Hardy" as the author. Carl Weber points out that instead of forwarding the desired copies of the remaining instalments of *A Pair of Blue Eyes*<sup>2</sup> Hardy sent a copy of a favourable review this novel had received in the *Spectator* and made inquiries about the American publishing house.<sup>3</sup> Although Hardy did not exactly respond in the way Holt had hoped for, Holt nevertheless made arrangements for the publication of *A Pair of Blue Eyes* by his firm, of which he informed Hardy in July 1873. The American first edition appeared in the same year. One year later Holt printed *Desperate Remedies* and *Far from the Madding Crowd*. All of these novels appeared as part of the Leisure Hour Series.

Hardy learned much about the American book market from a dispute about the American rights for the serialisation and first book publication of *Far from the Madding Crowd*. On 3 March 1874 Smith, Elder & Co. wrote to Hardy:

Dear Sir,

We have, much to our regret, been informed by our Agents Messrs. J.R. Osgood & Co. of Boston, U.S. who purchased the right of printing articles that appear in the "Cornhill Magazine" in their periodical the "Atlantic Monthly", and that they have been required to relinquish the republication of your story "Far from the Madding Crowd" in favour of Messrs. H. Holt & Co., who state that they have arranged with you for advance sheets.

We are sorry to be under the necessity of reminding you that you made no reservation of the early sheets for America, which, therefore, we considered to be included in our purchase of your story for the "Cornhill Magazine" and for subsequent publication. And as we sent an early copy of this periodical to Messrs. Osgood & Co. under a long standing agreement, we shall have to make them a considerable deduction, in the consequence from their payment to us for the right of reprinting the "Cornhill Magazine"; we have therefore, more than one reason to regret your not having apprized us in the first instance of your arrangement with Messrs. Holt & Co.

We remain, dear Sir,  
Yours very faithfully,<sup>4</sup>

Although Smith, Elder mention the *Atlantic Monthly* as the periodical in which *Far from the Madding Crowd* was intended to be serialised in America, Hardy's novel never appeared in it. There were two American serialisations which came out almost simultaneously in *Every Saturday* (from 31 January till 24 October 1874) and in *Littel's Living Age* (from 31 January 1874 till 9 January 1875). Until 1873 Osgood owned the *Atlantic Monthly* and *Every Saturday*; he then sold both publications to Hurd & Houghton and to H.O. Houghton & Co.<sup>5</sup>

Hardy had, once again, made no arrangement with Holt for their publication of *Far from the Madding Crowd* and informed Smith, Elder accordingly.<sup>6</sup> In his response Hardy included a copy of a letter which he had previously received from the American publisher stating:

... Conformably to the usage among American publishers Mess<sup>rs</sup> Osgood & Co. have transferred the right to issue it [*Far from the Madding Crowd*] in book form to us, we having introduced you here. We shall probably have to pay the sum they agreed to pay Mess<sup>rs</sup> Smith Elder & Co. and will of course correspondingly be crippled in our ability to make the work profitable to you. As they have the use of the story for their periodical of course they will only charge back to SE & Co. a portion of SE & Co.'s total charge. As yet they have advised me of none of the details. Thereafter it would be best for you to reserve the right of reissue in America.<sup>7</sup>

Relieved at Hardy's clarification Smith, Elder replied:

Dear Sir,

We beg to thank you for a copy of Messrs. Holt's letter to you, and in reference to their remark as to their anticipation of having to make a payment to us, we can only say that until we hear from our Agents we cannot explain it; but we hope to be able to do so in a satisfactory manner in so far as we are concerned.

Meanwhile, we can explain Messrs. Osgood's conduct in transferring the right of reprinting your story in book form. It is the custom of American publishers to regard the firm which first makes a prize of a new English book (or to use Messrs. Holt's euphemism, introduces a new Author) as entitled to reprint every work of the same writer; and with a nice sense of humour the right is respected in America, quite irrespective of any other consideration.

Immediately we hear from our Agents we will write to you and explain how the matter stands, meanwhile,

We are, dear Sir,  
Yours very faithfully,<sup>8</sup>

After this misunderstanding Hardy and Smith, Elder were more careful concerning their arrangements. When Smith, Elder offered Hardy £700<sup>9</sup> for the right to serialise *The Hand of Ethelberta* in the *Cornhill* and afterwards to print its first edition in book form for one year, they pointed out explicitly that Hardy is "free to deal with American Publishers and with Continental Copyright" while Smith, Elder retained the right to issue "Colonial Publications".<sup>10</sup> Thus they followed Holt's advice to Hardy of dealing with the British and American publication rights separately. In America *The Hand of Ethelberta* was serialised in *The New York Times* and ran from 20 June 1875 to 9 April 1876. Like all of Hardy's previous novels its first publication in book form was taken care of by Holt who included it in their Leisure Hour Series in 1876.

<sup>1</sup> Weber, Carl. *Hardy in America: A Study of Thomas Hardy and His American Readers*. Waterville, Maine: Colby College Press, 1946. 15.

<sup>2</sup> The serialisation of *A Pair of Blue Eyes* appeared in *Tinsley's Magazine* between September 1872 and July 1873.

<sup>3</sup> Weber, *Hardy in America*, 16.

<sup>4</sup> Copy of a Letter of 3 March 1874 from Smith, Elder & Co. to Hardy. National Library of Scotland (henceforth: NLS), MS 23173 (31). Note: This copy is unsigned.

<sup>5</sup> Weber, Carl. J. *The Rise and Fall of James Ripley Osgood*. Waterville, Maine, 1959. 144.

<sup>6</sup> See Hardy's letter to Smith, Elder & Co. of 4 March 1974 (Purdy, Richard Little and Michael Millgate. *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy* Vol. 1. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978. 28).

<sup>7</sup> Copy of a letter of 28 Feb 1874 from Holt & Co. to Hardy. NLS, MS 23173 (41)

<sup>8</sup> Letter of 17 March from Smith, Elder & Co. to Hardy. NLS, MS 23173 (43). Note: This copy is unsigned.

<sup>9</sup> Letter of 22 March 1875 from Smith, Elder & Co. To Hardy. DCM.

<sup>10</sup> Letter of 9 March 1875 from George Smith to Hardy. DCM.