

# The History Boys

Hector  
Still here

Posner  
It is Wednesday, Sir.

Hector  
Yes, Well “AHH”, I thought it was the daytrip to Fountain’s and  
‘AHH”

Posner  
It is only half past 4

Hector  
Well, In that case, where is Dakin ?

Posner  
With Mr. Irwin, Sir

Hector  
“EEMM”.Of course.

Posner  
He is showing him some old exam questions.

Hector  
“JEAHH”,Pornography ,no doubt.  
Well, No matter.We must keep up the fight without him.  
What have we learned this week?

Posner  
“Drummer Hodge”, Sir ---Hardy

Hector  
“AAHH”, nice.

Posner  
“They throw in Drummer Hodge, to rest  
Uncoffined-just as found:  
His landmark is a kopie-crest  
That breaks the veldt around:  
And foreign constellations west  
Each night above his mound.

‘Young Hodge the Drummer never knew-  
Fresh from his Wessex home-  
The meaning of the broad Karoo,  
The Bush, the dusty loam,  
And why uprose to nightly view  
Strange stars amid a gloam.

‘Yet portion of that unknown plain  
Will Hodge for ever be;  
His homely Northern breast and brain  
Grow to some Southern tree,  
And strange-eyed constellations reign  
His stars eternally

Hector  
Good. Very good. ....Any thoughts?

Posner

I just wondered, Sir, if this  
'Portion of that unknown plain  
Will Hodge for ever be'  
Is like Rupert Brooke, Sir,  
'There's some corner of a foreign field...'  
'In that rich earth a richer dust concealed...'

Hector

It is, it is. It's the same thought... though.. Hardy's  
Is better, I think... ah ..more ah ..more, well  
Down to earth, yes, Quite literally., down to earth.  
....Anything about his name?

Posner

Hodge?

Hector

Mmm—the important thing is that he has a name.  
Say Hardy is writing about the Zulu Wars or later the Boer War  
possibly  
These were the first campaigns when soldiers.....  
Or common soldiers..were commemorated,  
the names of the dead recorded and inscribed on war memorials.  
Before this, soldiers...private soldier anyway....  
were all unknown soldiers  
and so far from being revered  
there was a firm in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in Yorkshire of course,  
which swept up their bones from the battlefields of Europe  
in order to grind them into fertilizer.....  
So, thrown into a common grave though he may be,  
He is still 'Hodge the drummer'  
Lost boy though he is on the far side of the world,  
He still has a name.

Posner  
How old was he?

Hector  
If he's a drummer, he would be a young soldier,  
Younger than you probably.

Posner  
No. Hardy

Hector  
Oh, how old was Hardy? When he wrote this,  
About 60.....My age ,I suppose...  
A Saddish life, though not unappreciated.....

'Uncoffined' is a typical Hardy usage.  
It's a compound adjective,  
formed by putting an 'un-' in front of the noun.  
Or verb ,of course.....  
Un-kissed....Un-rejoicing....Un-confessed....Un-embraced.

It's a turn of phrase  
That brings with it a sense of not sharing  
Of being out of it.  
Whether because of diffidence or shyness,....  
But a holding back. Not being in the swim.  
Can you see that?

Posner  
Yes, Sir. I felt that a bit.

## Hector

The best moments in reading are when you come across  
something—

A thought, a feeling, a way at looking at things—  
That you had thought special and particular to you.

(Looking at an imagined book)

And here it is, set down by someone else,  
A person you have never met,  
Maybe even someone long dead.

And it is as if a hand has come out and taken yours.

(Puts out his hand and it seems for a moment as if Posner will  
take it)

Let's just have the last verse again and I'll let you go.

## Posner

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Will Hodge for ever be;  
His homely Northern breast and brain  
Grow to some Southern tree,  
And strand-eyed constellations reign  
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