Many poems were written by Hardy at the end of the previous year and the early part of this—more than he had ever written before in the same space of time—as can be seen by referring to their subjects, as well as to the dates attached to them. To adopt Walpole’s words concerning Gray, Hardy was “in flower” in these days, and, like Gray’s, his flower was sad-coloured.

On March 6—almost to a day forty-three years after his first journey to Cornwall—he started for St. Juliot, putting up at Boscastle; and visiting Pentargan Bay and Beeny Cliff, which he had not once set foot on in the long interval. It very unhappily chanced that his wife and he had arranged to go there this very year together, after postponing their intention for several years.

He found the rectory and other scenes with which he had been so familiar changed a little, but not greatly, and returning by way of Plymouth arranged for a memorial tablet to Mrs Hardy in the church with which she had been so closely associated as organist before her marriage, and in other ways. The tablet was afterwards erected to his own design, as was also the tomb in Stinsford Churchyard—in the preparation of which memorials he had to
revive a species of work that he had been unaccustomed to since the years of his architectural pupillage.

In June he left for Cambridge to receive the honorary degree of Litt.D., and lunched with the Master of Magdalene (also Vice-Chancellor) Dr Donaldson, and Lady Albinia Donaldson, meeting—some for the first and last time—the Master of Trinity and Mrs Butler, John Sargent, Arthur Benson, Henry Jackson, Vice-Master of Trinity and the Regius Professor of Greek, Sir James Murray, and many others. The visit was full of interest for Hardy as being the sequel to his long indirect connection with the University in several ways, partly through the many graduates who were his friends, his frequent visits to the place, and his intention in the eighteen-sixties to go up himself for a pass-degree, which was abandoned mainly owing to his discovery that he could not conscientiously carry out his idea of entering the church. A few weeks later he was elected an Honorary Fellow of Magdalene, as will be seen.

In July he was in London once or twice, meeting Dr Page the American Ambassador, Mr and Mrs Asquith, and others here and there. A German translation of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* under the title of *Der Bürgermeister* was begun as a serial in Germany at this time, and in the same month the gift of the MS. of his poem on Swinburne's death was acknowledged by the Newnes Librarian at Putney, an offer which had originated with Mr Sydney Cockerell. In response to a request from the Secretary of the General Blind Association he gave his permission to put some of his books in prose and verse into Braille type for the use of the blind, adding:

I cannot very well suggest which, as I do not know the length you require. . . . If a full-length novel, I would suggest "The Trumpet-Major". If verse, The Battle of Trafalgar Scenes or the Battle of Waterloo scenes, from "The Dynasts", or a selection from the Poems. . . . I am assuming that you require scenes of action rather than those of reflection or analysis.

In August he was at Blandford with Mr John Lane searching about for facts and scenes that might illustrate the life of Alfred Stevens, the sculptor whose best known work is the Wellington monument in St. Paul's, and who was born and grew up in this town. Hardy had suggested that it ought to be written before it was too late, and Mr Lane had taken up the idea. The house of his birth was discovered, but not much material seems to have been gained.