



Laodicean, By Thomas Hardy: "Fear is the mother of foresight."

Thomas Hardy

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Thomas Hardy (2nd June 1840 – 11th January 1928), celebrated poet and writer, was born in a modest thatched cottage near Dorchester in the West country, to a builder father. His mother came from a line of intelligent, lively and ambitious women so ensured her son had the best formal education available for their modest means although this ended when he was 16. He became a draughtsman specialising in the building of churches was able to give it up to be a full time writer and poet with the publication of *Far From the Madding Crowd* which became a bestseller and like much of his work was serialised. His writing reflects his passionate beliefs for social reform and exposes the hypocrisy of the rules of the Victorian age which constrained many freedoms with convention and restricted the transcending of class boundaries. His novels are almost entirely set in rural Wessex which although fictional is clearly rooted in the SW counties of England where he was born and lived most of his life. Hardy's writing caused controversy in his lifetime but despite this he was highly praised and showered with honorary doctorates from many universities, a knighthood, which he refused and in 1910 the prestigious Order of the Merit. *Laodicean* is a rarely used word these days and means luke warm or half hearted, coming from Revelations 3-16 where Christians from Laodicea were rebuked for their indifference to religion. Hardy had to remain in bed for much of the writing of this novel due to internal bleeding, so dictated it to his wife who was also his nurse. As in his life, central to the book is also a woman, Paula Power, who is caught between two worlds that of the old and familiar and that of the new and modern. Underlining this dilemma is her indecision between two suitors, Captain de Stancy who is a descendant of the owners of the castle she lives in representing the old and George Somerset a rising young architect from London. This same dilemma faced much of Victorian society as industrialisation was radically changing people's lives and as always Hardy's rich character study and stunning prose create a compelling atmosphere and a good read.

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