

The sons veto, tony
kytes – arch deceiver,
and on the western
front



Women's role in society now, is very different to how it used to be, mainly due to the suffrage movement. In the nineteenth century women couldn't vote, were not considered equal to men, and also couldn't even earn a living. Most of the time men would look down at women as they were seen as the inferior gender and often were patronizing, the first example of this is in 'The Son's Veto' where the female (Sophy) is being corrected by her own son! 'Has, dear mother-not have! Her son is a public school boy; does this make him think he is better than others and superior? He is certainly frustrated with his mother's apparent stupidity.

Sophy has not got Standard English dialect, most probably from a bad upbringing, so in her son's eyes she embarrasses him, although she knows herself she does not fit. The lack of education is problematic in marriage as if either partner does not have the same education and background they're most unlikely to be unhappy in marriage. It is apparent to us that Sophy does not love her husband, the Vicar and married him out of respect-'Sophy did not exactly love him, but she had a respect for him which almost amounted to veneration' We must remember that in the nineteenth century, for a woman securing a husband was the same as securing a future, so many women did not marry out of love. This is similar in 'Tony Kytes-the Arch Deceiver' although all three women in this story have been treated badly all three are willing to marry even if they state that they are not-'She walked upon her father's arm, thinking and hoping he would ask her again. 'And 'She would not have refused Tony if he had asked her quietly'-when Tony asks for Hannah's hand in marriage she refuses although does not want to-'I do refuse him! Partly because her father was there and partly, too, in a

tantrum because of the discovery, and the scratch that might be left on her face. ' When Tony tries again he is refused for the second time and again the women is uncertain of her refusal-' though she looked back when she'd gone some way' and when he finally tries for the last time he is not refused and so marries Milly who is seen as the safe option from the start but also we must remember he had chosen her in the first place.

On the Western Circuit' also displays characters that do not marry out of love; Charles only reason for marrying Anna is because he slept with her and she became pregnant, he thought he loved her but only fell in love with Mrs Harnham, through the letters she was writing for Anna and he realises when he next sees Anna that she is illiterate, in absolute horror. Mrs Harnham enjoys writing to Charles-' The luxury of writing to what would be known to no consciousness but his was great, and she had indulged herself therein' and later we discover that Mrs Harnham has a greater passion for writing to Charles-' the writing of letter after letter and the reading of their soft answers had insensibly developed on her side an emotion which fanned his; till there had resulted a magnetic reciprocity between the correspondents' Charles and Anna are not the only characters in this story who married without love; Mrs Harnham and her husband, obviously do not get along well one example of this feeling is when Mrs Harnham states that she likes the Fair her husband response is-' Hm, there's no accounting for taste' this shows he is insulting her preferences. Throughout the story she is commonly mentioned as a lonely person-' Mrs Harnham-lonely impressionable creature that she was' this implies she does not often spend time with her husband-we do not know whether this is intentional due to the

fact that she may not enjoy his company neither are we told what her reason for marrying this man was, perhaps, like Anna and Tony Kytes she married through security. But is this the same for males-do they marry through security in these stories? Surely as the males are dominant they would not need to, Charles marries Anna because he is taking responsibility of the situation, even if he did act mature at the beginning of their relationship. Tony Kytes marries Milly as she is his last resort and was always the safer option-'Milly Richards, a nice, light, small, tender little thing'. The Vicar marries Sophy because he became morally dependant on her and enjoyed her company, when she looked after him and wanted it to last longer, he was also affected by what she endured for his sake-'The Parson had been very greatly moved by what she had suffered on his account'The points 'Tony Kytes' makes about marriage are that every decision made there will always be social and moral consequences, 'The Son's Veto' suggests that you should follow your heart, and the reason for marriage should be based on love and natural affinity, not money, social class and education.

If so the marriage will be unsuccessful and unhappy for one party. 'On the Western Circuit' displays the problems of acting immaturely, but also having to take responsibility, the character of Charles develops morally, is dignified and is not a fixed character. However the character of Tony Kytes is a fixed character, although a very interesting one. He is a man that does not like being alone and prefers to have a group of lady friends at any one time, he finds it difficult to have just one, from the distraction of the others. The reason he has three 'girlfriends' simultaneously is because his ideal women would be all three rolled into one-the characters are all female stereotypes in

this particular short story-the gorgeous one, Hannah, the funny one, Unity and lastly the safe one, Milly. Even though this is a comedy, the point being made is actually a very serious one, and the women are being suppressed through comedy and irony.

Tony does not value his father's advice to marry Milly, and as an act of rebellion does the opposite and asks Hannah to marry him, who was the better-looking one- ' I've asked Hannah to be mine, and she is willing. ' Neither does Tony value these ladies individually, but loves them all, without any identity- ' and in return, for their likings he loved 'em in shoals. ' In the Son's Veto, Hardy starts by describing Sophy's real beauty-her hair (Hardy seems to have an infatuation with appearances in all three stories) but seems to be patronizing towards her, and evokes sympathy excessively, encouraging the reader to feel the same. You are invited to believe that her son does not value her, from the way he looks down on her, correcting her and making her look incompetent- ' Has, dear mother-not have ' it is obvious to the reader that her husband does value her, from when she looked after him, and as a consequence injuring herself long-term- ' No Sophy; lame or not lame I cannot let you go. You must never leave me again ' On the Western Circuit, shows that women are valued, more so than either of the other two short stories, although, at first Charles is portrayed as immature, and unreliable, his character changes and he is seen to be loyal and redeems himself from innocently exploiting Anna.

This is a sad story of two lovers who cannot marry as each of them are already committed to another person and although they kiss knowing of the others commitments nothing happens as a result of this. In this short story <https://assignbuster.com/the-sons-veto-tony-kytes-arch-deceiver-and-on-the-western-front/>

the females seem to be controlling the relationship and in a way both females have exploited and used, almost deceived Charles, especially Mrs Harnham, for her own pleasure- 'The luxury of writing to him' when Charles finds out about Anna's illiteracy he confesses his love to Mrs Harnham- 'Why, you and I are friends-lovers-devoted lovers-by correspondence! ' 'God help us both! -In soul and spirit I have married you, and no other women in the world. ' The roles of women in society are portrayed differently in each of these short stories. They are comically used in Tony Kytes by publicising their misfortunes and not treating women with respect or equality. They are seen in The Son's Veto as the weaker gender and are patronized, in this case Sophy, although corrected by her own son, 'hastily adopted the correction, and did not resent his making it, or retaliate, as she might well have done'.

And in On the Western Circuit they are treated as marriage material, without the husband having to care, respect or love the women he is marrying.