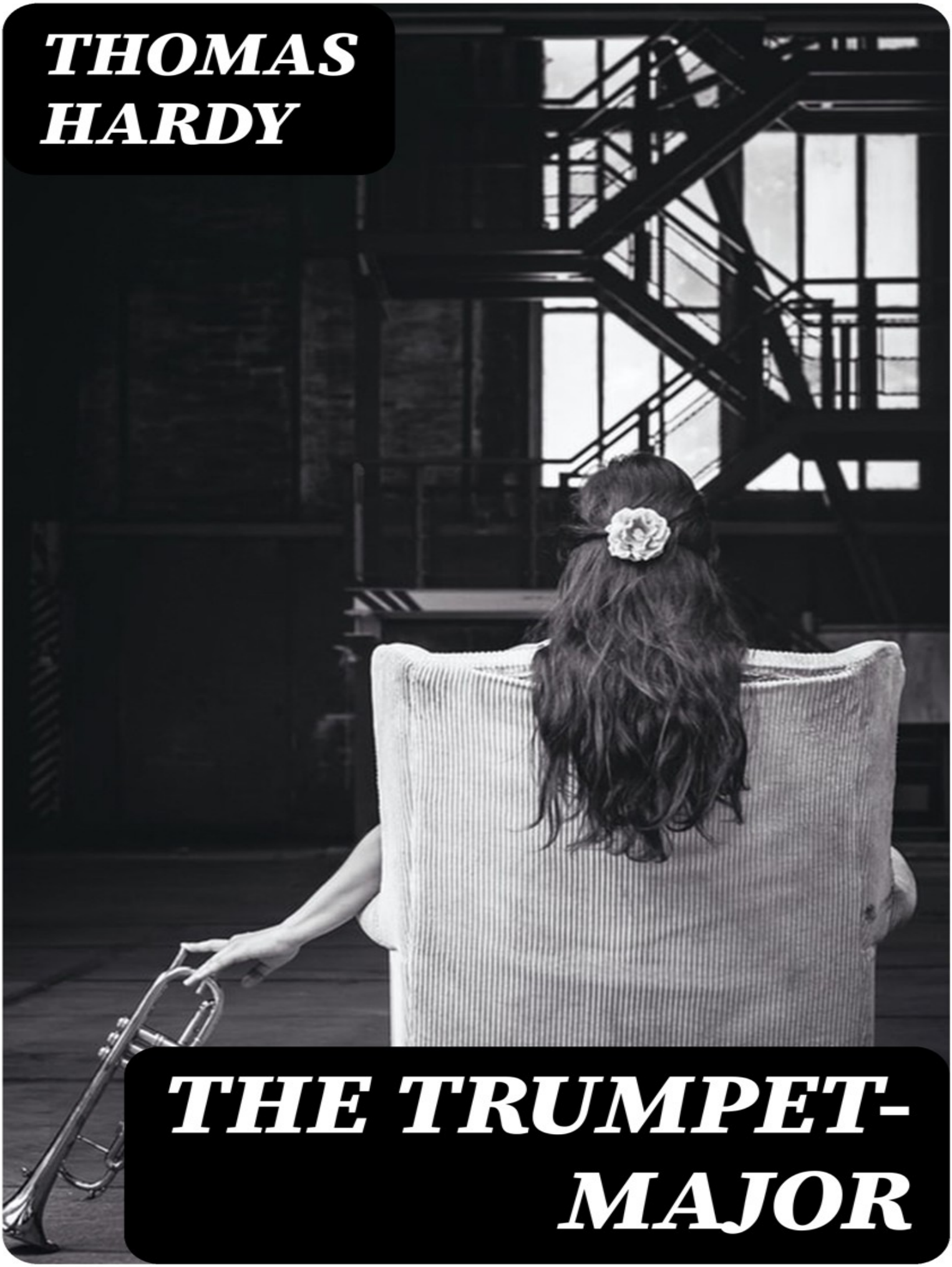
THOMAS HARDY



THE TRUMPET-MAJOR

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Thomas Hardy

The Trumpet-Major

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PREFACE

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The present tale is founded more largely on testimony—oral and written—than any other in this series. 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.

I. WHAT WAS SEEN FROM THE WINDOW OVERLOOKING THE DOWN

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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. Between the border of her cap and her forehead were ranged a row of round brown curls, like swallows' nests under eaves.

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.

By good-humour of this sort, and in other ways, Mrs. Garland acknowledged her friendship for her neighbour, with whom Anne and herself associated to an extent which she never could have anticipated when, tempted by the lowness of the rent, they first removed thither after her husband’s death from a larger house at the other end of the village. Those who have lived in remote places where there is what is called no society will comprehend the gradual levelling of distinctions that went on in this case at some sacrifice of gentility on the part of one household. The widow was sometimes sorry to find with what readiness Anne caught up some dialect-word or accent from the miller and his friends; but he was so good and true-hearted a man, and she so easy-minded, unambitious a woman, that she would not make life a solitude for fastidious reasons. More than all, she had good ground for thinking that the miller secretly admired her, and this added a piquancy to the situation.

* * * * *

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. The work, though chromatically brilliant, was tedious: a hearth-rug was a thing which nobody worked at from morning to night; it was taken up and put down; it was in the chair, on the floor, across the hand-rail, under the bed, kicked here, kicked there, rolled

away in the closet, brought out again, and so on more capriciously perhaps than any other home-made article. 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 millpond, 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 and village from north winds, making summers of springs, reducing winters to autumn temperatures, and permitting myrtle to flourish in the open air.

The heaviness of noon pervaded the scene, and under its influence the sheep had ceased to feed. Nobody was standing at the Cross, the few inhabitants being indoors at their dinner. No human being was on the down, and no human eye or interest but Anne’s seemed to be concerned with it. The bees still worked on, and the butterflies did not rest from roving, their smallness seeming to shield them

from the stagnating effect that this turning moment of day had on larger creatures. Otherwise all was still.

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. She was a woman of sanguine mouth and eye, unheroic manner, and pleasant general appearance; a little more tarnished as to surface, but not much worse in contour than the girl herself.

Widow Garland’s thoughts were those of the period. ‘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.

‘It cannot be he,’ said Anne. ‘Ah! there’s Simon Burden, the man who watches at the beacon. He’ll know!’

She waved her hand to an aged form of the same colour as the road, who had just appeared beyond the mill-pond, and who, though active, was bowed to that degree which almost reproaches a feeling observer for standing upright. The arrival of the soldiery had drawn him out from his drop of drink at the ‘Duke of York’ as it had attracted Anne. At her call he crossed the mill-bridge, and came towards the window.

Anne inquired of him what it all meant; but Simon Burden, without answering, continued to move on with parted gums, staring at the cavalry on his own private account with a concern that people often show about temporal phenomena when such matters can affect them but a short time longer. ‘You’ll walk into the millpond!’ said Anne. ‘What are they doing? You were a soldier many years ago, and ought to know.’

‘Don’t ask me, Mis’ess Anne,’ said the military relic, depositing his body against the wall one limb at a time. ‘I were only in the foot, ye know, and never had a clear understanding of horses. Ay, I be a old man, and of no judgment now.’ Some additional pressure, however, caused him to search further in his worm-eaten magazine of ideas, and he found that he did know in a dim irresponsible way. The soldiers must have come there to camp: those men

they had seen first were the markers: they had come on before the rest to measure out the ground. He who had accompanied them was the quartermaster. ‘And so you see they have got all the lines marked out by the time the regiment have come up,’ he added. ‘And then they will—well-a-deary! who’d ha’ supposed that Overcombe would see such a day as this!’

‘And then they will—’

‘Then— Ah, it’s gone from me again!’ said Simon. ‘O, and then they will raise their tents, you know, and picket their horses. That was it; so it was.’

By this time the column of horse had ascended into full view, and they formed a lively spectacle as they rode along the high ground in marching order, backed by the pale blue sky, and lit by the southerly sun. Their uniform was bright and attractive; white buckskin pantaloons, three-quarter boots, scarlet shakos set off with lace, mustachios waxed to a needle point; and above all, those richly ornamented blue jackets mantled with the historic pelisse—that fascination to women, and encumbrance to the wearers themselves.

‘’Tis the York Hussars!’ said Simon Burden, brightening like a dying ember fanned. ‘Foreigners to a man, and enrolled long since my time. But as good hearty comrades, they say, as you’ll find in the King’s service.’

‘Here are more and different ones,’ said Mrs. Garland.

Other troops had, during the last few minutes, been ascending the down at a remoter point, and now drew near. These were of different weight and build from the others; lighter men, in helmet hats, with white plumes.

‘I don’t know which I like best,’ said Anne. ‘These, I think, after all.’

Simon, who had been looking hard at the latter, now said that they were the --th Dragoons.

‘All Englishmen they,’ said the old man. ‘They lay at Budmouth barracks a few years ago.’

‘They did. I remember it,’ said Mrs. Garland.

‘And lots of the chaps about here ‘listed at the time,’ said Simon. ‘I can call to mind that there was—ah, ’tis gone from me again! However, all that’s of little account now.’

The dragoons passed in front of the lookers-on as the others had done, and their gay plumes, which had hung lazily during the ascent, swung to northward as they reached the top, showing that on the summit a fresh breeze blew. ‘But look across there,’ said Anne. There had entered upon the down from another direction several battalions of foot, in white kerseymere breeches and cloth gaiters. They seemed to be weary from a long march, the original black of their gaiters and boots being whity-brown with dust. Presently came regimental waggons, and the private canteen carts which followed at the end of a convoy.

The space in front of the mill-pond was now occupied by nearly all the inhabitants of the village, who had turned out in alarm, and remained for pleasure, their eyes lighted up with interest in what they saw; for trappings and regimentals, war horses and men, in towns an attraction, were here almost a sublimity.

The troops filed to their lines, dismounted, and in quick time took off their accoutrements, rolled up their sheep-skins, picketed and unbitted their horses, and made ready

to erect the tents as soon as they could be taken from the waggons and brought forward. When this was done, at a given signal the canvases flew up from the sod; and thenceforth every man had a place in which to lay his head.

Though nobody seemed to be looking on but the few at the window and in the village street, there were, as a matter of fact, many eyes converging upon that military arrival in its high and conspicuous position, not to mention the glances of birds and other wild creatures. Men in distant gardens, women in orchards and at cottage-doors, shepherds on remote hills, turnip-hoers in blue-green enclosures miles away, captains with spy-glasses out at sea, were regarding the picture keenly. Those three or four thousand men of one machine-like movement, some of them swashbucklers by nature; others, doubtless, of a quiet shop-keeping disposition who had inadvertently got into uniform—all of them had arrived from nobody knew where, and hence were matter of great curiosity. They seemed to the mere eye to belong to a different order of beings from those who inhabited the valleys below. Apparently unconscious and careless of what all the world was doing elsewhere, they remained picturesquely engrossed in the business of making themselves a habitation on the isolated spot which they had chosen.

Mrs. Garland was of a festive and sanguine turn of mind, a woman soon set up and soon set down, and the coming of the regiments quite excited her. She thought there was reason for putting on her best cap, thought that perhaps there was not; that she would hurry on the dinner and go out in the afternoon; then that she would, after all, do

nothing unusual, nor show any silly excitements whatever, since they were unbecoming in a mother and a widow. Thus circumscribing her intentions till she was toned down to an ordinary person of forty, Mrs. Garland accompanied her daughter downstairs to dine, saying, ‘Presently we will call on Miller Loveday, and hear what he thinks of it all.’

II. SOMEBODY KNOCKS AND COMES IN

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Miller Loveday was the representative of an ancient family of corn-grinders whose history is lost in the mists of antiquity. His ancestral line was contemporaneous with that of De Ros, Howard, and De La Zouche; but, owing to some trifling deficiency in the possessions of the house of Loveday, the individual names and intermarriages of its members were not recorded during the Middle Ages, and thus their private lives in any given century were uncertain. But it was known that the family had formed matrimonial alliances with farmers not so very small, and once with a gentleman-tanner, who had for many years purchased after their death the horses of the most aristocratic persons in the county—fiery steeds that earlier in their career had been valued at many hundred guineas.

It was also ascertained that Mr. Loveday’s great-grandparents had been eight in number, and his great-great-grandparents sixteen, every one of whom reached to years of discretion: at every stage backwards his sires and gammers thus doubled and doubled till they became a vast body of Gothic ladies and gentlemen of the rank known as ceorls or villeins, full of importance to the country at large,

and ramifying throughout the unwritten history of England. His immediate father had greatly improved the value of their residence by building a new chimney, and setting up an additional pair of millstones.

Overcombe Mill presented at one end the appearance of a hard-worked house slipping into the river, and at the other of an idle, genteel place, half-cloaked with creepers at this time of the year, and having no visible connexion with flour. It had hips instead of gables, giving it a round-shouldered look, four chimneys with no smoke coming out of them, two zigzag cracks in the wall, several open windows, with a looking-glass here and there inside, showing its warped back to the passer-by; snowy dimity curtains waving in the draught; two mill doors, one above the other, the upper enabling a person to step out upon nothing at a height of ten feet from the ground; a gaping arch vomiting the river, and a lean, long-nosed fellow looking out from the mill doorway, who was the hired grinder, except when a bulging fifteen stone man occupied the same place, namely, the miller himself.

Behind the mill door, and invisible to the mere wayfarer who did not visit the family, were chalked addition and subtraction sums, many of them originally done wrong, and the figures half rubbed out and corrected, noughts being turned into nines, and ones into twos. These were the miller’s private calculations. There were also chalked in the same place rows and rows of strokes like open palings, representing the calculations of the grinder, who in his youthful ciphering studies had not gone so far as Arabic figures.

In the court in front were two worn-out millstones, made useful again by being let in level with the ground. Here people stood to smoke and consider things in muddy weather; and cats slept on the clean surfaces when it was hot. In the large stubbard-tree at the corner of the garden was erected a pole of larch fir, which the miller had bought with others at a sale of small timber in Damer's Wood one Christmas week. It rose from the upper boughs of the tree to about the height of a fisherman's mast, and on the top was a vane in the form of a sailor with his arm stretched out. When the sun shone upon this figure it could be seen that the greater part of his countenance was gone, and the paint washed from his body so far as to reveal that he had been a soldier in red before he became a sailor in blue. The image had, in fact, been John, one of our coming characters, and was then turned into Robert, another of them. This revolving piece of statuary could not, however, be relied on as a vane, owing to the neighbouring hill, which formed variable currents in the wind.

The leafy and quieter wing of the mill-house was the part occupied by Mrs. Garland and her daughter, who made up in summer-time for the narrowness of their quarters by overflowing into the garden on stools and chairs. The parlour or dining-room had a stone floor—a fact which the widow sought to disguise by double carpeting, lest the standing of Anne and herself should be lowered in the public eye. Here now the mid-day meal went lightly and mincingly on, as it does where there is no greedy carnivorous man to keep the dishes about, and was hanging on the close when somebody entered the passage as far as the chink of the

parlour door, and tapped. This proceeding was probably adopted to kindly avoid giving trouble to Susan, the neighbour's pink daughter, who helped at Mrs. Garland's in the mornings, but was at that moment particularly occupied in standing on the water-butt and gazing at the soldiers, with an inhaling position of the mouth and circular eyes.

There was a flutter in the little dining-room—the sensitiveness of habitual solitude makes hearts beat for preternaturally small reasons—and a guessing as to who the visitor might be. It was some military gentleman from the camp perhaps? No; that was impossible. It was the parson? No; he would not come at dinner-time. It was the well-informed man who travelled with drapery and the best Birmingham earrings? Not at all; his time was not till Thursday at three. Before they could think further the visitor moved forward another step, and the diners got a glimpse of him through the same friendly chink that had afforded him a view of the Garland dinner-table.

'O! It is only Loveday.'

This approximation to nobody was the miller above mentioned, a hale man of fifty-five or sixty—hale all through, as many were in those days, and not merely veneered with purple by exhilarating victuals and drinks, though the latter were not at all despised by him. His face was indeed rather pale than otherwise, for he had just come from the mill. It was capable of immense changes of expression: mobility was its essence, a roll of flesh forming a buttress to his nose on each side, and a deep ravine lying between his lower lip and the tumulus represented by his

chin. These fleshy lumps moved stealthily, as if of their own accord, whenever his fancy was tickled.

His eyes having lighted on the table-cloth, plates, and viands, he found himself in a position which had a sensible awkwardness for a modest man who always liked to enter only at seasonable times the presence of a girl of such pleasantly soft ways as Anne Garland, she who could make apples seem like peaches, and throw over her shillings the glamour of guineas when she paid him for flour.

‘Dinner is over, neighbour Loveday; please come in,’ said the widow, seeing his case. The miller said something about coming in presently; but Anne pressed him to stay, with a tender motion of her lip as it played on the verge of a solicitous smile without quite lapsing into one—her habitual manner when speaking.

Loveday took off his low-crowned hat and advanced. He had not come about pigs or fowls this time. ‘You have been looking out, like the rest o’ us, no doubt, Mrs. Garland, at the mampus of soldiers that have come upon the down? Well, one of the horse regiments is the --th Dragoons, my son John’s regiment, you know.’

The announcement, though it interested them, did not create such an effect as the father of John had seemed to anticipate; but Anne, who liked to say pleasant things, replied, ‘The dragoons looked nicer than the foot, or the German cavalry either.’

‘They are a handsome body of men,’ said the miller in a disinterested voice. ‘Faith! I didn’t know they were coming, though it may be in the newspaper all the time. But old

Derriman keeps it so long that we never know things till they be in everybody’s mouth.’

This Derriman was a squireen living near, who was chiefly distinguished in the present warlike time by having a nephew in the yeomanry.

‘We were told that the yeomanry went along the turnpike road yesterday,’ said Anne; ‘and they say that they were a pretty sight, and quite soldierly.’

‘Ah! well—they be not regulars,’ said Miller Loveday, keeping back harsher criticism as uncalled for. But inflamed by the arrival of the dragoons, which had been the exciting cause of his call, his mind would not go to yeomanry. ‘John has not been home these five years,’ he said.

‘And what rank does he hold now?’ said the widow.

‘He’s trumpet-major, ma’am; and a good musician.’ The miller, who was a good father, went on to explain that John had seen some service, too. He had enlisted when the regiment was lying in this neighbourhood, more than eleven years before, which put his father out of temper with him, as he had wished him to follow on at the mill. But as the lad had enlisted seriously, and as he had often said that he would be a soldier, the miller had thought that he would let Jack take his chance in the profession of his choice.

Loveday had two sons, and the second was now brought into the conversation by a remark of Anne’s that neither of them seemed to care for the miller’s business.

‘No,’ said Loveday in a less buoyant tone. ‘Robert, you see, must needs go to sea.’

‘He is much younger than his brother?’ said Mrs. Garland.

About four years, the miller told her. His soldier son was two-and-thirty, and Bob was twenty-eight. When Bob returned from his present voyage, he was to be persuaded to stay and assist as grinder in the mill, and go to sea no more.

‘A sailor-miller!’ said Anne.

‘O, he knows as much about mill business as I do,’ said Loveday; ‘he was intended for it, you know, like John. But, bless me!’ he continued, ‘I am before my story. I’m come more particularly to ask you, ma’am, and you, Anne my honey, if you will join me and a few friends at a leetle homely supper that I shall gi’e to please the chap now he’s come? I can do no less than have a bit of a randy, as the saying is, now that he’s here safe and sound.’

Mrs. Garland wanted to catch her daughter’s eye; she was in some doubt about her answer. But Anne’s eye was not to be caught, for she hated hints, nods, and calculations of any kind in matters which should be regulated by impulse; and the matron replied, ‘If so be ’tis possible, we’ll be there. You will tell us the day?’

He would, as soon as he had seen son John. ‘’Twill be rather untidy, you know, owing to my having no womenfolks in the house; and my man David is a poor dunder-headed feller for getting up a feast. Poor chap! his sight is bad, that’s true, and he’s very good at making the beds, and oiling the legs of the chairs and other furniture, or I should have got rid of him years ago.’

‘You should have a woman to attend to the house, Loveday,’ said the widow.

‘Yes, I should, but—. Well, ’tis a fine day, neighbours. Hark! I fancy I hear the noise of pots and pans up at the camp, or my ears deceive me. Poor fellows, they must be hungry! Good day t’ye, ma’am.’ And the miller went away.

All that afternoon Overcombe continued in a ferment of interest in the military investment, which brought the excitement of an invasion without the strife. There were great discussions on the merits and appearance of the soldiery. The event opened up, to the girls unbounded possibilities of adoring and being adored, and to the young men an embarrassment of dashing acquaintances which quite superseded falling in love. Thirteen of these lads incontinently stated within the space of a quarter of an hour that there was nothing in the world like going for a soldier. The young women stated little, but perhaps thought the more; though, in justice, they glanced round towards the encampment from the corners of their blue and brown eyes in the most demure and modest manner that could be desired.

In the evening the village was lively with soldiers’ wives; a tree full of starlings would not have rivalled the chatter that was going on. These ladies were very brilliantly dressed, with more regard for colour than for material. Purple, red, and blue bonnets were numerous, with bunches of cocks’ feathers; and one had on an Arcadian hat of green sarcenet, turned up in front to show her cap underneath. It had once belonged to an officer’s lady, and was not so much stained, except where the occasional storms of rain, incidental to a military life, had caused the green to run and stagnate in curious watermarks like peninsulas and islands.

Some of the prettiest of these butterfly wives had been fortunate enough to get lodgings in the cottages, and were thus spared the necessity of living in huts and tents on the down. Those who had not been so fortunate were not rendered more amiable by the success of their sisters-in-arms, and called them names which brought forth retorts and rejoinders; till the end of these alternative remarks seemed dependent upon the close of the day.

One of these new arrivals, who had a rosy nose and a slight thickness of voice, which, as Anne said, she couldn’t help, poor thing, seemed to have seen so much of the world, and to have been in so many campaigns, that Anne would have liked to take her into their own house, so as to acquire some of that practical knowledge of the history of England which the lady possessed, and which could not be got from books. But the narrowness of Mrs. Garland’s rooms absolutely forbade this, and the houseless treasury of experience was obliged to look for quarters elsewhere.

That night Anne retired early to bed. The events of the day, cheerful as they were in themselves, had been unusual enough to give her a slight headache. Before getting into bed she went to the window, and lifted the white curtains that hung across it. The moon was shining, though not as yet into the valley, but just peeping above the ridge of the down, where the white cones of the encampment were softly touched by its light. The quarter-guard and foremost tents showed themselves prominently; but the body of the camp, the officers’ tents, kitchens, canteen, and appurtenances in the rear were blotted out by the ground, because of its height above her. She could discern the forms

of one or two sentries moving to and fro across the disc of the moon at intervals. She could hear the frequent shuffling and tossing of the horses tied to the pickets; and in the other direction the miles-long voice of the sea, whispering a louder note at those points of its length where hampered in its ebb and flow by some jutting promontory or group of boulders. Louder sounds suddenly broke this approach to silence; they came from the camp of dragoons, were taken up further to the right by the camp of the Hanoverians, and further on still by the body of infantry. It was tattoo. Feeling no desire to sleep, she listened yet longer, looked at Charles's Wain swinging over the church tower, and the moon ascending higher and higher over the right-hand streets of tents, where, instead of parade and bustle, there was nothing going on but snores and dreams, the tired soldiers lying by this time under their proper canvases, radiating like spokes from the pole of each tent.

At last Anne gave up thinking, and retired like the rest. The night wore on, and, except the occasional 'All's well' of the sentries, no voice was heard in the camp or in the village below.

III. THE MILL BECOMES AN IMPORTANT CENTRE OF OPERATIONS

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The next morning Miss Garland awoke with an impression that something more than usual was going on, and she recognized as soon as she could clearly reason that the proceedings, whatever they might be, lay not far away from her bedroom window. The sounds were chiefly those of

pickaxes and shovels. Anne got up, and, lifting the corner of the curtain about an inch, peeped out.

A number of soldiers were busily engaged in making a zigzag path down the incline from the camp to the river-head at the back of the house, and judging from the quantity of work already got through they must have begun very early. Squads of men were working at several equidistant points in the proposed pathway, and by the time that Anne had dressed herself each section of the length had been connected with those above and below it, so that a continuous and easy track was formed from the crest of the down to the bottom of the steep.

The down rested on a bed of solid chalk, and the surface exposed by the roadmakers formed a white ribbon, serpenting from top to bottom.

Then the relays of working soldiers all disappeared, and, not long after, a troop of dragoons in watering order rode forward at the top and began to wind down the new path. They came lower and closer, and at last were immediately beneath her window, gathering themselves up on the space by the mill-pond. A number of the horses entered it at the shallow part, drinking and splashing and tossing about. Perhaps as many as thirty, half of them with riders on their backs, were in the water at one time; the thirsty animals drank, stamped, flounced, and drank again, letting the clear, cool water dribble luxuriously from their mouths. Miller Loveday was looking on from over his garden hedge, and many admiring villagers were gathered around.

Gazing up higher, Anne saw other troops descending by the new road from the camp, those which had already been

to the pond making room for these by withdrawing along the village lane and returning to the top by a circuitous route.

Suddenly the miller exclaimed, as in fulfilment of expectation, ‘Ah, John, my boy; good morning!’ And the reply of ‘Morning, father,’ came from a well-mounted soldier near him, who did not, however, form one of the watering party. Anne could not see his face very clearly, but she had no doubt that this was John Loveday.

There were tones in the voice which reminded her of old times, those of her very infancy, when Johnny Loveday had been top boy in the village school, and had wanted to learn painting of her father. The deeps and shallows of the mill-pond being better known to him than to any other man in the camp, he had apparently come down on that account, and was cautioning some of the horsemen against riding too far in towards the mill-head.

Since her childhood and his enlistment Anne had seen him only once, and then but casually, when he was home on a short furlough. His figure was not much changed from what it had been; but the many sunrises and sunsets which had passed since that day, developing her from a comparative child to womanhood, had abstracted some of his angularities, reddened his skin, and given him a foreign look. It was interesting to see what years of training and service had done for this man. Few would have supposed that the white and the blue coats of miller and soldier covered the forms of father and son.

Before the last troop of dragoons rode off they were welcomed in a body by Miller Loveday, who still stood in his

outer garden, this being a plot lying below the mill-tail, and stretching to the water-side. It was just the time of year when cherries are ripe, and hang in clusters under their dark leaves. While the troopers loitered on their horses, and chatted to the miller across the stream, he gathered bunches of the fruit, and held them up over the garden hedge for the acceptance of anybody who would have them; whereupon the soldiers rode into the water to where it had washed holes in the garden bank, and, reining their horses there, caught the cherries in their forage-caps, or received bunches of them on the ends of their switches, with the dignified laugh that became martial men when stooping to slightly boyish amusement. It was a cheerful, careless, unpremeditated half-hour, which returned like the scent of a flower to the memories of some of those who enjoyed it, even at a distance of many years after, when they lay wounded and weak in foreign lands.

Then dragoons and horses wheeled off as the others had done; and troops of the German Legion next came down and entered in panoramic procession the space below Anne’s eyes, as if on purpose to gratify her. These were notable by their mustachios, and queues wound tightly with brown ribbon to the level of their broad shoulder-blades. They were charmed, as the others had been, by the head and neck of Miss Garland in the little square window overlooking the scene of operations, and saluted her with devoted foreign civility, and in such overwhelming numbers that the modest girl suddenly withdrew herself into the room, and had a private blush between the chest of drawers and the washing-stand.