

The Truant Soul

By Victor Rousseau

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"ARE YOU A WITCH?"

SYNOPSIS.—Nurses in the Southern hospital at Avonmouth are angered by the insolent treatment accorded them by Dr. John Lancaster, head of the institution, and there is a general feeling of unrest, into which Joan Wentworth, probationary nurse, is drawn. Doctor Lancaster is performing a difficult operation, for which he has won fame. Joan, with other nurses, is in attendance. She is upset, through no fault of her own, and makes a trivial blunder at a critical moment. The patient dies and Doctor Lancaster accuses her of clumsiness. She is suspended, the action meaning the end of her hope of a career as a nurse. Without relatives or friends, and desperate, Joan, urged by her landlady, goes to Doctor Lancaster's office to ask him to overlook her blunder and reinstate her. She overhears a violent altercation between Doctor Lancaster and other men who does not see. Joan is struck by the favorable change in the appearance and demeanor of the doctor, recalling that at times in the hospital he has been gentle and thoughtful and at others supercilious and bullying. He tells her he can do nothing for her at the hospital, but offers her a position in a nursing institution in the country, telling her she can be of "great assistance" to him. A man named Myers demands she tell him what the doctor had said to her. She denies him the information, and he covertly threatens her. At the institution, which is owned by Doctor Lancaster, Joan finds Myers. He tells her he is the secretary. She instinctively dislikes and fears him. The only patient at the institution is a Mrs. Dana, demoted but harmless. Joan is vaguely uneasy, feeling that there is some mystery about the place. Doctor Lancaster arrives. Joan accuses him of deceiving her, declaring her intention of leaving. He tells her he is the patient who needs her, saying he wants her in a "big fight," but makes no further explanation. She decides to stay. Evidently Doctor Lancaster is afraid of Myers. Joan discovers that the doctor is a victim of the morphine habit. Joan takes charge of him, helping him to overcome temporarily his craving for the drug. Myers accuses her of "meddling," but she refuses to leave or to give up her care of Lancaster.

CHAPTER VI—Continued

"For happiness, perhaps—I don't know. But not for duty. Your life is to be used, Doctor Lancaster, for the sake of the people, and I am going to help you use it. Your wonderful skill—"

He groaned at the words. Joan saw that, though he was suffering physically, there was some mental trouble which her words had evoked.

"Doctor Lancaster," she said, "the first thing you have to do is to use your will. And I am going to give you your first test, a little one only. It will last thirty seconds. Can you put forth your will for just that length of time?"

He fixed his eyes anxiously on hers and nodded. Yet she saw them waver toward the bottle.

"I am going to cross the room," she said. "Don't stir a finger till I return."

She heard Myers in the hall, and, going to the door, she turned the key. She heard Myers halt near her door. But she had no time to think of him. She went back to Lancaster, whose hands were strained hard against the arms of the chair.

"Well done!" she said.

"Miss Wentworth, I must have that hypodermic now."

"I want you to wait. Wait half an hour, Doctor Lancaster."

"I can't!" he cried, starting up. "I tell you I must have it. After an overdose one must have a smaller one. It will set me up nicely. Just half the quantity, Miss Wentworth."

"In half an hour," said Joan.

He sprang to his feet, shaking and furious. "Give me that bottle at once!" he cried.

"In half an hour."

Lancaster sat down. "Confound you, why ever did you come here?" he asked. "Suppose that I discharge you?"

"I shall not go, Doctor Lancaster. We have covered that point in our conversation already."

Then, seeing his distress, she went on rapidly: "Listen to me, Doctor Lancaster. You brought me here upon an impulse, because you had no one whom you could trust. You wanted to fight and you wanted me to fight with you. Well, I am going to do it, and we are going to win." She took out her watch and laid it on the table. "In twenty-five minutes you shall have half a dose. Then we shall have won the first skirmish. O, Doctor Lancaster, fight like a man and help us win!"

She spoke with so much earnestness that she kindled his enthusiasm. "Yes, we'll make the fight!" he cried, with blazing eyes. "If only I had had you long ago!"

He was in the full reaction from his dependency. He struck his fist emphatically upon the arm of the chair. "I'll be a man again!" he cried. "If

you knew everything, Miss Wentworth, you might understand how a man can be caught in a snare of his own making. But I'll win, with your aid, and I'll be my own master again."

"You are your own master now, Doctor Lancaster. Always think that and remember it."

"My own master? When that hound follows me—"

"Mr. Myers is your servant."

Lancaster laughed harshly. "By heaven!" he cried, "I'll tell him so. Miss Wentworth, give me that dose now, so that I can feel like a man again and have the strength to send him about his business."

"It will give you strength," she answered, "but it will not make you yourself, your better self. You will no longer want to send him about his business."

Lancaster stared at her. "How do you know that?" he asked. "Are you a witch? It's true. But I can't wait any longer. I have waited fifteen minutes. Half an hour next time, Miss Wentworth, the third drawer—"

As her eyes went toward the desk he snatched up the bottle and hypodermic from the table. Joan caught at his wrist. But Lancaster had already plunged the syringe into the fluid, and he was upon his feet.

He tried to free his hand, he fought furiously, but Joan succeeded in knocking the bottle from his grasp. It fell upon the table. Lancaster righted it, and suddenly darted toward the desk. Joan caught him. He flung her across the room. He had got the drawer open when she grappled with him again.

He struck at her with his right hand, beating her about the wrists, but she would not let go. She would never leave go, not though he struck her in the face. He tossed her this way and that, but she never unclasped her hold. At last he dropped into his chair exhausted and covered his face with his hands.

"Twelve minutes more," said Joan triumphantly, looking at her watch.

Then she realized that all through the struggle there had been a hammer-

ing at the door. She got up. "Who is it?" she called.

"Miss Wentworth, unlock the door, please," came the frightened voice of Mrs. Fraser.

"In a few minutes," said Joan.

"Miss Wentworth, what are you doing to Doctor Lancaster?"

"I am taking care of him."

"Mr. Myers says you will kill him. He has got to have his morphine; you can't stop a man abruptly like that. Mr. Myers understands him—"

"Mr. Myers can come in in fifteen minutes," said Joan. All the while she spoke she had never taken her eyes from Lancaster's face.

Lancaster was suffering acutely. The sweat streamed down his face, and he was looking at her with the eyes of a suffering animal. Yet it was not until the watch hand was on the hour that Joan took the bottle from the desk.

"The whole bottle is a normal dose," said Lancaster, through his teeth.

Joan drew one-fourth into the syringe.

"You must give me all, Miss Wentworth. That little quantity is useless."

He was lying about the strength of the dose, and he knew that Joan knew. She did not answer him. He extended his arm, and she plunged the needle into the wrist. Then she corked the bottle and she put it into the pocket of her uniform, having previously added the small quantity in the bottle upon the table.

The hammering at the door had begun again. But the girl waited until the spasms of pain disappeared from Lancaster's face. He rose.

"Miss Wentworth!" he began gratefully. Then, catching sight of her bruised wrists, he took her hands in his.

"Did I do that?" he cried.

"Not you, Doctor Lancaster," answered Joan, snatching her wrists away. "Your enemy—our enemy, who is now worsted in his first field of battle."

"Miss Wentworth, you see now what I am. I can't hold you to your promise. You must leave me. Who's that at the door?"

"We shall see," answered Joan, and unlocked it.

Myers was standing outside, white with rage, and with him was Doctor Jenkins, looking uneasy and embarrassed; his eyes fell before Joan's.

"Tell her what you told me!" stammered Myers, beside himself with his anger.

"Miss Wentworth," faltered Jenkins, "indeed you don't understand what you are doing, Doctor Lancaster—"

"Is a mighty sick man," burst out the secretary. "And it's my job to prevent him from being killed by meddlers. He picked this nurse up somewhere and she's trying to get rid of me and have the charge of the doctor. I won't stand for it," he added to Joan. "I warned you twice today, and you paid no attention to me. Now you can pack up and leave the institute. Isn't that right, doctor?" he added to Lancaster.

To Joan's stupefaction, Lancaster's old irresolution had already returned, and more; he seemed to ally himself with the secretary. The morphine, which had restored his body, had lent him its own false personality.

"Well, you see, Miss Wentworth means well," he said slowly, "but she doesn't realize conditions. You see," he added, turning to Joan but not meeting her eyes, "one has to taper off very slowly in a desperate case like mine. I'm very far gone, and heroic measures are useless."

"That's right. Now tell her to go," said Myers.

"Yes, Miss Wentworth, I really don't believe that you can do any good here," said Lancaster obediently. "It was a mistake. You shall be paid a full month's salary. Ask Mr. Myers to make out your check."

"She can drive back with Doctor Jenkins now," suggested Myers.

"She can drive back with Doctor Jenkins," agreed Lancaster, and Joan saw the secretary's pale face blaze with triumph.

"And you might get me a few more bottles from the storeroom," whispered Lancaster to Myers. "I'm very shaky. I must have enough on hand in case I wake up in the night. You understand my needs, Myers," he continued, with a catch of self-pity in his voice.

Joan did not hesitate a moment. She slipped between the two men and ran to the storeroom. With a muttered oath Myers ran after her. The girl was just in time to slam the door in his face and lean against it inside, bracing her foot against a plank and using the whole weight of her body.

She heard Myers breathe heavily as he tried to force his entrance. He dashed himself madly against it, but Joan knew that she would die rather than yield.

"Open that door!" shrieked Myers, in uncontrolled fury. "Open at once, do you hear me?"

Joan looked hastily about her. Some instinct seemed to tell her that the case of morphine bottles was hidden under the linen pile in the near corner. By stretching out one hand without giving way in the least Joan could just reach far enough to toss away the napkins. There were dozens of the tiny bottles in the packing case beneath—enough to kill a herd of oxen.

Joan heard Jenkins' protesting voice outside, and the irresolute tones of Lancaster. The matron was speaking, too. The girl did not know what they were saying to Myers, beyond the general sense of their expostulations, but she felt her will ride high above the storm of conflict.

A hammer lay on the shelf. Joan took it in her hand.

"Listen!" she cried to those outside. "I have the morphine and I have the hammer. And I am going to break every bottle in this room—"

Lancaster cried out pitifully at her words. "Miss Wentworth, you will kill me if you do!"

"Unless this case passes into my possession. I am going to have the storeroom key, and I am going to take charge of Doctor Lancaster, who has employed me for that especial purpose, during this month."

The silence of stupefaction outside was complete. Joan flung the door open boldly and stood before the group, Lancaster, with eyes bent inquiringly upon hers, the matron and Jenkins, mute, and Myers, leaning against the opposite wall of the passage, regarding her with venomous impotence.

"Well, what do you say to that, doctor?" he sneered.



"Well Done!" She Said.

Joan was putting up a good fight against big odds. Is Doctor Lancaster worth saving?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Keep cool, and you command every body.—St. Just.

OSTRICH FEATHERS POPULAR TRIMMING

Decoration Adds to Beauty of Costume; Hand-Painting Is Fashionable.

Paris Sports Frock for Day and Evening Wear



This charming sports frock was recently exhibited at the skating gale performance in Paris. It is also seen at all the leading French winter sports resorts.

New ideas in the use of ostrich feathers are constantly devised. For, though feathers for accessories and trimming have been used for more than two seasons, observes a fashion writer in the New York Times, they possess so many possibilities of charm and chic that they carry on. In millinery ostrich, the new "willow" kind is used on many of the more dressy hats. Even on the stiff beavers and felts some milliners have introduced ostrich feather pompons and the longer ostrich feathers. In one extreme novelty from a smart Parisian house a black silk smooth beaver of the directoire type, made of black and white feather, ostrich is fastened at one side and hangs to the point of the hip.

Some unusually pretty, dressy collars or short boas are made of this way willow ostrich, very full and fluffy, to tie with ribbons in front, at one side or at the back of the neck. They are shown in many colors, and one that is thought uncommonly smart is of black and white, marked to resemble the old-fashioned Shetland wool yarn. Any of these feather things for the neck adds a soft touch to a plain frock, and one seen them worn by fashionable women in the smart restaurants and in theaters.

Hand-painting, a manner of embellishing many articles in the wardrobe of a fashionably dressed woman, has been so long out of style as to have seemed lately like a lost art. But this season some of the best things of many types are hand-painted—gowns, negligees, scarfs, stockings, lingerie, gloves and even handkerchiefs. Among the frocks is a white chiffon painted in garlands of flowers—wild roses and feathery ferns—though it would have found no favor a few seasons ago. In the up-to-date adaptation the painted things appear to be in perfect harmony with the mode of the day and are regarded as very smart.

The scarfs are perhaps the most decorative of all the hand-painted dress novelties. Those of silk, crepe

Turquoise Blue Beaver Hat, Silver Cloth Trim



Chic and in keeping with the mode of the season is this attractive little turquoise blue beaver hat with silver cloth trim to accentuate its beauty.

Accessories Should Be in Harmony With Suit

It is not enough to have one's frock or suit or hat the most becoming to be found and the smartest from a fashion point of view. There are a dozen and one things to be considered before one attains the superlative quality of chic so much to be desired, and even the most trivial accessory has its proper place in the sartorial scheme.

The woman of fashion has always made a point of having each detail of her costume in perfect harmony but it is doubtful if she has ever displayed quite such meticulous care in the choice of her accessories as she does this season.

Sophisticated simplicity is the dominant note of modern fashions and an unwise selection in the matter of bag, gloves or a handkerchief, an ornament that is a bit too much or too little, stockings that are not the correct shade or a scarf that is not appropriate will ruin a costume that in other respects is perfect.

Time was when bags were divided into two types, those for daytime and those to carry in the evening. Today these types are multiplied until there

or chiffon in the new dainty colors, some very long, are painted on the ends with designs of many kinds, graceful floral and conventional motifs being equally popular. The variants in these are many, and some are startlingly picturesque. A long, straight scarf of white crepe has a big flamingo painted on each end. Another, in yellow, forms a background for clusters of large golden roses, and a scarf of vermilion silk has end designs in large black plumes.

No colors are quite so popular as black and white, shown in many striking combinations. Of all the styles in design those of Russian character are perhaps the most successful. Hand-painted nightgowns, lingerie and other practical apparel are a passing fad and are not seriously considered this side of the water.

Motor Bags Must Be Smart

The bags one carries on a motor trip must be as smart as the motor itself. For this purpose there are the most stunning bags of red leather. They are of all sizes, from the small vanity to a large dressing bag almost as big as a medium-sized suitcase, and are beautifully fitted with all the necessary toilet requisites. Small flat envelope bags are carried with a costume of black or dark blue and add a touch of brilliancy so essential to chic.

Beads Match Scarf

Nowadays one matches one's beads to the scarf. A pretty striped scarf made on a handloom has a string of wooden beads that exactly matches the tones of the scarf.

Gray Is Chic

The woman who follows closely the modes of the moment will choose gray for her ensemble. A gray suit, a gray hat, a coat of gray trimmed with silver-toned fur, and stockings of gray make up an ensemble that has infinite chic and is well in advance of fashion.

Variable Coiffure

One can have either a bob or a formal coiffure today, if not for the asking, at least for the paying. One hairdresser makes a specialty of transformations. Each is fitted to the shape of the head and is the exact tone of the customer's hair. One braid, which encircles the back of the head, changes an afternoon bob to an evening coiffure.

Steel Beads Adorn Moire Bags

Bags to carry with the tailored suit are of black moire with intricate designs of steel beads. They are large square envelopes and contain the necessary fittings.

AN OPERATION RECOMMENDED

Avoided by Taking Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound

Los Angeles, Cal.—"I cannot give too much praise to Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound for what it has done for me. My mother gave it to me when I was a girl 14 years old, and since then I have taken it when I feel run down or tired. I took it for three months before my two babies were born for I suffered with my back and had spells as if my heart was affected, and it helped me a lot. The doctors told me at one time that I would have to have an operation. I thought I would try 'Pinkham's,' as I call it, first. In two months I was all right and had no operation. I firmly believe 'Pinkham's' cured me. Everyone who saw me after that remarked that I looked so well. I only have to take medicine occasionally, not but I always keep a couple of bottles by me. I recommend it to women who speak to me about their health. I have also used your Sanative Wash and like it very much."—Mrs. E. GOULD, 4000 East Side Boulevard, Los Angeles, Cal.

Many letters have been received from women who have been restored to health by Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound after operations have been advised.

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