



## "The One Who Comes Alone"

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Illustrated by E. J. DINSMORE

"N O, Miss, not a vision! Quite clearly I could see the great trees with their branches pointing upward as if they could not understand why they had been so torn. The ground about me was furrowed as by a giant plow and my injured foot lay in a pool of water. So near to me that I could touch him lay the American who had cracked jokes in the trench but a few hours before. Above us the springtime moon shone pityingly. It seemed to want to soften the awfulness of what it must look upon. No, Miss, I dreamed not. Clearly I saw him come to me, swiftly over the uneven ground. Like a woman he dressed my wounds and bathed my face, and so tenderly did he carry me that I suffered not at all."

The little poilu talked earnestly and his companions listened with grave faces.

"Oui, Mademoiselle," another soldier interrupted, "many times he has come. In his uniform—his uniform with the cross of crimson on his arm. He comes into the battlefield where men lie dying, and into the trenches when the boys are hungry and disheartened. Always he comes quietly and gives to each man what most he needs, and always, Miss, he is kind. His eyes they shine with much understanding, and beautiful he smiles, always, Miss!"

"Is he French?" I ventured to ask, but the men only exchanged glances and shrugged.

"Always we understand him, Miss; also the Anglaises," one answered patiently.

During my eight months of service, I had heard many weird tales of help and comfort that had come to the soldiers. Some of the wounded men told of waking to find themselves in protected spots many feet from where they had fallen; others told of being miraculously saved by skillful first aid, or of being dragged out from the enemies' lines. But knowing their keen appreciation of every slight service I decided that in the fullness of gratitude the wounded men attributed supernatural powers to the nurses or doctors who were able to relieve their sufferings. In their semi-conscious state a stretcher-

bearer might easily seem to descend from out the setting sun, nor would it be difficult to believe that the fingers that tenderly bound a wound were those of a saint. But for the past few months the stories of this one man had grown in number and detail, and they were told with remarkable similarity both by the soldiers from the Somme and by the soldiers from the Piave front. His uniform with the crimson cross on the sleeve, his marvellous strength and tenderness, and his wonderful smile that renewed men's faith and courage; these simple facts were always the same; yet, in no branch of the Red Cross of France or of Italy was there a man who answered the entire description.

"It would be impossible for a man to be transferred from one line to another so quickly, and no ordinary man could do so much," I reminded a veteran of Verdun, to which he calmly agreed:

"Oui, Mademoiselle, no ordinary man could do so much!"

The earnestness of the soldiers and their sincere belief in 'The One Who Comes Alone,' as they called him, puzzled me greatly, so, one afternoon I broached the subject to a fellow worker who had been among the first to answer the call of France.

"Have any of the men whom you have nursed told you queer things about a—Red Cross ambulance doctor?" I asked hesitatingly.

"Do you mean 'The One Who Comes Alone?'" she asked quietly and I nodded.

"I know a boy," she answered, "who was injured so badly that it seemed almost a pity to take precious time to dress his wounds; he was shot all but to pieces and had lain for three days in a filthy barn. I was standing by his bedside wondering how he happened to be alive at all, when suddenly he opened his eyes and looked at me. 'I am in no pain,' he said, 'and in a few weeks I'll be ready to go back.' Thinking to soothe him I answered, 'Yes, surely, in a few weeks.' The poor chap smiled then and went

on talking. 'It won't take long,' he said, 'you see, Miss, The One Who Comes Alone sat with me all day yesterday, and although he didn't say much, when my head got to doing queer stunts, he took hold of my hand and hung on like a regular pal.'"

"Well," the elder nurse said slowly, "we've done some remarkable things here in the hospital, but no one pretends to know how that boy happened to recover, and he did go back."

An urgent call ended our talk then, and the next morning I was sent to one of the dressing stations near the front, at that mysterious point called "somewhere." Here, every hour was so filled that I had no time to question the truthfulness of soldiers' tales. My thoughts turned often to the bevy of girls at home who were longing to come over, and I almost wished that they might be allowed to come.

One night, when the wounded were being brought in in droves and I had sponged, and plugged, and bandaged until my head swam, I caught myself saying over and over in a sort of monotone, "if-we-only-had-more-help, if we only had more help;" and I went on sponging, and plugging, and bandaging paying no particular attention to a young man in a Red Cross uniform, with the usual Red Cross on his arm, who carried in a wounded Englishman and proceeded in a cool, business-like fashion, to dress the man's wounds. This patient attended to, he turned to others, and, in an incredibly short time, the suffering men had all been made as comfortable as possible. Then the young doctor came toward me:

"You are about all in," he said, smiling. "Lie down and rest; I'll keep watch and call you, if need be." Then he took my arm and gently led me to my cot, and giving the hard bit of a pillow a punch he promised, with a queer little laugh, "Not even a Boche's bomb shall destroy the station while I am here!"

FOR two hours I slept, a delicious restful sleep, and when I awoke, he was leaning against the door frame and it seemed to me that absolute peace had come to our station. (Continued on page 61)



Sunny Jim sprang to his feet. "Did you hear

what this beast said?" he demanded.