

WESSEX TALES

put up his hand so—with the pencil in it. Yes, the writing was sideways, as it would be if executed by one who extended his arm thus.

These inscribed shapes of the poet's world,

‘Forms more real than living man,
Nurslings of immortality,’

were, no doubt, the thoughts and spirit-strivings which had come to him in the dead of night, when he could let himself go and have no fear of the frost of criticism. No doubt they had often been written up hastily by the light of the moon, the rays of the lamp, in the blue-grey dawn, in full daylight perhaps never. And now her hair was dragging where his arm had lain when he secured the fugitive fancies; she was sleeping on a poet's lips, immersed in the very essence of him, permeated by his spirit as by an ether.

While she was dreaming the minutes away thus, a footstep came upon the stairs, and in a moment she heard her husband's heavy step on the landing immediately without.

‘Ell, where are you?’

What possessed her she could not have described, but, with an instinctive objection to let her husband know what she had been doing, she slipped the photograph under the pillow just as he flung open the door, with the air of a man who had dined not badly.

‘O, I beg pardon,’ said William Marchmill. ‘Have you a headache? I am afraid I have disturbed you.’

‘No, I've not got a headache,’ said she. ‘How is it you've come?’

‘Well, we found we could get back in very good time after all, and I didn't want to make another day of it, because of going somewhere else to-morrow.’

‘Shall I come down again?’

‘O no. I'm as tired as a dog. I've had a good feed, and I shall turn in straight off. I want to get