

“Le Bon Soldat,”

IT was early autumn in France. The leaves were falling, the harvests were ripe, and the women and children were busy gathering in the crops which were to provide a needy nation with food during the long, cold winter that was predicted by everyone. In the neighborhood of Cambrai all was desolation. Night and day shells were bursting, with their terrible incessant thunder. The Y. M. C. A. buildings and the First Aid hospitals alone were standing, like gaunt sentinels keeping watch over the desolate stillness of the surrounding country. For three miles around the vicinity of the trenches, only the ruins of churches, schools, and dwelling houses showed where once prosperous villages had stood. There was one exception. The small cottage of old Mère Marie Beaupré had miraculously escaped the fate of all the neighboring buildings—how or why no one knew. Other villagers, vacating the desolate territory themselves, had urged Mère Marie to follow their example. But she had remained steadfast in her resolve to stay within the old cottage which had been her home for years, and with her grandchild, Celeste, lived on, apparently oblivious to the dangers which threatened on all sides. She heeded the monotonous roar of the guns no more than she had heeded the rumble of some villagers' wagon on the highway before her house, in the long, happy days before the war.

No villager's wagon ever passed now. All was deserted, save when a body of troops marched by to relieve their comrades in the trenches, or convoys, loaded with supplies, made their way to the scene of action. Occasionally, too, soldiers on horseback would pass, on their way to the outside world, and often would pause at the old peasant woman's cottage for refreshment.

Such were red letter days to the little Celeste—days to brighten the long, dull, monotonous stretch of her little existence. And one day—Celeste caught her breath to think of it—some soldiers had passed on horseback when her doll, Rosine, was lying in the sand of the road, where she, careless