

"Pro Patria"

By JANE OSBORN

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It was a good half-hour after the last of the evening "office hours" neatly painted on the frosted glass sign that was affixed to Doctor Burton's front door; and so usually monotonous were his evenings spent in the little neighborhood of Farnamtown that he experienced no little surprise when he heard a ring of his front door bell. He had the evening paper in one hand, his carpet slippers on his feet and his shell-rimmed spectacles hanging perilously over one ear when he went to the door. It was his neighbor, Miss Margaret Kellogg—Margaret Kellogg, noted in the neighborhood none the less for her success as teacher of the "infant class" in the one church of the neighborhood than for her dressmaking establishment that consisted of one very young sewing apprentice, a long pier glass in her front parlor, a half-dozen well-thumbed and not too recent dressmakers' journals with French names and glaring colored designs, and enough orders for dresses—quite different from those portrayed therein—from the women in the neighborhood to secure for Margaret a very meager income. She was not yet thirty, but her many years of self-reliance and self-support led people to think of her as considerably older.

"I've been given the street to canvass for the new Liberty loan," she announced, when she had taken a seat rather primly in the doctor's cluttered study. "I don't like prying into people's affairs, but it seemed that somebody had to do it, and when they asked me I didn't see my way clear to refuse. Are you thinking of taking out one of the new bonds, doctor?"

It was an embarrassing moment until the doctor, assured by the level, frank, blue eyes of the girl seated before him, decided to tell her just how matters stood. He had been hankering to make a breast of the situation to some one and now he had an excuse. After all, if he had canvassed the entire neighborhood of Farnamtown for a sympathetic soul to whom he could with least embarrassment tell his predicament it would have been to this very Margaret Kellogg.

"I would like to subscribe as much as anyone in town," he said, "but I'll tell you how it is. I've been here—let me see, three years. When my uncle, old Doctor Murray, died I felt that there was as good an opening here as anywhere else, and I hankered after the life of a country doctor. I found a considerable mortgage on this old place of his and I've had to keep paying off that. Then his equipment was entirely out-of-date, and here, way off from hospitals, I felt there were certain things I had to have. And, well, you know that Farnamtown isn't very prompt in paying its bills, and since the war a good many people have left here to be nearer the ammunition works and the practice isn't so large as it was to begin with. So, you see, Miss Margaret, I'd like to do it, but I can't. I can't even promise to take a single bond, not this trip. I'd give up the place here entirely, only somehow it seems that the people need me. I may be called to the front, but so far it hasn't seemed possible. I'm putting Ted through college and there's my mother, who is staying to keep house for him till he's through. I didn't like to get exemption, but I had to, and now unless I'm called as a surgeon I'll have to stick it out here."

Margaret had listened attentively. She was aware of the fact, for every one in Farnamtown knew his neighbor's business, that when the doctor undertook to subscribe to two bonds on the previous issue he had dispensed with the services of his one man of all work, and since that time he had been running his own small car and no doubt cooking his own meals, cleaning his own house and hoeing his own garden. She knew also that Farnamtown was "slow pay," and she knew that people had especially imposed on the young doctor, who, because he had bought new equipment for his office and went about in an automobile—howbeit the least pretentious of its tribe—instead of in the old doctor's buggy, they imagined to be possessed of untold wealth. Hence payments were deferred more than ever and, though they would have expected the butcher or baker to suspend service had they kept him waiting for payment as they did the doctor, they would have been mightily offended if the doctor did not rouse himself from slumber to soothe their aches and pains in spite of bills gone overdue for two or three years.

So after Margaret Kellogg had stayed just long enough, as she told herself, to indicate that she "wasn't miffed because he didn't subscribe," she went on to her next neighbor and so back to her little cottage down the street.

It was two months later. It was eight o'clock, just after the last of the doctor's office hours, and a lamp burned in Miss Kellogg's front parlor, where she was picking out long seams on a dress she had put together for the minister's wife who had decided, after it was almost done, that she wanted it made in quite another way from the original plan. And picking out was difficult on the double-stitch machine. There were so many changes of mind among the feminine population of Farnamtown who patronized Miss Kellogg that when she cashed in her old machine a few years before and got a new one she had threatened to get a "single threader," but loud had been the objections. Her patrons didn't want to run the risk of having seams come undone in church or at socials, as "hey had heard of their doing when sewed in that careless manner.

The doctor had never called on Margaret before except professionally once or twice, and this was not exactly a social call. He had been designated by the local authorities as one of those to help with the Thrift stamp canvass and he had, much as he disliked to do it, to find out from each person on the street just how much he or she would invest in Thrift stamps before the first of the next year.

Margaret didn't hesitate in explaining so long as she might had she not heard the doctor's confidence two months before. Her excuses were much the same. Farnamtown was slower pay than ever and thread and findings were getting higher every day. What if she did charge a little more to cover the increase? If the ladies didn't pay till year after next that really didn't help. So except perhaps for one or two stamps she could make no promise. She would like to dispense with her one apprentice and save her small wage, but she was an odd little girl—daughter of a poor widow—and if Margaret didn't employ her goodness knows who would; and then what would become of her?

If there were only something she could do to earn a little extra every once in a while—she had heard of people doing that. So had the doctor and he, too, wished that in Farnamtown he might find some simple task to perform by which he might earn the little necessary to make his small subscription to government loans and Thrift stamps.

Now they had both told each other their little predicament and somehow they felt that there was something between them that did not exist between them and anyone else in Farnamtown. The doctor rose and as he passed the kitchen door, he sniffed ever so slightly. Miss Margaret told him he smelled cherry jam. She'd just been putting it up; that is why she had to pick out the seams so late. He sniffed again pleasurable and then in a twinkling she stood beside him with a slice of her light, oatmeal war bread and a little saucer of fresh cherry jam to be sampled.

That was how it began. The doctor said he had some cherries going to waste on his place. He couldn't sell them and he couldn't eat them all. He smacked his lips over the sample and said he could well afford to pay a little to have his cherries converted into food for next winter. And that was how Miss Margaret made arrangements to earn her bit toward buying Thrift stamps. It was very little, but the doctor felt he was not rash in spending it. Besides, he could send some of the jars to his mother and brother to help provision them as well as himself. The doctor brought the baskets of cherries in stealthily and Margaret told none of the neighbors of the arrangement. And then one day when Margaret had to have some repaire made on her old house—there was a leak in the roof that needed soldering and there were some loose drains and one of the front stairs had grown old and sagged out of place—the doctor asked her why, if she had to pay some one for doing the work, he couldn't come and do it himself. "It isn't exactly surgery, but I've always been fond of tinkering," he said. And that made it possible for the doctor to begin payments on the next bond.

It was the last evening of the repairs on the sagging step, which the doctor did by stealth to keep the secret from the neighbors, as Margaret had kept hers about the cherry jam. Then, not with the greatest fluency, but with sufficient explicitness, the doctor told Margaret that they simply must unite their forces still further. He didn't ask her to marry him, as he had intended to; he simply told her that she had to. And Margaret's mind ran on, woman fashion, and predicted the buying of more stamps and more bonds. They could live in one house and both keep on with their work, and there would be only one furnace to keep heated, and that would make possible a real show of patriotism.

And the plan might have worked had not the announcement been made the very day following that poor little Farnamtown had been chosen as the site for a new hospital and that Doctor Burton had been appointed one of the resident surgeons—and that meant opportunity to do his bit as he had dreamed of doing it, and incidentally enough to make possible increased contributions to the brother and mother and enough left besides to send to oblivion forever the symbols of the "establishment" in Margaret's front parlor.

Value of White Oilcloth.
White oilcloth will change a dark, dingy kitchen to one that is clean and bright. A yard of it will save you from looking at the worn off paint at the base of the dish closet or the inside window ledge of kitchen and bathroom.

A strip along the wall beside the sink will catch spattered drops of dish water or drainings and may be easily cleaned with a lightly soaped cloth. A yard of it will cover the top of the kitchen table, with some to spare. A length of a few inches more will make the tops of washstubs slightly and convertible to table uses.

The top of the refrigerator covered in this way will be taken as a guarantee of sweetness and cleanliness below.

DEATH NEAR, BUT HE IS NOT AFRAID

Yank Lieutenant Feels Hun Will Get Him, but Will Take Few Along.

PROUDEST MAN IN UNIFORM

Wins Promotion From Corporal to Platoon Leader for Daring Piece of Work on Night Patrol Duty.

Paris.—It was on the boulevard. The Opera. The Opera was but a scant half block away. And it was dark, both the Opera and the boulevard. The only light came from the kiosks advertising Paris newspapers, patent bouillon and talcum powder. There I heard the typical story of the American second lieutenant, the platoon leader who's doing a wonderful bit in winning the war.

Call him Prettyman, which isn't his name. He was a deputy superintendent of banks before the war. As he said himself, he'd never been out in his life after one in the morning except in a taxicab. He used to earn \$6,000 a year, have his bath every morning and a cocktail before dinner. He is a typical successful young New Yorker.

"Gosh," he said, "I'm the proudest man in this army. I've got two kinds of itches at the same time."

"We came over on the Justicia, the one that was torpedoed the other day," he said.

And they spewed us out at an English port at eleven o'clock one night, and at eleven the next night we were back of the lines in Flanders. I was only a corporal then. Then we were moved to Alsace and there we got our first taste of war. Incidentally, there I got to be a platoon leader.

On Night Patrol.

"Here's what it was. Up in the first line the Heinies were just about fifty yards away. One night the order came for a patrol. Now, it's hard to tell you about a patrol standing here in the boulevard. Out there it's as black as the inside of your shoe. It's into that that a patrol is supposed to go. And we went. Sure I was scared. Scared green. I didn't know where I was, and I had the lives of 60 men in the hollow of my hand. But we went. We laid for 14 hours right up against the German wire and we located every machine gun they had, and every man Jack of us got back to our own lines safely.

"My God! it was different from New York. It was a lot different from Paris. It was hell. But when the Heinies came over the next day we knew where they were coming from. And we sloshed them.

"That country is full of spies and our wires from the front line back were cut. So I went back myself. They'd laid down the best box barrage I have ever seen. Oh, I got through it, because I was lucky, I suppose. I got through it three times that night, in fact. And me, never out after one o'clock in my life before except in a taxicab. Say, it was fierce. Right out in the open country. All I had to tell me where I was were the telephone wires. And they were cut. I was almost sick to my stomach when I hit the break in that friendly little black wire I'd kept running through my hand. But we did get word through. And all the Germans got by way of prisoners were 17 cripples that had been sent up to the front line by mistake.

"And, say, I feel they're going to get me. I've got my second lieutenant and I'm going back up to the front in a few days, as soon as this celebration is over. And I have a hunch that I won't come back.

"I've got a little sister and a dear father that I'd like to go back to, but there's something bigger than that.

I'm wearing the uniform, I am. It don't make a bit of difference if I die, because there are four, five, as many millions as you want, more. Only when I do die I'm going to take at least five Heinies with me. And I'm going to handle the sixty or seventy or the hundred and twenty men under me so they'll do the same.

Allies Are Fine Soldiers.

"Sure, I get awful impatient with the French sometimes because they don't understand our language. And the British sometimes rub me the wrong way. I've had fist fights with 'em both—before I got to be an officer. But they're all in the same game and you can tell the folks back home that they're damned good soldiers, those British and French, every one of them. Only we're going to go them one better—particularly the platoon leader of the — company of the —th. You'll hear from us. Only if you're dropping a line to the folks I know

just tell them that you saw me—in Paris celebrating, and on the way to the front, where I don't expect ever to come back from. Good-by, old man; good luck!"

And he strode across the street and disappeared. His job ahead of him to do, full knowledge of the cost of that job, and proud to pay the price demanded—even to the ultimate. He's the platoon leader, the U. S. A. platoon leader, that's going to win this war.

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