

FOREWORD

A MODEST comedy of Dartmoor, planned more than twenty years ago, is now finished, and it may be permitted to address those few fellow artists and amateurs who have honoured me with their interest to the end.

They are invited to judge the work as a whole and from no fragment; they are asked to consider it as a frieze, carved largely and roughly, whereon victors, vanquished, and spectators of the ceaseless struggle play their parts in the great hypæthral theatre of the Western Moors. The workmanship is archaic, yet I venture to claim form and economy of means so austere that the difficulties have often conquered me.

But in the temples of art every servant shall find his or her place; and while the greatest alone can fill the niche, wreath the column, and adorn the holy of holies, the least may bring something to make fair each nook and corner, may add a minor freseo, or piece of patient carving, that shall not shrink from the sunbeam.

The purpose of this attempt can be set down in a phrase. I have tried "to say 'yea' to life, even in its most difficult problems, and to display a will to life rejoicing at its own vitality in the sacrifice of its highest types." Doubtless many a young writer, blessed with courage, imagination, and a soul unshadowed by superstition, has, consciously or unconsciously, despised the line of least resistance and done likewise. But the way is steep; it leads swiftly up to tragedy and the fearless acceptance of things as they are. To quote again from Nietzsche, this attitude "lifts a creator higher than Aristotle's 'terror and pity' to a realm that denies the subjection of any emotion." It is a realm wherein pessimism is choked, for only the humanist can breathe there. The world declines to endure so chill an atmosphere: she will not be racked on the mountains of the