**History of English Literature-II**

**UNIT-V**

**THOMAS HARDY (1840-1912)**

Hardy’s first published work was rather sensational Desperate Remedies. This novel had an involved construction. His next novel was the charming idyll ‘Under the Greenwood Tree’. It was set in the rural area which he later made famous as Wessex. His next novel ‘A pair of Blue Eyes’ was an ironical work. ‘Far from the Madding Crowd’, a tragi-comedy set in Wessex, is the first of the great novels that made him famous. The novel has a rural background. It reveals the emotional entanglements of rustic characters.

**Aspects of Hardy’s Novels**

**Hardy’s Subjects**

In novel after novel Hardy deal with the subject of human beings being buffeted by a malign power. Man is shown to be the plaything of chance. Hardy’s attitude to life is markedly different from that of his contemporaries Tennyson and Browning who were facile optimists. Hardy’s view of life was one of pessimism and disillusionment.

**His treatment of his themes**

Hardy conveys his pessimistic philosophy through an over- frequent use of chance and coincidence. The charge often leveled against Hardy is that he over- emphasizes the element of chance. Most of the turning points in his novels are brought about by chance happenings only.

**His Characters**

Hardy’s characters mostly belong to the countryside. In some of his novels he portrays the clash between the city and the country side. Clym Yeobright coming from Paris appears as glamorous as a creature from heaven to Eustacia Vye in ‘The Return of the Native’. In the same novel Thomasin prefers the fashionable man from Budmouth, Wildeve, to the kind but unpolished reddleman Diggory Venn. In almost all his novels Hardy introduces a group of minor rustics who are a frequent source of pithy humour and serve as a chorus commenting on the actions of the main characters.

**His treatment of Nature**

Hardy was born and brought up in the countryside in the midst of beautiful natural scenes. In his novels Hardy presents nature in Wessex not merely as a background but as an unfeeling observer of human tragedies and turmoils. Such is the role played by Edgon Health in ‘The Return of the Native’.