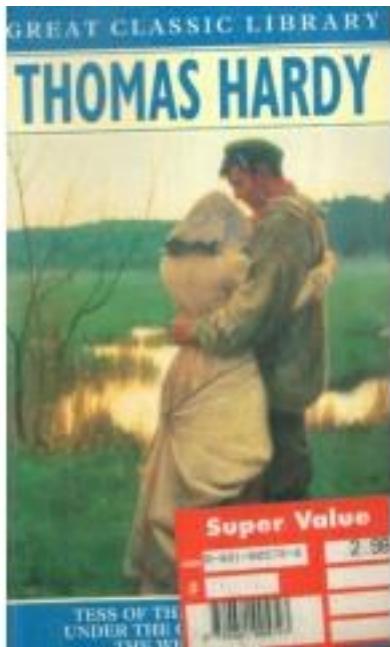


Tess of the Durbervilles Under The



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Chapter One §

ON AN EVENING IN THE latter part of May a middle-aged man was walking homeward from Shaston to the village of Marlott, in the adjoining Vale of Blakemore or Blackmoor. His pair of legs that carried him were rickety, and there was a bias in his gait which inclined him somewhat to the left of a straight line. He occasionally gave a smart nod, as

if in confirmation of some opinion, though he was not thinking of anything in particular. An empty egg-basket was slung upon his arm, the nap of his hat was ruffled, a patch being quite worn away at its brim where his thumb came in taking it off. Presently he was met by an elderly parson astride on a gray mare, who, as he rode, hummed a wandering tune.

◦ Good night t' ee, ' said the man with the basket.

◦ Good night, Sir John, ' said the parson.

The pedestrian, after another pace or two, halted, and turned round.

◦ Now, sir, begging your pardon; we met last market-day on this road about this tinge? and, said "Good night" and you made reply "Good ni, 2ht j Sir John "? as now. 1

◦ I did, 7 said the parson.

◦ And once before that—near a month ago. '

◦ I may have. '

◦ Then what might your meaning be in calling me "Sir John" these different tines, when I be plain Jack Durbeyfield, the haggler?7

The parson rode a step or two nearer.

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