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The Appeal of Khaki

By JANE OSBORN

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"I shall shriek—I certainly shall shriek if I come to another khaki hero." H. B. Shanley mumbled this rather to herself than aloud as she sat before her high piled desk in the editorial offices of "The Purple Book; all-story, five-cent weekly." H. P. Truman, the remainder of the editorial staff, laid a gentle hand on his bald head and looked over his shell-rimmed spectacles at his colleague on the other side of the room.

He looked just in time to see Miss Shanley dash off her own shell-rimmed spectacles, lean supinely back in her swivel chair and at the same time emit a stifled yell.

"There, I said I'd do it, and I did. The very next manuscript I turned to began right in the first paragraph with 'Her head dropped on his khaki shoulder. Good-by, she whispered and pushed him away,' and then at the end: 'If I thought you were there waiting for me I could fight a thousand Huns.' They are all like that. If the hero isn't in khaki he is in sailor blue and half the heroines are nurses."

"Was that what made you make that funny little shrieky noise?" asked Mr. Truman, obviously relieved.

"Certainly, why shouldn't I? Every blessed story that comes in is the same. How I am going to get enough possible stories for you to make up the magazine out of here I am sure I don't know. They are all alike. The contribs have lost their balance. They think that all they have to do is to bring in a little trench slang, a lot of mush and twaddle about broad khaki shoulders, clinking spurs and that sort of thing and their story is sold."

Mr. Truman suggested that possibly the readers of the Purple Book liked clinking spurs and khaki shoulders; there were a good many men in the camps who read the magazine and they should be catered to.

"To be sure," agreed Miss Shanley, slitting the next large envelope that lay before her and unfolding the manuscript mechanically. "But I've found it out. There are only about seven days a soldier can fall in love, and we've used each one of those plots at least five times over. It's monotonous. There is the man who doesn't know he loves the plain little girl at home till he gets away in the trenches, and there is the girl who doesn't know she loves the awkward, frank-eyed, broad-shouldered hero till he gets away. Then there is the girl who wants to be a suffragette or something and won't marry the man till he's gone and then she gets an idea that she ought to 'keep the fire burning' and she sends for him or something and—"

"Yes, I know," said Truman, who was rather bored than otherwise at his assistant's analyzing tendencies. There were times when she was delightful, really too delightful for his own peace of mind. But in this mood she was trying. "Well, please don't shriek about it next time—you gave me quite a scare. I thought you were having a fit or something."

"I told you I was going to," argued Miss Shanley.

"I thought you were jesting. Suppose instead of doing that you whistle joyously when you come to a hero out of khaki? Really I quite agree with you that we do need some really gripping stories of a nonmilitary nature." Then Mr. Truman went back to his editorial work, and gradually there began to creep over him a pleasurable consciousness. He had had an undercurrent of conviction that his colleague disapproved of him because he had not enlisted; he had feared that it would be necessary as a means of winning her permanent esteem for him to don the khaki or sailor blue. But apparently he had been mistaken. She could not have spoken as she had about broad khaki shoulders if she had admired them as much as most young women were reputed to do.

Suddenly Mr. Truman started in his chair so violently that his spectacles fell off from his nose. Miss Shanley had emitted a whistle so piercing and sharp that it had violently agitated his delicately strung nervous organization.

"That," she announced, "was to let you know I'd found the gripping story you were wishing for. It's a thriller and the hero is an Argentine cowboy, and there isn't one reference to war. I'm going to accept it without waiting for you to read it, I'm so sure it is what you are looking for."

"You might tell the young woman that wrote it that we appreciate not having the hero in khaki and would like more in the same vein," smiled Mr. Truman as Miss Shanley halted the diminutive stenographer from the next room so that she might at once write her letter of acceptance.

"It isn't a young woman—it's one Patrick Henry Madison."

"You never can tell," commented the superior editor. "That's just the sort of name a girl writer would choose."

The letter notifying "Patrick Henry Madison" of the acceptance of his story and the announcement that he would receive his check "on date of publication" was brief but encouraging. It was signed H. B. Shanley, and

left little suspicion in its abrupt businesslike wording that H. stood for Helen and B. for Beatrice. Perhaps Patrick Henry Madison had seldom received editorial letters so encouraging, perhaps he read between the lines—at all events he wrote a letter of considerable length sending in his next nonmilitary story—the hero this time was a South Sea Island planter, without a suspicion of khaki—and so friendly a character that H. B. Shanley was constrained to write an equally friendly letter in reply. Again that editor congratulated him on his rare discernment in keeping his knees out of the war game. "Unless you can tell your story like a genius and have an entirely new twist, any war story now would be deadwood. They have all been written except the really great ones." The correspondence continued for several months and the stories appeared at close intervals. Then "Patrick Henry" asked permission to meet H. B. Shanley and the interview was carefully arranged to take place in the Purple Book editorial office on the afternoon in the week when Mr. Truman played golf. He had quite set himself at ease on the matter of enlisting now, so sure was he of Helen's attitude on that score, and it was only because he had not definitely decided whether when he did ask this colleague of his to become Mrs. Truman he should stipulate that she should continue her post in the office—he dreaded the presence of anyone else—or whether he should arrange to have her do the house-keeping in some conveniently arranged little flat, that he had not as yet taken her into his full confidence as to his intentions. He was planning to settle this question for himself that afternoon on the golf course. Perhaps the next day he would make his declaration.

But the next day he was in no hurry. Helen was in a wonderfully joyous mood and this seemed decidedly auspicious. It would be time enough at five o'clock to ask her.

"Patrick Henry turned out to be of the feminine gender, I dare say?" he asked, as he glanced over proofs on his desk of that writer's latest contribution.

"Miss nothing," laughed Helen, "and the funny thing was he—"

"So it was a man after all?" Mr. Truman felt an irritation that he could not account for.

"It was so funny. He is really perfectly wonderful. I hadn't told you, but we had got very well acquainted with each other through the letters we have written. I knew I liked him, but I imagined he was going to be some quiet, studious little man of about your build."

"Well?" Mr. Truman was distinctly irritated at that remark.

"Well, he wasn't at all. You see he had discovered in the third letter that I wasn't a man, and—well, I don't know how it happened, but we got awfully fond of each other, and—well, he asked me to marry him, and I said I couldn't say yes till I'd seen him. And he said there was something about him that I might dislike very much. He thought I would, he said, from something I said in one of my first letters. You see I told him I was glad his heroes didn't have broad shoulders, or something like that, and—well, you see he has, and he turned out to be Capt. Patrick Henry Madison. Isn't that wonderful? I explained, of course, that what I said about stories had nothing to do with the way I felt as a girl. So I just said 'yes' right away, and I thought I'd tell you first because you and I have always been such good chums, and—Patrick and I will be married in a week or so. I thought you ought to have time to find some one else to fill this chair."

Mr. Truman was signing letters with an air of considerable preoccupation. He gently stroked his bald patch and straightened his blue serge shoulders.

"It's very funny that a man in the service would be content to leave all patriotic flavor out of his stories. I should think he would be so enthusiastic he would want to." Mr. Truman had definitely decided he wouldn't like Captain Patrick.

"Oh, he's enthusiastic, all right, and he's going to write one great big thrilling war story. He's just been waiting till he could write a really great one. You'll take it, won't you, Mr. Truman?"

"Yes—unless I'm not here either. You see, I've been thinking of getting into the war myself. There is a mighty strong appeal about khaki and all that sort of thing," and the associate editor assured him that there was.

Why Buttoned Shoes Have Passed.

Every woman with her eyes open must have noticed that button shoes are little worn, and no doubt the fact that lace shoes are as a general thing neater and trimmer and more easily kept in condition has a good deal to do with this.

The fact that button shoes use more leather than lace shoes is the big reason behind their disappearance from fashion, say those who know. It does seem a very little leather to save, doesn't it? But then this is the day when we appreciate the importance of very small things; the saving of a slice of bread a day, a lump of sugar or a half pound of meat—trifles that we are assured amount to enormous proportions in the aggregate.

Gas Meters and Guitars.

The gas meters of the houses in New York city are now recorded by camera, which yields a permanent record of each of the regular readings.

The guitar was introduced into Europe by the Spaniards, who copied the instrument from the Moors.

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