

peter of the regiment. Fortune—fickle jade—had never played him false, and he succeeded in everything he undertook. No one sounded the *réveil* so well as he, and no sentinel's step was as firm and quick on the rounds as that of Blouart.

And what a trumpeter he was !

By nature a musician, you know, he had passed his boyhood's days listening to the music of the winds and birds. Often, while tending his sheep on the green fields of Touraine, he used to manufacture strange whistles from bits of willow. He liked nothing better than to try and rival Nature's songsters with those whistles of his. And now he owned a real instrument, and used to practise every afternoon while in garrison on the shores of the Orne. He could see the church towers of Caen above the chestnut trees on the Grand Promenade, their pointed spires pricking holes in the blue cushion of the heavens.

At sundown the bells opened their brazen throats and rang out the chimes, at first in an indistinct murmur, then swelling loud and high, to float again into silence and slowly die away. Victoire paused every time to listen to this ineffable music;—not that he was given to dreams and reverie, on the contrary, he liked a jolly good time and a hearty laugh as well as any of them, and his "frank French eyes" looked ever bravely and boldly into the face of the whole world.

His only sorrow had been to leave his home and father, who was now well on in years. Yet he consoled himself with the thought that time was passing quickly, for he had but two more years to serve. At times the bells reminded him of the Angelus at home, and he would think sadly and fondly of the little ivy-covered cottage and of the old man smoking his pipe in the doorway; but he was only twenty-five years old, and at this age is not life's prospect set in blue and gold and all the living easy?

And then he liked the garrison life; trumpeting morning and evening, marching through the streets full of people, and after drill, resting beneath the trees and chatting of the pretty blonde heads they had seen behind the shutters.

And so the time passed quickly; then war broke out.

II

They had been fighting all day. The sun had reached the horizon, and still the battle continued. Both sides had sworn to conquer, and neither would surrender.

The trumpet-call was heard from time to time in the heart of the *mêlée*, rivalling the noise of the cannon and the shouts of the soldiers.

Blouart advanced. A crowd of soldiers, dazed and stupefied with the smoke and carnage, followed blindly at his heels. Victoire seemed to realize the

significance of his adopted name. He rushed on the enemy like an infuriated war-horse, and never ceased sounding the charge. Suddenly he found himself surrounded by hostile faces; not a French uniform could be seen near him. He tried in vain to force a way through the living wall of men, rifles were drawn on him, and he was taken prisoner.

The sun disappeared..... slowly, slowly, night descended and covered the scene of death with her sombre mantle: the battle was at an end.

Blouart marched along between the soldiers over the hills past fields and woods. The din of battle was still in his ears, and he walked as in a dream.

At last they stopped for the night near a wood; the fires were lighted, and threw strange shadows among the trees. Overcome by fatigue, Victoire threw himself down on the moss, fell asleep and dreamed. He was once more a child at home. The day was bright, and the birds sang; his mother was busy at her spinning-wheel. School was just over, and he had come in with a long rod found by the roadside, which he displayed with no small pride and joy. What a fine gun it makes! He struts about the yard, a mimic soldier, when suddenly a large dog passes, barking loudly. The valiant soldier takes fright, throws down his gun, and runs away at full speed. His mother calls to him from the window: "Shame on you! A true soldier never surrenders!"

A true soldier never surrenders!

Blouart seemed to hear these words in his ear. He awoke with a start and looked around him. The camp slept. Only the sentinel's step could be heard as he tramped over the soft moss. The sky was bright with stars; a fresh breeze arose, bringing with it the fragrant scent of the forest. Victoire passed his hand over his forehead, and remembered that he was a prisoner.

He must get up: he will escape or die.....but no! he is watched, and cannot move.

Hours go by, the sky grows white, and a path can now be seen winding along the edge of the forest to a hill before them. This road passes by a deep ravine, from whose depths can be heard the roar of a mountain torrent. The signal for departure is given, but this time not by Victoire. He looks sadly at his trumpet, and a wild desire to die takes possession of him.

A true soldier never surrenders!

These words still echo in his ears. He is walking between two soldiers. The precipice is there just at hand, and with it death and deliverance. Victoire throws himself against the soldier on his right, who gives a terrible cry and is hurled into the abyss. Blouart is about to follow, but is beaten back by the soldiers' rifles; he feels the cold steel on his forehead and closes his eyes.