

## The Patriot

*By kind permission of the writer, a local gentleman.*

Often have I thought of the Patriot. Often he has come into his own again; and, in the days that are coming, I trust there will be a place for him. In my memory of many broken men he stands out conspicuously clear. He moved, when I met him, slowly and fearfully as a man who expects a fall. He wore no bandages, but his presence was appalling,—his face at times haunts me with its patient but palpable expectancy. His story (he was one of the Pats) was told to me with a sympathetic manner, but with also a dramatic effect that carried me away. Instead of the the wind-swept promenade I was within sound of the guns; squeezing the soft grease of the ground; mingling with men who had watched death and desolation; and who had their being amid scenes of desolation and ruin. As I listened his real name faded away and he became "the Patriot," and by that name I always think of him. He was one of many. One of the men whose patriotism rang out a clarion note of comfort in the early days of the war. He came—one of the virile types of Colonial Manhood—to emphasise the solaridity of Empire. He was a patriot.

All of the happenings to the "Pats" would want much telling. The Patriot himself might still have been with them but for one German and one happening for which I must find space. There came a day when, by the ordering of fate, the Patriot was face to face with this ONE German—when he came up against a new emotion. The German was very young, and he threw his rifle down, saying in effect "Me boy, me no fight", the Patriot succumbed to the emotion, and marched his prisoner back to an old shed. The easy attitudes of his comrades at arms proclaimed it a rest-house. They turned as the Patriot came in after his prisoner and leaned his rifle behind the door. One fellow enquired what—

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The Patriot opened his eyes to the uniformity of a hospital ward. He tried to pick something out of the obscurity of his mind, but failed. He lay feebly counting the long windows. One - two - three one - two - three. A sister appeared from nowhere at his bedside. "And so you are awake"? she asked, with a curious look at the awakened one. And after a time, during which she stroked the coverlet and said soothing things to cover her inspection, she added, "Do you know how long you have been asleep"? The Patriot lacked the strength to guess the riddle.

The Sister saved him the trouble. "Eight days", she added, in the tone of the woman who watches professionally by the sick-bed