

MACMILLAN READERS  
**INTERMEDIATE LEVEL**

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THOMAS HARDY

# Tess of the d'Urbervilles

Retold by John Escott



**MACMILLAN**

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Tess

One evening in May, a middle-aged man was walking from the village of Shaston to his home in the village of Marlott. He was carrying an empty basket in one hand.

Early that same day, the man had been to the market in Shaston to sell the eggs from his chickens. When he had sold all the eggs, he had gone to an inn<sup>12</sup>. He had stayed there all day, drinking beer. Now the man was very drunk, and he could not walk in a straight line.

After some time he met an elderly parson<sup>13</sup> riding a grey horse.

‘Good night, Parson Tringham,’ said the man with the basket.

‘Good night, Sir John<sup>14</sup>,’ said the parson, as he rode past the drunken man.

The man stopped and turned round.

‘Excuse me, sir,’ he said. ‘We met on this road at this time last week. I said “goodnight”, and you replied “Goodnight, Sir John” to me then, too.’

‘Perhaps I did,’ said the parson.

‘Why do you call me “Sir John”?’ asked the man. ‘My name is Jack Durbeyfield.’

The parson rode on a little further, then he stopped his horse and turned back.

‘As you know, Durbeyfield,’ said the parson, ‘the name “Jack” is often used instead of John. And a little time ago, I discovered something interesting about the history of your family. Durbeyfield, you are a descendant<sup>15</sup> of the very old and noble<sup>16</sup> family called d’Urberville. Sir Pagan d’Urberville, who lived hundreds of years ago in this county of Dorset, was a famous knight.’

'I've never heard that before,' said Durbeyfield.

'It's true,' said the parson. 'Let me look at you, Durbeyfield. I've seen portraits<sup>17</sup> of members of the d'Urberville family. Yes, Durbeyfield. Your nose and chin look like the noses and chins of the people in those pictures. The d'Urberville family once had manor houses<sup>18</sup> all over this part of England. There have been many d'Urbervilles named Sir John. You could have been "Sir John" yourself.'

'Is that right, Parson Tringham?' said Durbeyfield. 'I am a d'Urberville? Well, I've heard that my family once had money and land. And maybe the Durbeyfields were once called d'Urberville. But we are poor now. My grandfather had secrets. He never talked about his family. But where do the d'Urbervilles live now, Parson Tringham?'

'There are no more members of the noble d'Urberville family,' answered the parson. 'They are all dead.'

'And where do their bodies lie?'

'At Kingsbere,' said the parson. 'In the churchyard<sup>19</sup> there.'

'What about our family's land and houses?'

'You don't have any.'

'Oh. Will we ever be a noble family again?' asked Durbeyfield.

'Ah – I can't tell you that,' replied the parson. 'I don't know.'

'What can I do about it, sir?'

'Nothing,' said the parson. 'You can't do anything about it. It's an interesting piece of history, that's all.'

'Well, Parson Tringham, will you come and have a drink of beer with me at the Pure Drop Inn?'

'No, thank you, Durbeyfield,' said the parson. 'You've had enough beer already.' And he rode on.

Jack Durbeyfield sat down at the side of the road with his basket. After a few minutes, a young man walked past.

'Fred!' shouted Durbeyfield. 'Carry this basket for me.'