

The Trumpet-Major

*John Loveday, a Soldier in the War with
Buonaparte, and Robert His Brother,
First Mate in the Merchant Service*

A Tale

By

Thomas Hardy

Abridged by

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THE traveller by rail to the watering-place of Weymouth—the 'Budmouth' of this story—on the south coast of England sees, as he draws near to his destination, a monument on the sky-line of the high downs between Dorchester and the sea. If he asks what it is, he will be told that it is 'the Hardy monument.' He may even receive, as one such traveller certainly did, the erroneous information that it was built to honour the distinguished novelist, whose home was in Dorchester and who has made this region so familiar under the name of Wessex. The monument was really erected, however, to commemorate a member of Hardy's family who belonged to an older generation—Admiral Sir Thomas Hardy, best remembered as the Captain Hardy who was Nelson's closest companion on the flag-ship *Victory* on the last and crowning day of his life, October 21, 1805. Few stories in British history are better known than the story of the Battle of Trafalgar, of Nelson's great victory, his fatal wound, and his dying words, especially the touching request, 'Kiss me, Hardy,' and the farewell, 'God bless you, Hardy.'

The writer of *The Trumpet-Major* was not born till thirty-five years later. But a century ago in rural England memories of heart-shaking events, such as the great Napoleonic war, bringing with it the dread of a French invasion, lasted longer than in the twentieth century. The daily newspaper now provides a quick succession of sensations from all over the world, each of which obliterates the traces of its predecessors; but the newspaper then came, as a rule, only once a week into the ordinary country home, and even then perhaps as a loan from a neighbour.¹ Hardy must often have talked in his boyhood with old people whose recollections of the war were vivid still. Relics of preparations for defence against the

¹P. 14.

threatened invasion—‘ an outhouse door riddled with bullet-holes,’ as he tells us in his Preface, ‘ a heap of bricks and clods on a beacon-hill,’ ‘ worm-eaten shafts and iron heads of pikes ’—fired his imagination in childhood. The part which the most famous member of his own family had played in the struggle must have been a peculiar source of pride and pleasure. So even in childhood he began to feel that interest in the war with Buonaparte which in later years was to inspire his epic-drama, *The Dynasts*.

How far does *The Trumpet-Major* belong definitely to that particular type of fiction known as ‘ the historical novel ’ ? It is hardly a ‘ historical novel ’ in the usually accepted sense. The main interest of the book does not lie in great historical events or personages. We are merely concerned with the reaction of great events upon the lives and fortunes of an obscure English family. We are allowed, it is true, a brief glimpse of that homeliest of monarchs, King George III., going about among his subjects at his favourite seaside resort ; and readers of Thackeray’s *Four Georges* or of Macaulay’s essay on Frances Burney will notice that Hardy has been at pains to reproduce the King’s little idiosyncrasies—his trick of saying, ‘ What ? What ? ’¹ for example. The only other historic character who appears is Captain Hardy, whom we see at his home, the manor-house of Portisham (Po’sham in the story). But if we may use the term ‘ historical novel ’ to cover any fiction that illustrates history in the broad sense, by illuminating the life and manners of a particular period, *The Trumpet-Major* may lay claim to the description, and will take high rank in its class by its vivid presentation of the life of an English village and an English watering-place in the stirring days of 1805.

It has sometimes been thought (and the Emperor himself afterwards wished this to be believed) that Napoleon did not seriously contemplate the invasion of England, and that in collecting and drilling a large army of conscripts on the French

side of the Channel in the years 1803-5, and preparing a large fleet of flat-bottomed boats for the transport of troops, he was merely masking designs against continental enemies. Even if this theory had any foundation in fact, it would make little difference to the novel. What is of importance to the story is not the genuineness or feasibility of Napoleon's schemes, but the reality of the fears of country people living on the Dorset coast or within a few miles of it. Yet it is interesting to know that the best historical judges believe that Napoleon was profoundly in earnest. 'Nobody,' says Mr. H. A. L. Fisher,¹ 'who has read the vast, minute, and eager correspondence which for three years revolves round the naval problem, can for a moment doubt but that Napoleon was in earnest in his designs for the invasion of England, or that he intended to carry out the project on at least two occasions in the autumn of 1803, in the summer of 1804, and most probably also in the spring and summer of 1805. If the plan was never serious, why was a medal ordered to be struck representing Hercules strangling a mermaid and bearing the legend *Descente en Angleterre, frappé à Londres 1804*? Or why did the Emperor spend five weeks on the north coast in the summer of 1804, throwing the whole weight of his fiery energy into the naval preparations, and taking a strange exhilaration and excitement from the movement of the sea? . . . It was easy and natural to declare that the invasion had never been intended, when it was clear that the plan would not be carried through.'

This is the time, then, which *The Trumpet-Major* brings vividly before us. We are shown the encampment and drill of the regular troops and yeomanry on the Dorset downs; the operations of the press-gang by which recruits were forcibly procured for the navy; the beacons on the hill-tops in readiness to spread the alarm of invasion; the pikes in the church, antique weapons that were still thought good enough for the use of volunteers. We read the veritable words of the 'Address to all Ranks and Descriptions of Englishmen' that

¹ Fisher, *Napoleon*, p. 131.

stirred the consciences and roused the patriotic sentiments of such men as Bob Loveday.¹ Modern readers may be surprised to find a 'German legion' in attendance upon King George.² Though the third George, by contrast with the first and second, liked to be regarded as a true-born Englishman, the Court was still more than half German; the English king was also Elector of Hanover, and had Hanoverian soldiers in his pay.

Apart from the historical background, the chief interest of the book lies in the contrasted characters of the two Loveday brothers. The one is a sailor, the other a soldier, and the differences that naturally follow from the professions they have chosen are cleverly brought out. But this is the least part of the matter. The real contrast is between John's singularly true, deep, unselfish nature, and the shallow, unconsciously selfish, highly impressionable Bob. That Bob should be the one to attract to himself the womanly devotion which John has done so much more to deserve is one of those ironies of life which Hardy, beyond most novelists, perceives clearly and sets down unflinchingly. Thoughtless and selfish and fickle as Bob is represented to be, there is no satirical bitterness in the portrait. Bob has genuinely delightful qualities; we cannot grudge him his popularity. The mutual affection of the two brothers is charming, and so is the simple, honourable, and loving nature of their father, the miller.

Anne Garland is an engaging study of a simple English country girl, brought up with little culture and few social advantages, but instinctively high-minded and innately refined. The portrait abounds in subtle and delicate touches. A foil to Anne is provided by the flashy adventuress, Matilda Johnson, whose charms captivate the simple-minded and undiscerning Bob. But here again, as in the case of the brothers, the contrast is presented dispassionately, with no hint of exaggeration. Matilda is worthless enough, but she is not malicious, and she is sincerely remorseful when she has

¹ P. 84.

² P. 35.

reason to fear that by an impulsive word she may have betrayed Bob to the press-gang. The rather colourless character of Mrs. Garland, with her faded gentility and her willingness to press upon Anne, though without undue insistence, the overtures of a suitor who has nothing to recommend him but a slightly superior social status, is wholly true to life. Instead of any tediously elaborate analysis of her qualities, Hardy gives in a few quiet epithets sufficient help for the understanding of her part in the story. She is 'impulsive and tractable';¹ her 'sentiments were naturally so versatile that they could not be depended on for two days together';² and 'her nature was the reverse of managing.'³

With 'Uncle Benjy' and his nephew Festus we seem to pass into the atmosphere of a novel of Dickens—a region of types, eccentric and diverting, rather than real individuals. But any one who has noted the lengths to which a ruling passion, such as the miser's, can be carried in old age, will hesitate to accuse Hardy of exaggeration. Nor is there anything incredible in the development of the boastful, cowardly, cantankerous Festus out of such a childhood and youth as are described by Hardy with some particularity.⁴ One advantage of the introduction of these two is the provision of a certain element of comic relief.

These few are practically all the characters of the book—a remarkably short list. The social limits within which the story moves are also very narrow; we have barely a glimpse of dependants, such as David; no glimpse at all of squire or parson, lawyer or doctor. Not less striking are the narrow limits of time and place. The whole action is confined within the space of a few months, and to the small village of 'Overcombe' (a composite of Sutton Pointz and Upwey), the lanes, fields, and downs in its neighbourhood, and the town of 'Budmouth.' Hardy concentrates our attention on a tiny group of people, and gives us every opportunity of knowing them well.

¹ P. 38.² P. 37.³ P. 34.⁴ P. 26.

Why is it that a tale constructed with such severe limitations never relaxes its hold upon the reader? A partial explanation may be found in the historic interest already touched upon—in the linking up of these quiet lives with great and far-reaching events. But the true secret of the book's charm lies a good deal deeper. I think that what really grips us as we read, though we may often be unaware of it, is the author's philosophy of life—his interpretation of human life, as we gather it from the cross-currents and shifting purposes and constraining external events that sway the thoughts and speech and actions of the creatures of his imagination. And I do not know that this interpretation of life could be better expressed than in some words of the late Sir Walter Raleigh. Writing of *Don Quixote*, one of the great books of the world, he said:

'All irony criticizes the imperfect ideas and theories of mankind, not by substituting for them other ideas and other theories, less imperfect, but by placing the facts of life, in mute comment, alongside of the theories. The Ruler of the World is the great master of irony, and man has been permitted to share some part of his enjoyment in the purifying power of fact. The weaker and more querulous members of the race commonly try to enlist the facts in the service of their pet ideas. A grave and deep spirit like Cervantes knows that the facts will endure no such servitude. They will not take orders from those who call for their verdict, nor will they be content to speak only when they are asked to speak. They intrude suddenly, in the most amazing and irrelevant fashion, on the carefully ordered plans of humanity. They cannot be explained away, and many a man who thought to have guarded himself against surprise has been surprised by love and death.'¹

To say that Hardy was profoundly aware of this 'irony,' and quickens the sense of it in every responsive reader, is to say that he belongs to the company of the great observers and interpreters of life, that he is with Cervantes and with Shakespeare.

J. H. FOWLER.

¹ W. Raleigh, *Some Authors*, p. 32.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

THOMAS HARDY was born at Higher Bockhampton, two miles from Dorchester (the 'Casterbridge' of his books) on June 2nd, 1840. He was educated at Dorchester, and articled at sixteen to an ecclesiastical architect of that town. In 1863 he won the prize medal of the Institute of British Architects with an essay on 'Coloured Brick and Terra-Cotta Architecture.' For some years he studied under a well-known architect, Sir Arthur Blomfield, in London. But his tastes drew him irresistibly to literature, and the success of his early novels, *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872) and *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), justified him in altogether abandoning architecture for a literary career.

A remarkable feature of his work was his deliberate determination to make his novels a picture of life in the part of England to which he belonged and in which he continued to make his home. So completely are the novels identified with this region that their author himself calls them 'the Wessex Novels' (from the name of the old kingdom in the south-west of England), and the county of Dorset is often called 'the Hardy country.' Many of the novels were first published serially in magazines—'Far from the Madding Crowd' in *Cornhill* (1874), 'The Return of the Native' in *Belgravia* (1878), 'The Trumpet-Major' in *Good Words* (1880), 'The Mayor of Casterbridge' in *The Graphic* (1886). His last novels were *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), *The Well-Beloved*, and *Jude the Obscure* (1896). He wrote also many short stories—*Wessex Tales* (1888), *A Group of Noble Dames* (1891), *Life's Little Ironies* (1894), *A Changed Man* (1913).

Poetry he had written even before he produced prose fiction, and in his later years he returned very definitely to his early love. *Wessex Poems* appeared in 1898, *Poems of the Past and Present* in 1902; the three parts of the great epic-

drama, *The Dynasts*, in 1904, 1906, 1908. Other volumes of lyric and narrative verse followed. He astonished and delighted his admirers by the youthful fire and vigour of his verse in the Great War; and even in extreme old age he did not shrink from adventuring in new literary fields, producing in 1923 a play for mummers, *The Famous Tragedy of the Queen of Cornwall, at Tintagel in Lyonesse*. His literary eminence was recognized by the bestowal of the Order of Merit. From the death of George Meredith to his own death in his native Dorchester in January 1928 he was incontestably at the head of contemporary writers of English.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE present tale is founded largely on testimony—oral and written. The external incidents which direct its course are mostly an unexaggerated reproduction of the recollections of old persons well known to the author in childhood, but now long dead, who were eye-witnesses of those scenes. If wholly transcribed their recollections would have filled a volume thrice the length of 'The Trumpet-Major.'

Down to the middle of this century, and later, there were not wanting, in the neighbourhood of the places more or less clearly indicated herein, casual relics of the circumstances amid which the action moves—our preparations for defence against the threatened invasion of England by Buonaparte. An outhouse door riddled with bullet-holes, which had been extemporized by a solitary man as a target for firelock practice when the landing was hourly expected, a heap of bricks and clods on a beacon-hill, which had formed the chimney and walls of the hut occupied by the beacon-keeper, worm-eaten shafts and iron heads of pikes for the use of those who had no better weapons, ridges on the down thrown up during the encampment, fragments of volunteer uniform, and other such lingering remains, brought to my imagination in early childhood the state of affairs at the date of the war more vividly than volumes of history could have done.

Those who have attempted to construct a coherent narrative of past times from the fragmentary information furnished by survivors, are aware of the difficulty of ascertaining the true sequence of events indiscriminately recalled. For this purpose the newspapers of the date were indispensable. Of other documents consulted I may mention, for the satisfaction of those who love a true story, that the 'Address to all Ranks and Descriptions of Englishmen' was transcribed from an original copy in a local museum; that the hieroglyphic portrait

of Napoleon existed as a print down to the present day in an old woman's cottage near 'Overcombe'; that the particulars of the King's doings at his favourite watering-place were augmented by details from records of the time. The drilling scene of the local militia received some additions from an account given in so grave a work as Gifford's 'History of the Wars of the French Revolution' (London, 1817). But on reference to the History I find I was mistaken in supposing the account to be advanced as authentic, or to refer to rural England. However, it does in a large degree accord with the local traditions of such scenes that I have heard recounted, times without number, and the system of drill was tested by reference to the Army Regulations of 1801, and other military handbooks. Almost the whole narrative of the supposed landing of the French in the Bay is from oral relation as aforesaid. Other proofs of the veracity of this chronicle have escaped my recollection.

T. H.

October, 1895.

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The Frontispiece is from a drawing by Thomas Hardy himself, illustrating some verses in *Wessex Poems* entitled "The Alarm," which are described as being "In Memory of one of the Writer's Family who was a Volunteer during the War with Napoleon." The beacon-fire has roused the countryside to repel a French invasion, and the Volunteer on his way to the coast pauses to look towards "the shore-line planted with Foot and Horse for miles."

WHAT WAS SEEN FROM THE WINDOW OVERLOOKING THE DOWN

IN the days of high-waisted and muslin-gowned women, when the vast amount of soldiering going on in the country was a cause of much trembling to the sex, there lived in a village near the Wessex coast two ladies of good report, though unfortunately of limited means. The elder was a Mrs. Martha Garland, a landscape-painter's widow, and the other was her only daughter Anne.

Anne was fair, very fair, in a poetical sense; but in complexion she was of that particular tint between blonde and brunette which is inconveniently left without a name. Her eyes were honest and inquiring, her mouth cleanly cut and yet not classical, the middle point of her upper lip scarcely descending so far as it should have done by rights, so that at the merest pleasant thought, not to mention a smile, portions of two or three white teeth were uncovered whether she would or not. Some people said that this was very attractive. She was graceful and slender, and, though but little above five feet in height, could draw herself up to look tall. In her manner, in her comings and goings, in her 'I'll do this,' or 'I'll do that,' she combined dignity with sweetness

as no other girl could do ; and any impressionable stranger youths who passed by were led to yearn for a windfall of speech from her, and to see at the same time that they would not get it. In short, beneath all that was charming and simple in this young woman there lurked a real firmness, unperceived at first, as the speck of colour lurks unperceived in the heart of the palest parsley flower.

She wore a white handkerchief to cover her white neck, and a cap on her head with a pink ribbon round it, tied in a bow at the front. She had a great variety of these cap-ribbons, the young men being fond of sending them to her as presents until they fell definitely in love with a special sweetheart elsewhere, when they left off doing so.

She lived with her widowed mother in a portion of an ancient building formerly a manor-house, but now a mill, which, being too large for his own requirements, the miller had found it convenient to divide and appropriate in part to these highly respectable tenants. In this dwelling Mrs. Garland's and Anne's ears were soothed morning, noon, and night by the music of the mill, the wheels and cogs of which, being of wood, produced notes that might have borne in their minds a remote resemblance to the wooden tones of the stopped diapason in an organ. Occasionally, when the miller was bolting, there was added to these continuous sounds the cheerful clicking of the hopper, which did not deprive them of rest except when it was kept going all night ; and over and above all this they had the pleasure of knowing that there crept in through every crevice, door, and window of their dwelling, however tightly closed, a subtle mist of superfine flour from the grinding-room, quite invisible,

but making its presence known in the course of time by giving a pallid and ghostly look to the best furniture. The miller frequently apologized to his tenants for the intrusion of this insidious dry fog; but the widow was of a friendly and thankful nature, and she said that she did not mind it at all, being as it was, not nasty dirt, but the blessed staff of life.

On a fine summer morning, when the leaves were warm under the sun, and the more industrious bees abroad, diving into every blue and red cup that could possibly be considered a flower, Anne was sitting at the back window of her mother's portion of the house, measuring out lengths of worsted for a fringed rug that she was making, which lay, about three-quarters finished, beside her. Nobody was expected to finish a rug within a calculable period, and the wools of the beginning became faded and historical before the end was reached. A sense of this inherent nature of worsted-work rather than idleness led Anne to look rather frequently from the open casement.

Immediately before her was the large, smooth mill-pond, over-full, and intruding into the hedge and into the road. The water, with its flowing leaves and spots of froth, was stealing away, like Time, under the dark arch, to tumble over the great slimy wheel within. On the other side of the mill-pond was an open place called the Cross, because it was three-quarters of one, two lanes and a cattle-drive meeting there. It was the general rendezvous and arena of the surrounding village. Behind this a steep slope rose high into the sky, merging in a wide and open down, now littered with sheep newly shorn. The upland by its height completely sheltered the mill

Here, the mill

and village from north winds, making summers of springs, reducing winters to autumn temperatures, and permitting myrtle to flourish in the open air.

The girl glanced at the down and the sheep for no particular reason ; the steep margin of turf and daisies rising above the roofs, chimneys, apple-trees, and church tower of the hamlet around her, bounded the view from her position, and it was necessary to look somewhere when she raised her head. While thus engaged in working and stopping her attention was attracted by the sudden rising and running away of the sheep squatted on the down ; and there succeeded sounds of a heavy tramping over the hard sod which the sheep had quitted, the tramp being accompanied by a metallic jingle. Turning her eyes further she beheld two cavalry soldiers on bulky grey chargers, armed and accoutred throughout, ascending the down at a point to the left where the incline was comparatively easy. The burnished chains, buckles, and plates of their trappings shone like little looking-glasses, and the blue, red, and white about them was unsubdued by weather or wear.

The two troopers rode proudly on, as if nothing less than crowns and empires ever concerned their magnificent minds. They reached that part of the down which lay just in front of her, where they came to a halt. In another minute there appeared behind them a group containing some half-dozen more of the same sort. These came on, halted, and dismounted likewise.

Two of the soldiers then walked some distance onward together, when one stood still, the other advancing further, and stretching a white line of tape between them. Two more of the men marched to another outlying point,

where they made marks in the ground. Thus they walked about and took distances, obviously according to some preconcerted scheme.

At the end of this systematic proceeding one solitary horseman—a commissioned officer, if his uniform could be judged rightly at that distance—rode up the down, went over the ground, looked at what the others had done, and seemed to think that it was good. And then the girl heard yet louder tramps and clankings, and she beheld rising from where the others had risen a whole column of cavalry in marching order. At a distance behind these came a cloud of dust enveloping more and more troops, their arms and accoutrements reflecting the sun through the haze in faint flashes, stars, and streaks of light. The whole body approached slowly towards the plateau at the top of the down.

Anne threw down her work, and letting her eyes remain on the nearing masses of cavalry, the worsteds getting entangled as they would, said, ‘Mother, mother, come here! Here’s such a fine sight! What does it mean? What can they be going to do up there?’

The mother thus invoked ran upstairs and came forward to the window. ‘Can it be the French?’ she said, arranging herself for the extremest form of consternation. ‘Can that arch-enemy of mankind have landed at last?’ It should be stated that at this time there were two arch-enemies of mankind—Satan as usual, and Buonaparte, who had sprung up and eclipsed his elder rival altogether. Mrs. Garland alluded, of course, to the junior gentleman.

By this time the column of horse had ascended into full view, and they formed a lively spectacle as they rode