

**UNDER THE GREENWOOD  
TREE. A PURAL PAINTING  
OF THE DUTCH SCHOOL**

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Under the Greenwood Tree. A Pural Painting of the Dutch School by Thomas Hardy

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**THOMAS HARDY**

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OF THE DUTCH SCHOOL**



UNDER THE  
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A RURAL PAINTING OF THE  
DUTCH SCHOOL

BY

THOMAS HARDY

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PART I

*WINTER*

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# UNDER THE GREENWOOD TREE

## CHAPTER I

### MELLSTOCK LANE

To dwellers in a wood, almost every species of tree has its voice as well as its feature. At the passing of the breeze, the fir-trees sob and moan no less distinctly than they rock; the holly whistles as it battles with itself; the ash hisses amid its quiverings; the beech rustles while its flat boughs rise and fall. And winter, which modifies the note of such trees as shed their leaves, does not destroy its individuality.

On a cold and starry Christmas eve, less than a generation ago, a man was passing along a lane in the darkness of a plantation that whispered thus distinctively to his intelligence. All the evidences of his nature were those afforded by the spirit of his footsteps, which succeeded each other lightly and quickly, and by the liveliness of his voice as he sang in a rural cadence:—

“With the rose and the lily  
And the daffodowndilly,  
The lads and the lasses a-sheep-shearing go.”

The lonely lane he was following connected the hamlets of Mellstock and Lewgate, and to his eyes, casually glancing upward, the silver and black-stemmed birches with their characteristic tufts, the pale grey boughs of oak, the dark