

The Truant Soul

Chapter VIII
—12—

By the next morning there was no doubt that victory had been won. There was color in Lancaster's face, a lightness in his step; and, best of all, he was psychically whole. The drug devil still clung to the nervous refuges of its physical domain, the hands still trembled, the man started at sudden sounds; but the shifty, furtive, lying spirit had taken its departure.

Joan only discovered afterward what Lancaster must have endured. The treatment had been more heroic than Joan had known, with her own limited experience, and the antidotes which she administered, under Lancaster's own directions, were purposefully limited, for fear of supplanting one habit with another.

Lancaster had gone through the worst of his ordeal; and yet certain features of his illness were puzzling to both of them. The symptoms of morphine poisoning, elusive and protean as they are, seemed in this case irreconcilable with those classically accepted. There was Lancaster's complete prostration on the morning when Joan discovered the nature of his illness. He told her afterward that he had been conscious all the time, but physically inert, as if paralyzed. That did not point to morphine poisoning. And a certain lethargy remained one of the last symptoms of the case.

The intimacy of the sick room, born of their struggle, had become the most natural thing to both of them. The passing of Myers had wrought an extraordinary change in the atmosphere of the institution. And somehow the news of Lancaster's recovery had spread into Millville. Joan inferred that even the country people had boycotted the institute, but now two mothers brought their babies to Lancaster, and it was amazing and delightful to Joan to see the doctor's transformation, his jolliness and tenderness toward the children.

"I'm using my respite," he said whimsically. "I want to get well to face my harder battle."

"It is no respite," answered Joan. "You are free now, Doctor Lancaster; it is only a habit of thought that holds you."

There ensued three wonderful days after the secretary's departure, always to remain clear in the girl's memory. They were three days of uninterrupted recovery. After the second no more morphine was given. The fight was won; there was no questioning that.

"I suppose you will have to return to Avonmouth soon," Joan suggested. He turned a startled look on her. "Yes—soon," he said, and fell into a gloomy meditation from which she could not arouse him.

That afternoon a telephone message came from Thompson, a hill village, fifteen miles distant. A farm-hand had been crushed by a falling tree; would Lancaster come at once and see if anything could be done for him? "Would you like to come with me?" asked the doctor.

"If I can be of help."
"Of course you can—the greatest help. I shall need you badly, perhaps to administer an anesthetic," he answered.

Lancaster telephoned to Jenkins for the buggy, and half an hour later they were driving along the country road into the heart of the mountains. They traveled for the most part in silence; Lancaster's thoughts were occupied with his prospective case, and Joan was content to sit quietly at his side and watch the changing panorama of the land she loved and knew so well. The road ascended continuously, until at last, when the sun was low down in the sky, they entered Thompson, a tiny settlement in the very heart of the mountain peaks.

It was a serious case, and the patient was already comatose. The tree had fallen across the chest, crushing it, and driving a rib into a lung. An immediate operation offered the only hope, and the doctor decided to perform it in the cabin.

Joan, having bundled out the family and the neighbors, administered the ether. She had never been greatly impressed by the legend of the skilled surgeon with the wonderful touch; her first operation at Avonmouth had seemed to her like a sort of glorified plumbing, and the leisurely manner of the surgeons had reduced the art to a science in her estimation. Now she revised her opinion as, seated at the patient's head, she watched Lancaster working within a compass of fractional inches, where a slip would have been deadly. His fingers, which had trembled as he held the reins, were as steady as the steel instruments he held, his deftness and precision were amazing; and when at last the operation was ended, and the patient's recovery announced as probable, she could not conceal her enthusiasm.

They were to remain at the cabin overnight in case of a change for the worse, returning to the institute in the morning. After a scrappy meal they had wandered to the end of the village, toward a patch of woodland that was encroaching on the tiny settlement. The long summer twilight still held the land, although the mountain tops were already vague and shadowy. They stood there, looking down toward the level country under them.

"I think you are the most wonderful surgeon in the world," said Joan. "And you see I didn't faint this time, she added.

"Faint? Why should you faint?"

By
Victor Rousseau
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asked Lancaster, looking at her with a puzzled expression.

"You seemed to regard my weakness in the operating room as a sign of my incapacity," she replied, a little chagrined that he should have dismissed the matter from his mind.

Lancaster looked at her with that strange glance which seemed always designed to hide his thoughts. Then his face softened.

"Joan, do you know that I owe everything on earth to you—to you, my dear?" he asked.

And he took her in his arms and kissed her.

"That's what you mean to me," he said. "I can't lose you; I want you to fill the life that you have given back to me."

And at the touch of his lips on hers Joan knew that in truth she loved him; all that she had heard of the man's past, his dissolute life, the talk of Avonmouth, was forgotten. She only knew that she loved him, not with the wild passion of which she had heard, but with a quiet and abiding fondness, none the weaker for its qualities of calmness; and it was the most natural thing in the world that she, who had given him life again, should give her own life also to this wonderful strong man who had risen above his wrongs and driven the besetting devils from him by valorous strength. Her heart was lifted up; serene and trustful she returned his kiss.

"I love you, too," she answered. "Nothing of the past shall ever come between us."

They were at the verge of the forest, upon a height that overlooked Millville and Lancaster, hill villages, but now outspread in the shadowy plain beneath them. A dozen countries

could be dimly discerned from that spot by daylight. Far in the distance were the coastal lands, nearer the cultivated belt, nearer still the little farms, and the matchless mountains all about them. It was their home country—both of them were thinking that; the smell of the rich soil was in their nostrils, and in their hearts the sense of home.

"Joan, can a man begin to build up his life again at thirty-eight, after he has missed everything?" asked Lancaster, after a long silence.

"You have proved that he can," she answered. "But you have not missed everything, my dear. You are a very great man, and a man with a great work in the world. Many men have gone along the path you took, but few have found the strength to turn back as you have done."

"Joan, I want to tell you something. I was engaged to be married once—years ago. She ran away on the evening before our marriage day. It was the beginning of my downfall. I thought I loved her."

His face was haggard. Divining his distress, Joan slipped her hand into his.

"Joan, dearest," said Lancaster, after a pause. "I have often thought that some day I would tell you all the wretched story of the past. But I have been thinking differently today. I was entrapped by an unscrupulous man, who robbed me of everything that made life worth living. But there is nothing that would make me afraid to look my fellow men in the face. It is myself whom I have shamed and humiliated. Joan, I want to say nothing, not because I would keep anything from you, but because I want to start my life anew. I shall never go back to the institute."

"You mean, dear—?"

"Never. I shall not return tomorrow. I want you to come to the Southwest with me, Joan, my dear. We will drive across the hills to Carroll's and catch the through train there. I shall begin to live the new life you have given me. Will you leave everything for my sake, Joan? Is it too hard a request?"

"It is not too hard," she answered. "But it is not right for you."
"It is right for me to leave a living death behind me."

"No, dear. It is running away. You

spoke to me of some harder fight to be fought."

"With nothing to win, Joan—nothing. When I leave here no human being will miss or regret me."

"There is your work at Avonmouth. There is the hospital which you have made famous throughout the United States. Your work is there, not in some obscure place where it would be of less use to the world and no example. Besides, consider that if you become famous again, as you must, you will be discovered. And one can never leave his past behind him. That follows everywhere."

"Yes, that is true," muttered Lancaster, staring out over the darkening hills. "Well, I leave it to you, my dear, but to go back to fight out a futile battle seems to me now something unendurable."

"You must go back to the institute, and then to Avonmouth, and meet your enemies, John," she said. "I shall be at your side. Nothing will make me afraid, or weaken my love for you."

His face twitched. "Not if I tell you things which prove me worthless of your love?" he asked. "Not if you find I am an outcast man who has deserved his misfortunes?"

She only smiled at him. "I shall not judge you by your words," she said, "nor yet by other men's opinions, but my knowledge of you."

"Then I shall tell you everything," he answered, drawing Joan's hand into his. "Everything, but not here. Here I shall keep the peace of the hills within my heart, and you."

So they strolled back toward the cabin, and Joan's drab-colored life was transmutated in this, her first love, to gold. She lived in her lover, she trusted wholly in him who had brought love to her, not like a conquering god, but in the simplest guise, making it the unfolding of her own loving nature. She gave her youth, her innocence as love's price, and thought the exchange her profit. There was never such peacefulness in any place as there that evening, and in Joan's heart was abounding peace likewise.

When they reached the cabin the patient was better. Lancaster spent the evening giving detailed instructions to the man's wife.

"I shall do my best to come again if I am needed," he said. "But I can't promise. I may be called to Avonmouth at any moment. Keep him quiet, for heaven's sake keep him absolutely motionless for a week, and then let him sit up if he wants to. And nothing to eat but the schedule I am making out for you."

Afterward Joan told Lancaster that she wished to stay for a few days to take care of the man. But Lancaster would not hear of it.

"These hill people never die," he said. "He'll be up and about before the week is over."

"But the diet?"

"They'll feed him on soda biscuits as soon as he's well enough to eat anything. Fortunately he won't be able to eat for a week, so he won't come to any harm. I shall send Jenkins over two or three times to report progress."

Joan's room was a tiny place under the eaves. She spent a sleepless, happy night there, thinking over the happiness that had come to her. It was strange and wonderful to lie awake under the same roof that sheltered Lancaster, and to reflect how soon their lives would flow together, calmly, in their own country. She could not have wished any happier fate in life.

With her limited experience, it seemed ideal that, after the years of stress in Avonmouth, she should be returning, almost to her own home, a wife. She had puzzled sometimes over Lancaster's long residences in the place that bore his name. But she dreamed of the time when he would give up his work at Avonmouth and retire to a new institute, a spacious home where they could fill their wards with the country people, where her life's vocation and her life's happiness would be united.

At last she fell asleep, and when she awoke, Lancaster was tapping at her door.

"Time to get up, Joan!" he called cheerfully.

She sprang out of bed. "How is the patient?" she asked.

"Doing finely and wants to go to work," said Lancaster, laughing.

Joan dressed in a hurry and ran downstairs. Lancaster was waiting on the porch. She raised her face for his kiss, already natural to her, already the happy fulfillment of her innocent dreams of love. Then, arm in arm, they strolled out into the sunlight.

The glorious light lay on every hill, in that light all the shadows of the past seemed to shrivel away.

"We are going back to the institute this morning, Joan," said Lancaster.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

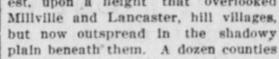
Franklin Set Style

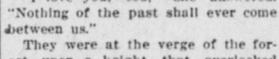
When Eighteenth-century Paris was still wearing the picturesque three-cornered hat Benjamin Franklin came to represent the new republic of the United States, wearing on his head a queer thing derived from the steeple crowns of the Puritan Pilgrim fathers. Paris copied it and turned it into the cylinder which Christendom has worn ever since, says the Detroit News.

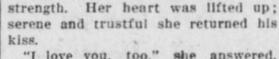
In the Eighteenth century when partisans of France and of Russia were fighting it out in Sweden the French faction wore hats, the Russians caps. The Middle ages, as a familiar ballad reminds us, knew a Pilgrim by his "cockle hat."

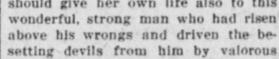
They traveled for the most part in silence.

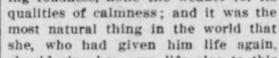


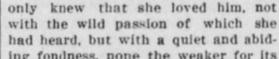


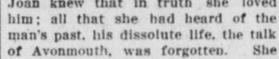


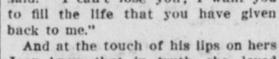


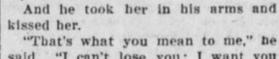


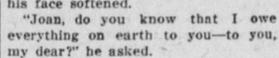


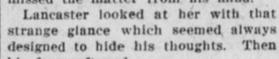


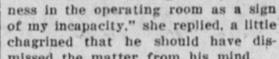


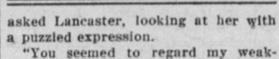








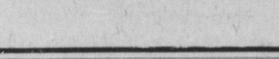


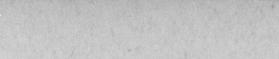




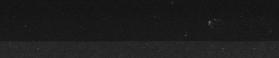












HOW TO KEEP WELL

DR. FREDERICK R. GREEN
Editor of "HEALTH"

IDIOSYNCRASY

IDIOSYNCRASY. This is a long word. What does it mean? It stands for something which we know exists but no one knows what it is.

A familiar proverb which goes back to the old Greek writers is that "One man's meat is another man's poison." This is a terse way of saying that a food which will agree with and nourish one person will produce injurious effects on another. The food is just the same in both instances, so the difference must be in the individuals.

What is the difference? No one knows. Yet strawberries, which most people enjoy, will cause nausea and vomiting and a severe rash in some cases. I recall a patient who could not eat lobster. Her friends knew it and never offered it to her. Taking lunch at a hotel with friends, a salad was ordered which contained a small amount of lobster meat, although this was not known to any of the party. Inside of ten minutes after eating the salad, this lady was taken violently ill. By the time she could be taken to a room and undressed, her body was covered from head to foot with a vivid scarlet eruption. The other members of the party, who ate exactly the same salad, showed no symptoms at all.

Certain drugs produce unusual effects on some people. Others are unpleasantly affected by the odors of certain flowers or the presence of certain animals.

At a recent meeting of German scientists, Professor Dorr of Basel discussed this subject, which has become one of practical importance on account of the different way in which individuals are affected by animal serums.

It has been found that the various individual forms of sensitiveness possess the same peculiarities. A person who is unusually sensitive to one material is sensitive to that material alone; that is, a person who cannot eat lobster can eat oysters and fish with impunity. A person who is sensitive to strawberries can eat apples, grapes, plums or pears without any discomfort. Another peculiarity is that the symptoms caused in a sensitive person have nothing whatever to do with the effects that the same substance produces in normal individuals. The third peculiarity is that symptoms produced by any of these objects in any individual who is sensitive to them are all alike. This is also true of animal serums. Probably hay fever is the best-known example of such sensitiveness.

No one knows why certain persons are sensitive to certain objects.

Not knowing the cause, however has not prevented scientific men from giving these peculiar conditions a name nearly as long as the old one. Cases of idiosyncrasy are now said to be caused by anaphylaxis. This does not increase our knowledge, but it gives us one long word to take the place of another.

EYESIGHT VARIES WITH AGE

WHEN are your eyes the best? At what age does the average person see clearest? The United States public health service has endeavored to answer this question by a careful examination of the eyes of ten thousand persons. Half of them were school boys from six to sixteen and half of them were working men from eighteen up. The boys were public school pupils in South Carolina, Maryland, Delaware and New York and the workmen were employees in post offices, in glass, pottery, foundry, steel, chemical, cigar, gas and cement industries in various parts of the United States.

This number is large enough to include every variety of sight defect. What were the results of this large number of examinations?

The public health experts found that the percentage (that is, the number out of every one hundred persons examined) of persons with normal vision increased with age from six years up to eighteen years, after which it declined and that the rate of decline was much more rapid after forty-five than before.

This would indicate that in children with good eyesight, school work was not as hard a strain on the eyes as different forms of work taken up after leaving school.

The investigation also showed that if the eyes were markedly defective, school work still further weakened them and that the percentage of persons with markedly defective vision increased steadily after six years of age. The rate of increase was more rapid during school life than in the early years of industrial work.

The percentage of persons with moderately defective vision decreased during the school ages, then increased from twenty to fifty and then declined again.

The general conclusion from these facts would seem to be that if one has good eyes, school work improves the vision but that, in persons with poor eyesight, school work is harder than industrial work, probably because persons having very poor eyes naturally select work which does not require acute vision. In any case, the eyesight is best at about eighteen years.

Overheard in Society
The human male doth now attain
A most submissive lot;
A lady may use words profane,
A gentleman may not!

Ananias' Calling
Dentist—Now open your mouth wide and I won't hurt you a bit.
Patient (a few minutes later)—Doc, I know what Ananias did for a living.

Wasted Time
"How is it that Betty and Jack have given up golf? It was their constant occupation last summer."
"Well, you see, since then they have become quite confidential and found out that they played only because each thought the other liked it."

Truly, a Land of Promise
"Buy a piece out near us, old man; it's the land of promise!"
"I'll say it is—they'll promise you anything to get you to buy out there."

Current Wit and Humor



SURE!

"Any good going to that factory for work?"

"Sure! Just go in at the gate that has 'Keep Out' on it, and cross the yard. Then you'll see a door with a 'No Help Wanted' sign. Go right in, and there'll be another door at your left with 'No Admittance' on it. If you see a big man in there with a bull-terrier tagging him, that's the foreman. He only speaks Rumanian, but you'll understand him."

Fireproof

"You are sure that this metal filing cabinet is absolutely fireproof?" asked Biggs of the new furniture salesman. "Absolutely, sir," replied the latter. "Why, do you know, sir, that one of our filing cabinets came safe and sound out of the big Spoff Bros' fire although everything inside it had been burned to ashes?"—Everybody's Magazine.

Promising

"When two people like the same thing their married life is bound to be happy," sighed the engaged girl.

"Well, you and Tom ought to be happy, then," remarked the girl, who wanted Tom but didn't get him. "I know you love him, and I notice he is fond of himself."

BUT HADN'T MADE UP YET



"You and Dick should kiss and make up."

"Oh, we've already kissed, but I haven't had time to make up yet."

The Poor Fish

"Has the young man any property?" Her stern papa demanded.

"Well, pa," the blushing girl replied, "I can say that he is landed."

Tired of That Question

"How is your rheumatism, Uncle Sam?"

"Still got it," rasped the dean of the grocery lyceum. "Had it for forty years. If I ever get rid of it I'll issue cards."

Fly in the Ointment

"Why are you looking so blue, Marie?"

"I was just thinking—what a horrid world this is. One must marry to get alimony."

That Was Different

Dora—I'm going to be married.
Cora—But I thought you detested all men!

Dora—Yes, but one of them proposed to me.

He Seizes Anything

"What is an opportunist?"

"One who meets the wolf at the door, and appears the next day in a fur coat."—Gargoyles.

NOT ON BILL OF FARE



Guest (to waiter with noiseless tread)—Waiter, have you rubber soles?

Waiter (indignantly)—You'll have to go somewhere else, sir, to get that kind of fish!

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Whom we fear more than love, we are not far from hating.—Mrs. Jameson.

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RESINOL

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For aching teeth use Pike's Toothache Dropper.