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'Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul?'

Jude Fawley, poor and working-class, longs to study at the University of Christminster, but he is rebuffed, and trapped in a loveless marriage. He falls in love with his unconventional cousin Sue Bridehead, and their refusal to marry when free to do so confirms their rejection of and by the world around them. The shocking fate that overtakes them is an indictment of a rigid and uncaring society.

Hardy's last and most controversial novel, *Jude the Obscure* caused outrage when it was published in 1895. This is the first truly critical edition, taking account of the changes that Hardy made over twenty-five years. It includes a new chronology and bibliography and substantially revised notes.