

27. Thomas Hardy

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***Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891)**

Tess  100

In the following scene Angel and Tess are confronted with the reality of the modern world: they go to the railway station to load milk onto a train.

They crept along¹ towards a point in the
expanse of shade² just at hand at which a
feeble light was beginning to assert its
presence, a spot where, by day, a fitful white
5 streak of steam³ at intervals upon the dark
green background denoted intermittent
moments of contact between their secluded
world and modern life. Modern life
stretched out its steam feeler⁴ to this point
10 three or four times a day, touched the
native existences, and quickly withdrew its
feeler again, as if what it touched had
been uncongenial.

They reached the feeble light, which came from the smoky lamp of a little railway
15 station; a poor enough terrestrial star, yet in one sense of more importance to
Talbothays Dairy⁵ and mankind than the celestial ones to which it stood in such
humiliating contrast. The cans of new milk were unladen⁶ in the rain, Tess getting a
little shelter from a neighbouring holly tree.

Then there was the hissing⁷ of a train, which drew up almost silently upon the wet
20 rails, and the milk was rapidly swung can by can into the truck⁸. The light of the
engine flashed for a second upon Tess Durbeyfield's figure, motionless under the
great holly tree. No object could have looked more foreign to the gleaming cranks⁹
and wheels than this unsophisticated girl, with the round bare arms, the rainy face
and hair, the suspended attitude of a friendly leopard at pause, the print gown of no
25 date or fashion, and the cotton bonnet drooping¹⁰ on her brow¹¹.



The world's first electric tram began operation in 1881 in Germany and was produced by Werner von Siemens.

1. **crept along**: moved slowly and quietly (it. *avanzavano lentamente*)

2. **expanse of shade**: it. *distesa d'ombra*

3. **fitful white streak of steam**: irregular white line of steam (it. *bianca linea discontinua di vapore*)

4. **feeler**: it. *antenna*

5. **Talbothays Dairy**: the farm where Tess is working now

6. **unladen**: unloaded (it. *scaricati*)

7. **hissing**: it. *sibilo*

8. **truck**: it. *carro*

9. **gleaming cranks**: bright handle (it. *manovella luccicante*)

10. **drooping**: falling down, bending (it. *afflosciato*)

11. **brow**: forehead