

**COLLECTION OF BRITISH AUTHORS.  
TAUCHNITZ EDITION. VOL. 2053. A  
LAODICEAN; OR, THE CASTLE OF  
THE DE STANCYS. A STORY OF TO-  
DAY. IN TWO VOLUMES, VOL. I**

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**THOMAS HARDY**

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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BY  
THOMAS HARDY,  
[AUTHOR OF "FAR FROM THE MADDING-CRUISE," ETC.]

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1882.

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A LAODICEAN;  
OR,  
THE CASTLE OF THE DE STANCYS.

BOOK THE FIRST.

GEORGE SOMERSET.

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## CHAPTER I.

THE sun blazed down and down, till it was within half an hour of its setting; but the sketcher still lingered at his occupation of measuring and copying the chevroned doorway—a bold and quaint example of a transitional style of architecture, which formed the tower entrance to an English village church. The graveyard being quite open on its western side, the tweed-clad figure of the young man, and the tall mass of antique masonry which rose above him to a battlemented parapet, were fired to a great brightness by the uninterrupted solar rays, that crossed the neighbouring mead like a warp of gold threads, in whose mazes groups of equally lustrous gnats danced and wailed incessantly.

He was so absorbed in his pursuit that he did not mark the brilliant chromatic effect of which he composed the central feature, till it was brought home to his intelligence by the warmth of the moulded stonework under his touch when measuring; which led him at length to turn his head and gaze on its cause.

There are few in whom the sight of a sunset does not beget as much meditative melancholy as contemplative pleasure, the human decline and death that it illustrates being too obvious to escape the notice of