

# The Boy in Blue

## A Tale of the U.S. Civil War

Harry Barton was just sixteen years old. He was a cadet in a northern military school.

Like all northern boys, Harry longed to enlist, for every battle he read about made him more restless and eager to go to the war. A new company was being formed. Harry could not study, he could not train, and he could not work. He could think of nothing but the war.

One day, Harry wrote a letter to his father:

*Dear father,*

*Do please let me go to the war! There is no one left in the school now but little boys. I can't study. Please let me go.*

*Your boy,  
Harry*

Harry's father was very sad when he read this letter. He knew what a cruel thing war is. Still, he wrote, "Yes, you may go." And Harry rushed to the recruiting office with the letter.

"See, see, I may go!" he cried.

But the recruiting officer only shook his head. "You are too young," he said.

"But I am large for my age!" Harry pleaded.

The officer only shook his head again. Poor Harry, it was a bitter disappointment.

But by and by another company was formed. "We need a drummer boy," said the recruiting officer.

"If you would only take me!" said Harry.

"Can you drum?"

"I think I can." Then Harry beat the drum while the fifer played the fife.

"Good, good!" said the fifer.

"All right, then," said the officer. "We will take you along as drummer boy!"

recruiting

recruiting

---



---



---

officer

officer

---



---



---

drummer boy

drummer boy

---



---



---

Harry threw up his hat. "Hurrah for the star-spangled banner!" he shouted.

On the next day, there was a great procession. The new company marched up and down the streets of the village, and Harry drummed. How proud he was of his drum and of his uniform and his brass buttons!

By and by, the company was ordered out, and the soldiers marched all day long under the hot July sun. It was a hard march for the new recruits; and at the end of it Harry dropped in the ranks.

"He has sunstroke!" said the surgeon. "He must be taken to the hospital."

For many weeks Harry lay on his cot in the hospital, waiting to be well again. At last the surgeon said, "Well, my lad, do you want to go back to your company today?"

**1. Harry was sent to the hospital for \_\_\_\_\_.**

- a. a wound**
- b. hiccupping**
- c. poisoning**
- d. sunstroke**

"Oh, may I go?" Harry cried.

"Your company is five miles from here. Do you think you can walk so far?"

"I can walk ten miles!" Harry said eagerly. "But do you mean that I may go today?"

"Yes, you may go," the surgeon answered. "And you are a brave soldier, my boy!"

Then off Harry started, his drum on his back. "Who goes there?" called the sentinel, as Harry reached the lines.

sentinel

sentinel

---



---



---

"Hello, Elias, is that you?" he answered. But Elias would make no answer.

"Give the countersign!" he called again.

"Now, Elias, you know who I am, and you know I don't know the countersign. Aren't you going to let me in?" laughed Harry, for

Elias and Harry were old childhood friends.

"Countersign, or you are a dead man!" answered Elias, coolly.

"But I don't know the countersign!"

"Corporal of the guard! Post number four!" shouted Elias.

The corporal came hurrying to the post. "What is the matter?" he asked.

**2. Harry cannot enter until he gives the \_\_\_\_\_ to his childhood friend, Elias.**

- a. bribe
- b. countersign
- c. secret handshake
- d. weapon

"Man trying to break my guard, sir!" was the sentinel's answer.

corporal

corporal

---



---



---

When the corporal saw Harry, he said, "Well, well! Here is our drummer boy again!"

Harry tumbled into his straw bed that night a very tired, but a very happy boy. At day break, the company was called out for battle.

"Company D! Fall in! The enemy is upon us!"

Then Company D fell in; and most bravely it fought. It was Harry's first battle. Many of his boy comrades were killed; but he drummed bravely on, though bullets whizzed about him.

In a few months, Company D went into winter quarters. It was a hard, bitter winter. Harry had never known before what it was to be cold and hungry. Then, too, the company had to drill, drill, drill, day in and day out.

How tired the boys were; and how glad they were when the sun went down, and they could rest till morning.

At last, word came that there would be no more fighting. The war was ended, the northern states had won, and the company might go back to their homes.

Alas, there were few in Harry's company left alive; for many of the brave boys had been killed in battle.

But it was a happy day for Harry when the train rolled into his own little town. The depot was crowded with people to welcome the soldiers, and Harry's father was there. "Are you there, Harry?" he called.

"Here, father!" Harry shouted back.

"Thank God!" was all the father could say when his boy leaped from the train.

"Thank God!" And the happy tears rolled down his cheeks.

"War is a cruel thing, my boy," he said. "A cruel thing; and may there never be another in this fair land of ours."

### **3. Which side won the Civil War?**

- a. North**
- b. South**

### **4. Harry was greeted at the train station by his \_\_\_\_\_.**

- a. brother**
- b. father**
- c. mother**
- d. sister**