Chapter-6

The Trumpet-Major: *Carpe diem*

‘In Time of “the Breaking of Nations”’

‘I’d sooner see churches fall than good drink wasted’

The Napoleonic wars in general and the apprehension of the French invasion on the English Coasts in particular had been a source of continued interest to Hardy since his boyhood. At Sturminster Newton before starting *The Return of the Native*, and in London after its completion, he did some reading and research on the subject. Though *The Dynasts* may be regarded as the grand result of the study, ‘*The Trumpet-Major* may be considered as a by-product of his research’ (Pinion 34). The backdrop of the novel was provided by the local history of Dorset and Weymouth. According to Pinion, ‘The period was 1804-5, from the time when preparations were made against the landing of the French near Weymouth until the threat of invasion vanished with the naval victory of Trafalgar’ (35).

Hardy realized that it was necessary for a novelist to stay in or at least near London. Accordingly, he settled at Upper Tooting in 1878 along with Emma. This move proved to be fruitful, as it brought him in closer
contact with editors, publishers and other writers. In June of the same year he was elected a member of the Savile Club, ‘the principal literary club of the day’ (Millgate 195). The Rabelais Club, as mentioned earlier, was established in 1879 to promote ‘virility in literature’. Hardy was requested to join the club ‘as being the most virile writer of works of the imagination then in London’ (Turner 66). Turner reports, “Hardy was facing his own ‘troubles’ in the spirit of Mark Tapley [a character in Dickens’ Martin Chuzzlewit, Oxford Works of Charles Dickens, 99] determined to be ‘jolly’ ‘under circumstances that would make other men miserable.’ [...] He wrung what amusement he could from a conversation heard in a bookshop, studied jokes in Punch, and later suggested on for George du Maurier to illustrate. The policy worked well enough to produce the delightful comedy of another short story, ‘The Distracted Young Preacher’ (1879). A larger product of Tapleian jollity was The Trumpet-Major” (Turner 67).

The novel was begun in the spring of 1879, the entire work was written at Upper Tooting. In early June, Hardy approached John Blackwood of Macmillan’s Magazine and offered ‘a cheerful story without views and opinions’ which was ‘intended to wind up happily’ (Millgate 205). The novel was eventually serialized in Good Words throughout 1880, and in
October of the same year it was published in three volumes by Smith, Elder 
& Co.

Critics have generally agreed about The Trumpet-Major as being a cheerful novel abounding in carnivalesque joviality and Rabelaisian mirth. Several of them compared it with Under the Greenwood Tree because of its happy ending and abundance of rustic mirth. Turner remarks, “Trying to combine the ‘rural’ novel that his public wanted to read with the Napoleonic theme that he wanted to write about, Hardy had set to work, by February 1879, on a ‘tragical-comical-historical pastoral about the 1804 invasion scare in Dorset. Grandfer Cantle had mentioned it in the Return, and his ‘cumulative cheerfulness’, there almost lost in the ‘gloom’ of which that novel’s reviewers complained, was to saturate its successor.” (67). Turner also suggests, “As if to justify his membership of the Rabelais Club, Hardy used the Rabelaisian comic catalogue to describe how ‘They make Ready for the Illustrious Stranger’, and modelled the wedding-feast menu on that of the Gastrolaters’ sacrifice ” (70). The same view is confirmed by an unsigned review in Athenaeum [20 November 1880, 672] following the publication of the novel: ‘Excellent too, almost Rabelaisian in its profusion, is the account of the preparations for Bob Loveday’s wedding feast;’ (Cox 72). The reviewer further observes that, while Hardy had called one of his earlier
books ‘a Dutch picture’, ‘in The Trumpet-Major there are a dozen such. The supper at Miller Loveday’s, in the course of which several of the leading personages are introduced to the reader, is simply perfect of its kind.’ (Cox 72). W.R. Rutland considers the novel to be really a rural painting, or rather sequence of rural paintings of the Dutch school like Under the Greenwood Tree rather than a traditional historical novel. But it is significant and charming from another point of view as well. In the preface to The Dynasts Hardy informs us that The Trumpet-Major was the first published product of his interest in the Napoleonic wars which had stirred his imagination since childhood. Rutland observes, ‘While The Trumpet-Major may be coupled with Under the Greenwood Tree in manner, and while the two go naturally together as the happiest of his books, a fact not unconnected with the debt that both owe to memories of childhood, they differ in this: that whereas the earlier book looks backward only, and paints a past which vanished from all save memory, the later is a prelude to the great work of Hardy’s maturity’ (188).

Some critics consider The Trumpet-Major a light novel the sole object of which is to provide delight and entertainment. Counting it to be the ‘lightest-hearted novel Hardy ever wrote’ (22), Duffin observes, ‘most of the book is conceived in the spirit of the highest comedy, with many touches
of a gayer humour and gentler satire than are usual with Hardy’ (25). He also observes that if John Loveday manifests signs of pathos which is absent in Under the Greenwood Tree, these signs are ‘outweighed by the comedy of Festus Derriman, the only rollicking figure of fun in the Wessex novels’ (22). Similar is the view of Lance Butler: ‘There is a lightness about The Trumpet-Major that we do not find elsewhere in Hardy except in Under the Greenwood Tree’ (146). He also comments that though the novel concludes with reference to a death, it is not a tragic tale: ‘The novel is not even formally a tragedy; often enough it is a comedy, and in general it is a romance if not a farce’ (146). Pinion categorically states that in The Trumpet-Major, Hardy’s main object is to provide entertainment: ‘his attitude is often Thackerayan in its comic detachment; from the nautical Bob Loveday to minor background figures, the character tendency is towards the type; the Derriman episodes incline to the farcical’ (THD 278). In a similar vein, Irving Howe considers The Trumpet-Major as ‘the one among his books that is most clearly meant as an entertainment’ (41). Rutland argues that as it is a slighter novel than Hardy’s tragic ones, it has been generally passed over by commentators, and yet has remained popular and favourite among general readers. It was reprinted eleven times between 1909 and 1928. ‘This is small wonder, for it is a charming book, even if a slight one’
(191). Julian Hawthorne in Spectator (18 December 1880, 1627) observes that the novel, though not Hardy's best, possesses 'much of his best work in it', and 'the subject is one calculated to show the author in his happiest light' (Cox 75).

The opening chapter provides a lively portraiture of the exquisite charm of Miss Anne Garland who 'was fair, very fair, in a poetical sense' (TM 1) and her stay with her mother Mrs Martha Garland who is a lady with 'good-humour'(TM 3). Patrolling of cavalry soldiers due to the apprehension of French invasion led by Napoleon stirred a general curiosity among the villagers in the backwaters of England. The village of Overcombe near the Wessex coast, the venue of the novel, was not an exception to it. The arrival of the troops had drawn Simon Burden, the watcher at the beacon, "out from his drop of drink at the 'Duke of York' as it had attracted Anne" (TM 6). The entire rural community is immediately interested and excited about the proceedings:

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. (TM 8-9)
The rustics are delighted to witness the grandeur of the cavalry and perceive the bravado linked with it. They even take pride in observing their national army which comprise of members even from villages like Overcombe. They seldom forget to attend any kind of gathering which provides mirth and collective enjoyment. Simon’s emergence from his ‘drop of drink’ once again exemplifies the sustained reign of Dionysus, though alluded to in a modest manner.

The rural characters, as confirmed earlier, are apt to enjoy any revelry and they are always eager to share this with their neighbours. Miller Loveday arranges a party to celebrate the safe arrival and homecoming of one of his sons. Apart from other neighbours he also cordially invites Anne and her mother to attend the same. As Duffin puts it, ‘Hardy is splendid at parties, and soon has a grand one going, given by Miller Loveday for the homecoming of his son John’. (23) The detailed description of the party continues through as many as three chapters (II to IV).

On the day of the party, the lady tenant and her daughter Anne, who live next door, can perceive the grand preparations that are proceeding in the Miller’s residence. Anne, sitting in their own wing, enjoys the arrivals, gossips and glimpses of bright colours of the people in the Miller’s part. As evening drew on,
[...] there was an intensified continuation of the above-mentioned signs of enjoyment, talkings and haw-haws, runnings upstairs and runnings down, a slamming of doors and a clinking of cups and glasses; till the proudest adjoining tenant without friends on his own side of the partition might have been tempted to wish for entrance to that merry dwelling, if only to know the cause of these fluctuations of hilarity, and to see if the guests were really so numerous, and the observations so very amusing as they seemed. (TM 25)

Song and loud chorus reach the ears of Anne and Mrs Garland who, eager to join the cheerful party, says, "I declare the room on the other side of the wall seems quite a paradise compared with this." (TM 25). A few minutes later Miller Loveday comes in ‘dressed in a suit between grand and gay’ (TM 26) and says, "Tis unnatural that you two ladies should be biding here and we under the same roof making merry without ye" (TM 26). Mrs Garland readily agrees to his proposal and consequently joins the party along with Anne, who is formally introduced to John Loveday, the trumpet-major.

Anne’s appearance at the party along with her mother, Miller Loveday and John, causes a pause in the hilarious proceedings for a few moments. Soon, however, the aged persons, having daughters of their own,
see that she is only too young a girl, and thereafter resume their gossiping and drinking with their habitual unconcern.

The guests comprise of a heterogeneous mixture of army men and civilians, including sergeants, sergeant majors, other non-commissioned officers, old Simon Burden (the pensioner), Corporal Tullidge (the miller’s friend and neighbour), a neighbouring dairyman or two and their wives, neighbour James Comfort, of the Volunteers ['a soldier by courtesy, but a blacksmith by rights' (TM 30)], William Tremlett and Anthony Cripplestraw, who, according to Pinion, ‘is the most vital character in comic scenes’ (A Hardy Companion 35).

As the party goes on, Anne’s presence evidently becomes the source of great pleasure to John. She is quite comfortable with him and asks if he thinks Bonaparte will really come during that summer. Anne’s curiosity reflects the general inquisitiveness of the villagers regarding this exciting prospect amidst their uneventful life. While a conversation starts about the landing of the French master, John is ‘too much engaged in attending upon Anne and her mother to join in these surmises, bestirring himself to get the ladies some of the best liquor the house afforded, which had, as a matter of fact, crossed the Channel as privately as Buonaparte wished his army to do and had been landed on a dark night over the cliff’ (TM 34).
The choicest 'draught of vintage' is accompanied by dance, song and merriment. The general conversation is suspended by an over-flowing song from one of the sergeants followed by others, each providing a ditty in his turn; 'the singer standing up in front of the table stretching his chin well into the air, as though to abstract every possible wrinkle from his throat, and then plunging into the melody' (TM 35). As the songs end, the Hungarian hussar entertains the party with a 'series of wild motions that he denominated his national dance' (TM 35).

Then Sergeant Stanner began his song —

When law-yers strive to heal a breach,
And par-sons prac-tise what they preach;
Then lit-tle Bo-ney he 'll pounce down,
And march his men on Lon-don town!

*Chorus*—Rol–li cum ro–rum, tol–lol–lo–rum,

The song continues for a considerable time till at the end of the thirteenth stanza Miller Loveday terminates him humbly by saying that he has done well. The unsigned review in *Athenaeum* (20 November 1880, 672) comments, '[…] only the reader will wish Mr Hardy had given a little more
of Sargent Stanner's song' (Cox 72). Indeed the song shows the light pitch of mirth, which, once reached, can embolden the revellers to subvert the institutions of law and Church, and even squash the fear of an imminent aggression of the enemy. As Stanner completes his part, the young Squire Derriman enters and without heeding to address anyone of the gathering, 'went on in tones that shook the window-panes':

When hus – bands with their wives agree,
And maids won't wed from mod – es – ty,
Then lit- tle Bo – ney he’ll pounce down,
And march his men on Lon – don town!


The keen zest of the rural congregation for singing, dancing, drinking and revelry even in the presence of strangers is vividly portrayed through this description of the party. Stanner, who was later mortally wounded at the devastating battle of Albuera, and Festus Derriman, the spoilt nephew of old Mr Derriman, are similarly enthused by the spirit of the occasion. It resembles carnival merriment which allows no discrimination between the lofty and the shoddy, or between the superior and the inferior. Any happy occasion (here, John’s homecoming) and its celebration inspire similar sort
THE ALHAMBRA CHORUS LINE:
"NAUGHTINESS" AND "SAUCINESS" PERSONIFIED.

of ardour in every one of the rustics who scarcely nurture any kind of malice against their fellow beings. Their sense of hospitality, nature of cherishing and appreciating genuine vibrant performance, and power of immersing themselves in the joviality are once again demonstrated through this narration.

‘No ceremony, good men all,’ he [Master Derriman] said; ‘I was passing by, and my ear was caught by the singing. I like singing; ’tis warming and cheering, and shall not be put down. I should like to hear anybody say otherwise.’ (TM 37)

The Miller welcomes Derriman; the gesture reveals the rustic’s good-humoured nature which prompts him to welcome even an uninvited guest. He also fills a glass and offers it to the visitor who drinks it without showing the least reluctance.

The company had again recovered its liveliness, and it was a long time before the bouncing Rufus who had joined them could find heart to tear himself away from their society and good liquors, although he had had quite enough of the latter before he entered. (TM 40)
This is indeed the most elaborately described carnival in Hardy’s novels. No wonder that its memory should remain vivid among the rustics of Overcombe for a long time afterward.

In the sixth chapter the conversation between Festus Derriman ['the most vital character in the comic scenes' (Pinion, *A Hardy Companion* 35)] and Cripplestraw [as noted already, ‘the only rollicking figure of fun in the Wessex novels’ (Duffin 22)] leads to a hilarious atmosphere while revealing the inherent cowardice and lack of patriotism of the characters, especially of the former. Festus asks Cripplestraw whether people in Overcombe talk about him. Answering in the affirmative, the latter turns the dialogue in such a direction that it becomes a huge source of fun:

‘[...] I wish I wasn’t no more afraid of the French than you be; but being in the Locals, Maister Derriman, I assure ye I dream of having to defend my country every night; and I don’t like the dream at all.’

‘You should take it careless, Cripplestraw, as I do; and ’twould soon come natural to you not to mind it at all. Well, a fine fellow is not every thing, you know. O no. There’s as good as I in the army, and even better.’ (*TM* 53)
Festus's apprehension of death reminds one of Shakespeare's use of death as a popular subject of laughter. Strumbo [in Henry IV] frankly declares to some members of his audience that whatever they might feel, no one willingly dies an honourable death [Act II, scene v]. 'Furthermore, by his cowardly evasion of actual combat, Strumbo objectifies the conviction that a dishonourable life is preferable to a noble death' (Bristol 181). Derriman appears to hold the same view.

'And they say that when you fall this summer, you'll die like a man.'

'When I fall?'

'Yes, sure, Maister Derriman. Poor soul o' thee! I shan't forget 'ee as you lie mouldering in yer soldier's grave.'

'Hey?' said the warrior uneasily. 'What makes 'em think I am going to fall?'

'Well, sir, by all accounts the yeomanry will be put in front.'

'Front! That's what my uncle has been saying.'

'Yes, and by all accounts 'tis true. And naterelly they'll be mowed down like grass; and you among 'em, poor young galliant officer!' (TM 53-4)
Derriman becomes afraid contemplating the terrible situation and his apparent cowardice itself involves a rejection of so-called ‘heroic’ ideals and a preference for the *carpe diem* approach to life.

‘Look here, Cripplestraw. This is a reg’lar foolish report. How can yeomanry be put in front? Nobody’s put in front. We yeomanry have nothing to do with Buonaparte’s landing. We shall be away in a safe place, guarding the possessions and jewels. Now, can you see, Cripplestraw, any way at all the yeomanry can be put in front? Do you think they really can?’

(TM 54)

The apparently ignorant comments of Cripplestraw reflects his barely concealed intention of terrifying his master and thus enjoying the fun by making him a pathetic and ridiculous figure. We are reminded of Falstaff (in *Henry IV*) who is persistently in suspicion that it might really be better to be a living coward than a dead hero, particularly as the duty to die heroically may depend more on the credulity of the fallen hero than on any demonstrable and concrete social benefit gained through sacrifice. Bristol observes, ‘By treating honorable death as a joke, Fallstaff speaks to a plebeian consciousness that maintains itself despite sacrifices demanded in
the name of the nation-state’ (183). Derriman resembles Falstaff when he says in response to Cripplestraw’s cheering provocation:

‘[…] I know a great warrior like you is only too glad o’ the chance. ’Twill be a great thing for ye, death and glory! In short, I hope from my heart you will be, and I say so very often to volk— in fact, I pray at night for ’t.’

‘O ! cuss you! You needn’t pray about it.’

Cripplestraw readily appreciates the response:

‘No, Maister Derriman, I won’t.’ (TM 54)

The character of Derriman is ‘a comic opera figure at times almost Dickensian’ (Duffin 22). Duffin also adds, ‘His swagger and funk, in the Bob Acres tradition, are emphasized to caricature. Touch him on his inferiority complex and he reacts in exactly the same way every time’ (22-23). But Derriman is meant to convey more than that; he obliquely manifests the uninhibited ‘animal’ desire for life and its zest.

Following the publication of The Trumpet Major, in a review of the novel in The Spectator (18 December 1880, 1627), Julian Hawthorne observes that Hardy ‘never misses the comic aspect of a situation or episode, and he never enforces it by a coarse or unsympathetic touch; the light falls gently and sweetly upon it, and passes on. A great many modern novelists
would never be humorous, if there were not so great a demand for humour now-a-days — a demand which they feel in duty bound to supply, to the best of their ability; but Mr Hardy is humorous, inevitably and inadvertently — and would be so, if humour in literature were a thing unheard of until he wrote' (Cox 74). That this eulogy is not an over-estimation is exemplified in yet another conversation between Cripplestraw and his master (in the twenty-sixth chapter). A tremendously funny situation is created when neither Festus nor his servant dares to go enquiring whether the French Army has landed on the shore. Derriman orders the latter to go to Budmouth and 'make a bold inquiry whether the cowardly enemy is on a shore as yet, or only looming in the bay.'

'I'd go in a moment, Sir,' said the other, 'if I hadn't my bad leg again. I should have joined my company afore this; but they said at last drill that I was too old. So I shall wait up in the hay-loft for tidings as soon as I have packed you off, poor gentleman!' (TM 233)

They are thus averse to take on the challenges of heroic enterprises and would rather submit to instinctual drives towards pragmatic self preservations instead.
Then he advises Derriman to be valiant and not to waste his time. He also suggests that instead of going to Budmouth Derriman should rush to the place where his ladylove is, and provide her protection and defence as she needs it most at that critical hour. Festus readily agrees:

'I will, Cripplestraw, now you put it like that!'

'Thank ye, thank ye heartily, Maister Derriman. Go now and hide with her.' (TM 236)

Festus' doubt 'Will they see it a brave hiding?' (TM 236) adds an extra edge to the comedy of the situation. Duffin comments, 'The scene in which he induces his man Cripplestraw to persuade him, an officer in the yeomanry, that to go into hiding on the news of Boney's landing is a more courageous thing than to go to the front, is hugely funny in a farcical sense'(22-23). But the farce, read between the lines, also conveys a deeper message of 'sunburnt' wisdom.

While returning home from a party at a neighbour's, Anne and John come across the Oxwell Hall of Uncle Benjy where they discover Festus in a mood of revelry availing of the advantage of his uncle's absence. In the dining room a dozen young men of the yeomanry cavalry including Festus himself are 'drinking, laughing, singing, thumping their fists on the tables in
the very perfection of confusion' (TM 76). The entire atmosphere reminds us of the Roman Saturnalia or the carnival revelry of the Middle Ages.

One of the young men might possibly have been in a maudlin state, for he had his arm round the neck of his next neighbour. Another was making an incoherent speech to which nobody was listening. Some of their faces were red, some were sallow; some were sleepy, some wide awake. (TM 76-77)

However, Uncle Benjy's sudden arrival and his intervention bring the revelry to an end. Nevertheless, the rejoicing of the young members of the yeomanry cavalry manifests their zest for drinking and jollity even in the face of impending threat of the French invasion.

The impact of the appearance of the supreme authority on the plebeians and their irrepressible excitement and curiosity to have a view of the sovereign and his family are vividly portrayed in Chapter Eleven. The rustics welcome the occasion and show readiness to squeeze enjoyment from it as they would have, in fact, grabbed any chance — big or small — to have a 'kick' and a 'burst' of laughter.

The Trumpet Major informs Anne that the King on his way to Gloucester Lodge will pass through the nearest town at midnight. Anne and her mother decide to witness the passing of King George and other royal
personages through that area. When they arrive at the ridge over which the highway stretched they see many of their neighbours, who have already reached there, 'idling on the grass border between the roadway and the hedge, enjoying a sort of midnight picnic' (TM 97). From the height of the ridge can be seen in the distance the watering place that is lighted that night more pompously in honour of the royal arrival. After waiting for hours the people could glimpse the approach of the royal procession a short while after half-past three.

Then there arose a huzza from the few knots of watchers gathered there, and they cried, 'Long live King Jarge!' (TM 103)

The procession moves on. It consists of three royal carriages, the first one, 'a post-chariot drawn by four horses' (TM 103), has the King and the Queen in it. Looking at it, Anne 'was rewarded by seeing a profile reminding her of the current coin of the realm' (TM 103). In the same carriage, it is reported, are the two elderly princesses, the second one contains more princesses, and the third vehicle some of their attendants. But as they have been travelling throughout the night, none of the royal family looks out of the carriage windows. When they have all passed by, Mrs Garland says, 'Thank God, I have seen my King!' (TM 103) She must have seen the King of her contemplation, for King George has not even peeped out of the carriage.
Nobody else, however, expresses any thankfulness, for they have expected a more gorgeous procession and an old person even comments quite irreverentially that ‘that sight of dusty old leather coaches was not worth waiting for’ (TM 103). This remark substantiates that the rustics dare to poke fun even at the King when appropriate situations arise. This is in tune with the subversive spirit which is part of the carnival tradition.

However, the disappointment of the gathering regarding the sight of the royal family and the hope of a dazzling procession is adequately compensated in the following chapter (Chapter XII). The Trumpet-Major (John Loveday) sends the message that a review by the King on the down is scheduled to be held on the following day. This news readily spreads through the village and country around and the following morning almost the entire population of Overcombe gathers on the slope along with crowd from afar to witness the proceedings of the day. Dressed in his best attire the miller reaches the spot accompanied by Mrs Garland and her daughter.

It is a cloudless clear day, with little wind blowing, providing a vividly wide view from the down. At nine in the morning various troops approach marching, some from the nearby camps and others from towns round about. Carriages of all sorts, ages and colours, and pedestrians belonging to all classes gather at the slope. At ten, the arrival of the royal
personages is reported and before long the king accompanied by the Dukes of Cambridge and Cumberland, and two generals, appears on horseback. Sensation is felt among the crowd. Then appear on the field the Queen and three princesses in a grand coach drawn by six exquisite cream-coloured horses. Two more princesses appear in the following coach drawn by four similar horses. There are heard 'confused acclamations' from the mob, 'There's King Jarge!' 'That's Queen Sharlett!' 'Princess 'Lizabeth!' 'Princess Sophiar and Meelyer!' (TM 107)

At the march-past the miller, Anne and her mother are delighted to identify John Loveday among the trumpeters, who looks as soldierly as any of his group. It is said that the entire procession is three miles long, which may seem an exaggeration. After the review there is a sham fight when the gathering disperse widely and thus Mrs Garland gets 'still clearer glimpses of the King, and his handsome charger, and the head of the Queen, and the elbows and shoulders of the princesses in the carriages, and fractional parts of General Garth and the Duke of Cumberland; which sights gave her great gratification' (TM 108).

At twelve the review is concluded: 'the King and his fifteen thousand armed men, the horses, the bands of music, the princesses, the cream-
coloured teams' (TM 119) — all disappear gradually. By one o’clock the downs are again bare.¹

The plebeians’ interest in the royal family, their ardour for collective mirth, their earnest wish for relishing pomp and grandeur, their thirst for witnessing colourful occasion despite their own strenuous and monotonous regular life are illustrated here excellently. They positively accept the hardships and tribulations of life and make it endurable by participating in such occasional merriments. These festive occasions provide them the power of sustenance through their everyday afflictions. Mrs Garland’s ecstasy even in having a partial view of royal personages reflects in general the rustics’ ability to squeeze entertainment however frugal the source may be. The general spectators’ curiosity only in ‘troops and battalions in the concrete, straight lines of red, blue and white formed of innumerable knee-breeches, black lines formed of many gaiters, coming and going in kaleidoscopic change’ (TM 109) reveals their knack for spotting the bright colour on a generally mundane stage of life. Though in the previous occasion they could not have a look at the members of the royal family and were disheartened at the lack of gorgeousness of the procession, they promptly gather again at the very next opportunity as soon as such an
occasion arises. This also reveals their ability for tapping every possible source of amusement.

In the fourteenth chapter it is reported that miller Loveday has received a letter from his younger son Bob. 'Letters were matters of public moment, and everybody in the parish had an interest in the reading of those rare documents' (TM 120); therefore when the miller invites Mrs Garland to have her opinion on the epistle, he discovers that 'he was to be additionally assisted by the opinions of other neighbours whose persons appeared in the doorway' (TM 120). The letter states that Bob has found his life partner in the form of Miss Matilda Johnson, without much ado, he and she have arranged to be married at once at Overcombe so that 'his father might not be deprived of the pleasures of the wedding feast' (TM 121).

The neighbours' general interest in personal letters, particularly that of a son of the soil who is a seafarer, illustrates the ways of this community life of these simple people. The content of the letter also carried the promise of a gala occasion of collective merriment.

On the scheduled day of Bob's arrival the miller along with his family members and neighbours go with much ardour to receive him. But despite much endeavour and search, they fail to meet him. Meanwhile, Bob has come home by another route and naturally finds the door locked. With
the help of a pole and apple tree 'climbing across like a Barbary ape, he entered the window and stepped down inside' (TM 126-27). When the entire household along with the neighbours return to discover Bob already settled within, they are excited:

Then there was a welcoming of Captain Bob by pulling out his arms like drawers and shutting them again, smacking him on the back as if he were choking, holding him at arm's length as if he were of too large type to read close. All which persecution Bob bore with a wide genial smile that was shaken into fragments and scattered promiscuously among the spectators'. (TM 128)

The warmth of the rustics' feeling at the homecoming of Bob is apparent.

The reception of Matilda and her wedding with Bob at once become the main concern of the mill and large scale preparations are soon in progress. Everybody unanimously agree that 'the mill residence had not been so thoroughly scoured for twenty years.' (TM 140)

The cuisine for the wedding festivity is appropriately thorough. In the words of Duffin,

[...] the Olympian feast that, at a later day, is prepared for the wedding of sailor Bob. A bare record of the fare makes the waistband feel tight. Four chickens and a little curly-tailed
barrow pig; a cold chine, stuffed veal, and two pigeon pies; thirty rings of black-pot, a dozen of white-pot, and ten knots of tender and well-washed chitterlings, cooked plain, "in case the bride should like a change"; sweetbreads, and "five milts, sewed up at one side in the form of a chrysalis, and stuffed with thyme, sage, parsley, mint, groats, rice, milk, chopped egg, and other ingredients; roasted before a slow fire, and eaten hot." Then there were apple pies— all windfalls and maggot-cored codlins being carefully excluded; and puddings stirred up in the milking-pail and boiled in a three-legged bell-metal crock, of great weight and antiquity. (23)

In the cellar Loveday has laid in an ample barrel of Casterbridge strong beer. Irving Howe mischievously notes, 'And in describing the strong beer of Casterbridge, Hardy became rapturous' (42):

It was of the most beautiful colour that the eye of an artist in beer could desire; full in body, yet brisk as a volcano; piquant, yet without a twang; luminous as an autumn sunset; free from streakiness of taste; but finally, rather heady. The masses worshipped it, the minor gentry loved it more than wine, and by
Apart from the beer, the miller also ‘tapped a hogshead of fine cider’ which ‘had been pressed from fruit judiciously chosen by an old hand’ (TM 142).

The preparation for the feast indicates an imminent occasion of collective mirth. It also reflects the miller’s earnest longing for involving all his neighbours in the merry event of his family. The rustics’ participation in the preparation reveals their zeal for remaining associated with a jovial celebration. Unfortunately, the wedding for which such elaborate arrangement is made does not materialise due to a hitch between Bob and Matilda. However, the victuals and the prospect of collective joviality are not wasted as the miller himself decides to marry his tenant neighbour Mrs Garland apparently not to allow waste of good food and drink. David’s exclamation brings out the rustics’ carnivalesque response to the prospect of eating, drinking and merriment. He says to Bob, ‘All right – all right again, Captain! A wedding after all! Hurrah!’ (TM 179) He also adds,

Maister and Mrs Garland have made up a match, and mean to marry at once, that the wedding victuals may not be wasted!

They felt ‘twould be thousand pities to let such good things get
blue-vinnied for want of a ceremony to use 'em upon, and at last they have thought of this. (TM 179)

David's attitude and feeling of gaiety represents the general disposition of the entire neighbourhood who are genuinely eager to take part in any jovial occasion — it matters little whether it is Bob's wedding or his father's — though they are of course sympathetic to the captain as Matilda has deserted him.

In the morning of the appointed day the wedding takes place 'at the cheerful hour of ten, in the face of a triangular congregation' (TM 183). In the evening, the miller is glad to see his neighbours devouring voraciously and drinking hard.

And, in addition to the poor and needy, every cottager's daughter known to the miller was invited, and told to bring her lover from camp — an expedient which, for letting daylight into the inside of full platters, was among the most happy ever known. (TM 184)

The merry event is celebrated with extensive participation of the neighbours, though the tone of gaiety is fixed at a temperate pitch considering the age of the couple and the replacement of the original couple.
Towards the end of the twenty-eighth chapter, the dread of the French invasion having disappeared Miller Loveday in a mood of relief proposes to have a drink. David gloomily informs him there is no liquor for he has drained out all from the barrels, considering that if the invasion should occur they would not be able to consume the drink. So, he thinks it is better to spoil it than preserving for the enemies to consume.

‘Afore I went to church for a pike to defend my native country, from Boney, I pulled out the spigots of all the barrels, maister; for, think I – damn him! — since we can’t drink it ourselves, he shan’t have it, nor none of his men.’

‘But you shouldn’t have done it till you was sure he’d come!’ said the miller, aghast.

‘Chok’ it all, I was sure!’ said David. ‘I’d sooner see churches fall than good drink wasted; [...] (TM 263)

The rustics’ zest for boozing is once again manifested. They, in a mood of gaiety, even poke fun at the very existence of churches and subvert its authority considering it inferior to quality liquor. This inclination for subversion and drinking to commemorate a merry occasion is perfectly in harmony with the carnival tradition of England.
Regarding this incident, Hardy told William Archer in *Real Conversations*, ‘Few of my longer books are so closely founded on facts as *The Trumpet-Major*. The incident of the people letting their cider run when Bonaparte was reported to have landed, is a literal fact’ (Rutland 189).

In the last chapter, Bob, arriving suddenly one mid-day, informs his family that order has been given to John’s dragoon to join Sir Arthur Wellesley in the Peninsula. The members of the household wish to make the eve of the trumpet-major’s departure a memorable one and thus a valedictory supper is organised in haste that very evening as the regiment is scheduled to depart the following day.

Following John’s entrance at the mill several of his companions arrive there for bidding him farewell. They comprise mostly of the persons who had joined the party arranged by the miller at John’s homecoming. However, on this occasion the celebration is a bit subdued compared to ‘that earlier and more cheerful occasion.’ (TM 383)

Thus the villagers bid a brave adieu to one of their comrades who is destined to go off ‘to blow his trumpet till silenced for ever upon one of the bloody battle-fields of Spain’ (TM 385). Their mood at the farewell gathering is hardly morose; they feel proud and display gaiety instead, that
their representative is on a march to serve the country. This is also a desperate feeling before embracing death.

The novel displays ample occasions of collective merriment illustrating the carnival ambience in the English rural areas even in the early years of the nineteenth century, though, of course, in a chastened form. The novel, despite having the threat of the French invasion as its background, would "probably disappoint readers who crave for 'sensation', albeit there are plenty of sufficiently exciting incidents in it" (Cox 72). The comic characters and their hilarious performances, the elaborately arranged feasts and the villager's avid enjoyment of them as well as of the royal reviews, the denouncing of the Church and glorification of liquor — all these manifest the carnival approach of the olden days.

**Note**

1. The Trumpet-Major Notebook of Hardy in which the author collected notes from the British Museum, provides amply detailed delineation of the actual reviews by the King [Taylor (ed) 117-84].