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The Patriotism of Susan

By JANE OSBORN

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Ever since fifteen years before, when the Yagers had the quaint old Dutch porch of their house on High street, in Tilton, turned into a full-fledged "front piazza," Horace Stocum had entertained a passion for Susan—hopeless, but none the less absorbing. For Horace was at that time simply a carpenter by the day for the builder who built that piazza, and though he had no mean idea of his own calling and had no very definite notion of the social superiority of the Yagers over the Stocums, still it was obviously impossible. Nothing could come of it. "Old Man Yager" had made what for that town was a fortune in the leading dry goods store, and Susan was his only heir. Moreover, she possessed radiant red hair, a defiant tip-tilted nose, a fair, rose-colored skin only the more dazzling for the contrast of a few freckles—and thus embodied Horace Stocum's ideal of all that was femininely lovely.

During those days that he saved and nailed the boards of the Yager piazza the twenty-year-old Susan had worn a heliotrope gingham dress as she pattered about the garden, and as Stocum caught glimpses of her through the windows; and since then there had been an associational thrill about that particular hue that had remained still vibrant, showing that the thirty-eight-year-old "boss carpenter" was as bewitched by Susan as ever. But it was more hopeless. She was regarded as one of the "best fixed" spinsters in town. She belonged to the Country club and had a center-aisle pew in the church attended only by the old aristocracy of Tilton.

History moved slowly in Tilton during most of those fifteen years, and though Horace fed on despair, he had little cause for jealousy, for there really were no eligible bachelors in Tilton nor any reason why they should come—that is, until Tilton awoke one day and found itself a war industries center. Then for the first time since there had been a winter barracks in old Tilton in the days of the Revolution the male population far outnumbered that of the women. Only the males in this case were workmen, mechanics, foremen, directors and promoters of a half dozen war-developing industries.

One morning in the first weeks of this new regime Horace was feeling particularly down at heart. The house where he had boarded gloomily for these fifteen years had been bought up at a good price as an extension to one of the plants, and he faced the proposition of being homeless within a week. It was the morning he was putting a side porch on Widow Smith's house, next to Susan's—for by this time front porches had gone out and side porches were in demand in Tilton.

"Too bad about Miss Susan," the widow remarked. She had brought her pea shelling to the side window, for she was nothing loath to converse with the comely carpenter, who stopped sawing as if suddenly paralyzed and gazed back blankly at the widow. "What's wrong?" he managed to ask.

"Oh, she would manage her own affairs—did her banking all in an out-of-town bank, wouldn't have a lawyer, and now—" the widow Smith here spoke with slow emphasis as she folded her hands over the dish of peas and looked hard at Horace. "Now she's keeping boarders."

"Keeping boarders?" Horace gasped. "Yes, and you can believe me that when any one as proud as Susan Yager would keep boarders, she's pretty well reduced. But she would have her own way and now—now she's reaping the results."

The fact really was that Susan had a houseful of boarders; and as every one said—and all the neighbors were gossiping about it—she couldn't have "become reduced" at a better time, for there were hundreds of out-of-town war workers only too eager to snap at a chance to become part of that household.

Horace had so long been accustomed to a mood of calm despair that the palpitation he experienced on actually seeking admission for himself in Susan's boarding house was immensely disturbing. Perhaps he would not have been so reckless, but now for the first time the element of jealousy entered. There were some 50 or 60 apparently eligible bachelors in Tilton, and of these Susan had undertaken to accommodate under her spacious roof six. Horace was the seventh.

Apparently Susan was a great manager, for soon the excellence of the fare of her board became proverbial through Tilton. She retained her old Southern cook, got a couple of young girls in to wash dishes, and wait on table and still managed to make a go of it—or apparently she did, for people soon observed that a coat of paint was being applied and other signs of a full purse were in evidence. Then she drew Horace aside one evening after the other boarders were leaving the dining room and asked him whether he would undertake the job of putting on a side porch like that of Mrs. Smith's, and, though Horace had an opportunity of taking some contract work for one of the new industries at a really stupendous figure, he assured her that he could begin at once.

It was the first time he had worked on the Yagers' house since that time

15 years before, when he had first thrilled under the near presence of his ideal. And her figure was still as bewitching, though possibly a little plumper, her skin as fair—were there a few more freckles?—and to make the ecstasy complete she again wore a frock of heliotrope muslin.

Still people pitied poor Susan Yager. To be sure, she apparently was making money, having all those improvements, but that was probably only another evidence of her extreme lack of business sense. That is the way Mrs. Smith looked at the matter, as she assured Horace she had every reason to believe Susan was rightfully involved in debt.

It was one night after that man Miggleworth, vice president of one of the big industries, had been showing (as Horace thought) too marked a devotion to Susan that Horace got his courage up. After all, he assured himself, his presumption now was not what it would have been once, for the Susan Yager heiress was a different person to woo than Susan Yager bankrupt. Susan Yager, boarding house keeper.

Strangely enough, all his awkward bashfulness vanished, when he found himself alone with Susan in her little sitting room, and the tip-tilt of her nose didn't seem half so proud and forbidding. He stood close beside her and realized that she was really not a tall, haughty person at all; her glorious auburn hair scarcely reached his heart.

He began quite deliberately, and told her he had loved her 15 years, and was asking her to marry him now, because he wanted to make her independent, pay her bills and share his years' savings with her.

And Susan promptly told Horace that she didn't think she could ever find a husband who would suit her better, let him steal one short delirious kiss, and sent him off to bed.

Somehow Horace had expected she would say that she appreciated his generosity about taking the debts. He concluded that she was still proud, as Yagers always were, and this is why she had not done so. But the next day she met him with a radiant smile that turned into contagious laughter. "I couldn't tell you last night," she said, "because after all it is comparatively unimportant. But, you see, I haven't any debts. I've managed my own affairs and—well, I've tripled the estate father left me. But I wanted to do something patriotic, and when I asked Mr. Miggleworth what I could do he said the most pressing need was more boarding houses—said the plants would have to close if there weren't more accommodations. I thought every one would know I did it just for patriotism."

"And—still you are willing to marry me?"

"Yes, Horace."

"And there is nothing I can do for you?" this in a crestfallen accent.

"You can give up doing house jobs," she said, "take some war contract and give the proceeds to the Red Cross."

And of course Horace did.

Love Your Work.

The richest rewards come only when one can literally fall in love with one's work. If you are keenly interested in your daily efforts, your work is being done more satisfactorily. It is a labor of love. Every day is an enjoyable experience.

Love your work. Retain your youthful enthusiasm. All this means that you must take every possible care of your health. That you must maintain your physical energies at high-water mark. Remember always that you depend upon your bodily machine for the attainment of your object in life. Take care of that machine.

Is it not worth more than an automobile, than an airplane, a fine horse or dog? Recognize its value to the full. Remember that each day you are what your food makes you. Your muscles, the strength and contour of your body, are influenced by the exercise you take. The blood that makes up the tissues, that nourishes and gives energy and enthusiasm to your brain, depends upon your diet and exercise and the general care of your body.—Physical Culture.

Why He Was Worried.

Carl J. Carter, prosecuting attorney for the Bartholomew and Decatur circuit court, who lives near Columbus, had just been explaining to his wife certain matters in his questionnaire, and that she would be required to swear to certain matters therein stated relative to dependences.

Donald, his six-year-old son, while on the way to the city in company with his mother, seemed to be in a rather worried state of mind, and was exceptionally quiet.

"What is the matter with you, Donald?" Mrs. Carter inquired.

"Oh, mamma, I was just thinking about you having to swear, and I don't like it. Can't you say 'dog gone it' and let it go at that?"—Indianapolis News.

A Little Story.

Two city fathers standing in the market place beside a pile of cabbages. A naturalist named by, and noticed that a Pieris butterfly had settled down on the hat of one of the aldermen.

"Friend," he said, "a butterfly is resting on your head."

"Good," replied the dignitary, "that brings good luck, if the old saying may be believed."

"Yes," the naturalist rejoined; "and it reveals to me the wonderful instinct with which nature has endowed the insect."

"How is that?" the city father asked, much interested.

"It is a cabbage butterfly," the naturalist said—and passed on his way.

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Walther-Williams Co.
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