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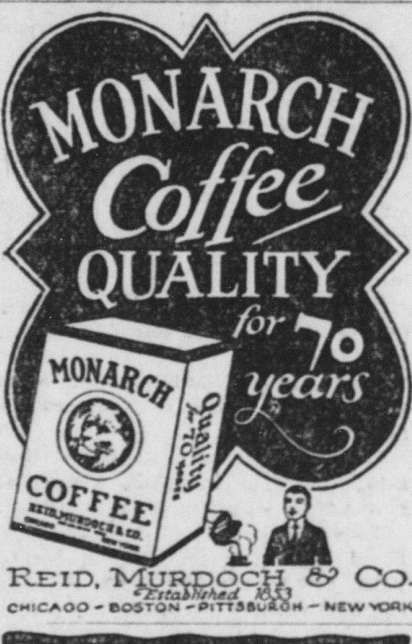
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The TRUANT SOUL

by Victor Rousseau

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CHAPTER IX—Continued

"At first, when I came here, it was only at times that he'd take the morphine, and then he'd have terrible outbursts of rage, and his mind would go, especially when he'd have those fits after he came back from Avonmouth. But after that the hoodoo got him. That was when I was afraid."

"The hoodoo?" inquired Joan. "Miss Wentworth, the devil who was at him so long got hold of him once or twice. I've seen him come back from Avonmouth a different man, Miss Wentworth. That's when I've been afraid. Because the devil that can kill the body isn't much of a devil, but when he kills the soul there is no help but prayer. When he's in those dreadful moods he's another man. He's a wicked man, Miss Wentworth, and I'd shoot him then, if he tried to harm me or any of mine, and I wouldn't think I'd killed Doctor Lancaster. It all began after they accused him of stealing the trust funds."

"It is not true," said Joan. "I'm sure it isn't, Miss Wentworth. But you see old Doctor Lancaster didn't leave the charge of the fund to his son; he left it in the care of the trustees. And there were complications about the hospital at Avonmouth. And then, after the doctor's bride ran away on the eve of their marriage it changed all his nature."

"I have heard of that," said Joan quietly. "But we must not discuss that in the doctor's absence."

"Why, everybody knows about that, Miss Wentworth. Before it happened they say the doctor was the most respected man in Lancaster. He'd been born here, you know, on the plantation down in the valley Millville way. She was a Miss Reid. She came from Farnley county. She was the reigning belle there, admired and flattered, and it turned her heart to a stone to have all the men after her, crazy to marry her. The doctor was a young man then, and he couldn't see any further into her heart, such as it was, than the rest of them."

"She led the doctor a chase before she promised him, they say. But the very day before their marriage was to have been she left her home without a word to anyone, to go off with another man who's never been discovered. That broke the doctor up. He took to drugs then, they tell me. The Institute had been a big place before; it stood over on Morley's hill, but it burned down one night, and we took this old farm house. And the doctor was using the funds, they said, and wasn't responsible at all."

"The trustees found that the money was gone. Nobody knew where it went, because the doctor had his own inheritance, and he wasn't the man to steal or squander. They wouldn't do anything to him, because of his family, but they put Mr. Myers in charge of the finances. That's all. None of us liked him, but what could we do about it? He was here when Doctor Jenkins and I were appointed, and as soon as we understood how matters were we agreed to stay as long as we could and try to help the doctor."

"Mrs. Fraser, I want to know why Mr. Myers incited Doctor Lancaster to use morphine," said Joan. "Miss Wentworth—" "You know he did. You told me so. And Doctor Jenkins knows." The matron looked agitated. "What could we do?" she cried. "Suppose we knew, what can two people do against a man like Myers? Suppose we had said so, who would have believed us? We did all we could do; and we all love the doctor and would rather stay with him and help where we could than be discharged and do nothing."

She looked at Joan piteously, like a child caught in wrongdoing.

"I know you did your best," answered the girl. "But why should Doctor Lancaster stay here in Myers' power, instead of at his home in Avonmouth, where he is respected and powerful? Nothing of all this is known there."

The matron wrung her hands. "I don't know," she answered. "I suppose that man has had him by the throat in more ways than we know. Whenever the doctor used to go to Avonmouth Mr. Myers would go with him, and generally he'd come back with him. Miss Wentworth, till you came here the doctor wasn't a man; what with his drugs and the hold Mr. Myers had over him, he was just a machine. And Mr. Myers was the driver."

Joan had the feeling that she should not listen to the matron's talk about Lancaster; it seemed disloyal of her; but she felt, too, that she must know more, and speedily, if she was to thwart that menacing evil which she sensed more and more clearly as the moments passed.

"Miss Wentworth," said the matron, placing her hand on the girl's arm firmly, "there's something else I ought to have told you about, Mrs. Dana—" "Hark!" interrupted Joan, holding up her hand for silence.

Then they heard, a long distance away, and inaudible to one whose attention was not strained, like theirs, the sound of the wheels of Jenkins' buggy.

Chapter X

Joan hurried out upon the veranda and stood peering under her raised hand across the rain-swamped fields

to where the carriage road wound in and out among the hills. The sun had set, and it was beginning to grow dusk; a bat was flitting under the eaves, and the steady downpour never ceased. Mrs. Fraser, who had moved to follow the girl, went back into her room. There was a queer, troubled pucker about her lips, and once she went to the door and looked intently at Joan, who had not stirred from her position of expectancy.

Presently, looking out through the dripping trees, Joan could see the buggy crawling up the hill through the mud. Slowly it moved along the road. Jenkins was driving, and there were two men with him, not one. Joan recognized Lancaster; then she perceived, first the hard hat, next Myers' face under it.

She shuddered. The worst had come about, then. But the last battle was joined, and under her fears she felt a hardening of her spiritual resources. She would not falter. She went slowly toward the top of the three low wooden steps, and stood there like a statue, watching the buggy pass up the weed-grown drive until it came to a standstill.

Lancaster and Myers were laughing together, and, as Myers saw the girl, he said something, and the other threw back his head in merriment.

Myers was the first to descend. He raised his hat to Joan and grinned. "The doctor's come back quite safe, you see," he said, "and feeling fine again."

Joan hardly noticed the man; she was bracing herself to bear what was to come.

Lancaster got out, and Jenkins, contrary to his custom, lashed the horse violently and drove rapidly away. Myers and Lancaster came up the steps of the porch together. Now Lancaster was raising his hat in turn, and under it was the face of the smirking bully of the operating theater at the Avonmouth hospital.

"Well, I had a fine trip to Avonmouth, my dear, and I hurried back as fast as I could, to see you. I couldn't stay away from you very long, Joan, after you saved my life. And I persuaded Mr. Myers to return with me. We're all going to be good friends, Mrs. Fraser! Mrs. Fraser! Where the devil are you?" he bawled.

Mrs. Fraser's frightened face appeared at the door. "Here, sir!" she stammered.

"Is supper ready? If so, we'll all eat together."

"It's waiting, sir. I'll lay another place," said the matron.

"Good! Then we'll go in. What do you say, Joan, darling? Aren't you glad to see me?" he asked, linking his arm in the girl's and advancing his face within a few inches of hers.

With a sob Joan tore herself away from him and ran upstairs at the top of her speed. She was choking with grief and shame. Hard as she ran, she knew her flight was an incentive to Lancaster to follow her. He went after her as fast as he could, and, as she slammed the door of her room, his hand was on the knob outside. She was just too late to turn the key.

"Joan! Joan! Open the door and don't act like a little fool!" he shouted. "What's the matter with you? Ain't you glad I've come back? Say, I've got a half dozen bottles of the fizzy stuff in my bag, and we three will make a night of it."

"Oh, won't you please leave me?" pleaded Joan. "Try to remember how—how different you were yesterday." "That's true!" he swore. "I'm different now. I was a sanctimonious mug yesterday. I'm in my right mind today. It gave me the blue creeps, being cooped up here in this God-forsaken place. I tell you, Joan, now that I've had enough good liquor to soak that morphine out of my system I'm feeling like a king. Say, now, come down to supper, like a good little girl, and we'll have a great time together. Myers doesn't bear any ill-feeling. And we'll put him out after a while and finish up the bottles ourselves. And say—"

He was advancing toward her with his arms outstretched. Joan sprang back to the washstand and snatched up the half-filled pitcher, with such an evident determination to defend herself with it that the man fell back scowling.

"Joan, don't be a little jackass!" he shouted angrily. "I know what you mean when you look at me like that. You think you're above being jolly and sociable, just because I don't choose to stand on my dignity tonight. Did you expect me to go about always looking like a sanctified mummy, as I did when I was ill?"

"Listen, Doctor Lancaster," panted the girl. "I am not going to judge you by what you are saying now. Leave me, and tomorrow, if you are yourself, I shall be willing to hear your explanation, because I know it is not your better self that is speaking. Leave my room now, please, immediately!"

The man glared at her; but he was dominated, in spite of himself, by her courage and apparent calmness.

"Well, I'm not going to fight with you before I've had my supper," he answered. "You think things over, and in a little while I guess you'll see them in a different light. You can't fool me with those mock airs and graces, dearie. I've seen them in women before. Used to believe in them once, too, till I found it meant that it was going to cost me more in the end. You come down and act straight, Joan—see?"

He slammed the door viciously behind him. Joan fell upon her knees

beside her bed. There, tearless, but shaken with her grief, she poured out a wild prayer for the lost soul of the man. This was worse than anything she could have divined. Better by far that he had returned as on that earlier day, drugged and possessed by the morphine spirit than in the chains of this devil. Better that he had died. For Lancaster, even when the shift, false, lying drug fiend was in control of him, had never been vicious and vile like this before.

And yet this was the John Lancaster of the Southern hospital. It was the traditional Lancaster in his hour of relaxation. He treated women shamefully, as a gossiping nurse had said. Joan had never been in fear of physical harm as she was now. She rose from her knees, looking wildly about her. Then she heard footsteps outside, and she sprang back across the room.

But it was only the matron, Mrs. Fraser cast a scared glance at her and ran forward. "What did he say to you?" she cried.

"I am afraid of him. I dare not stay here. Where shall I go?" cried Joan, losing all self-control.

In the midst of her terror Joan suddenly realized that the look upon the matron's face was the same as on her first night, when they had held a brief conversation in the same room.

For a moment Mrs. Fraser did not answer her. The women drew together, listening. They were having supper below, conversing in hoisterous tones and laughing loudly. Joan heard her own name spoken, and a renewed outburst of mirth followed.

"Mrs. Fraser," said Joan, "the Doctor Lancaster whom I respect and honor is not in that man's body. I am going away. I am going at once. I shall ask Doctor Jenkins to protect me until tomorrow. He is a gentleman; he will do so."

"You can't go through this storm," exclaimed the other, and, as she spoke, Joan realized that the wind had risen to a hurricane, and the boughs creaked and snapped like pistol shots. "You must stay here tonight. Stay with me, and I'll swear he shall not hurt you. Look at this!"

She pulled a revolver from beneath her apron and handed it to Joan.

"I've kept that ever since the last time he came back like this, when he went raving among the patients, mad with liquor. That was the end of the institution. He frightened a sick girl almost to death. Use it on him if you must—use it, because it won't be him you'll kill, but the devil that's got him."

She was almost incoherent with fear and excitement. Joan took the revolver and slipped it into the pocket of her uniform. Oddly enough, she felt that the Lancaster of that evening had so grossly wronged the Lancaster of earlier days that to kill him would be to avenge an intolerable outrage. She hated him with all the intensity of which her heart was capable, hated him for the wrong he had done himself, the outrage on their love; and under the hate the flame of the love she had borne burned pure and clear.

It was long since dark, but the maid had not lit the lamp outside Mrs. Dana's door, near the head of the stairs. The moon had not yet risen. The women crept cautiously along the hall.

Lancaster and the secretary were in Myers' room. The door was open. Joan heard a cork fly with a bang, and the gurgle of the champagne in glasses. Their voices were raised high, and there came the sound of a scuffle.

"Sit down!" the secretary was crying. "Do you want to be a fool and spoil everything? Leave her alone until tomorrow."

"I'm d-d if I do!" cried Lancaster. "Wait a minute! Listen to me! You agreed to come back here and put her out. Why don't you do it now?" Lancaster laughed coarsely. "Because she's too d-d a pretty, Myers," he answered.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Boy Was Right There After Job He Wanted

He was a clean-cut, wide-awake young chap and he wanted a job. "I have nothing at present," said the corporation manager, "but leave your name and if anything turns up you will be notified."

"May I ask if you have made the same promise to many others," said the applicant.

"Yes, quite a few," was the reply. The boy grinned and remarking that it was no monopoly he went out.

A few days later a young man was needed in a hurry and seven telegrams were dispatched to seven waiting applicants. Hardly had these left the secretary's office when in walked Johnny on the Spot, holding his telegram.

"How in the world did you get it?" gasped the executive.

"Well, sir," he answered, "the other day as I was going out I stopped and got a job as errand boy. I thought it would be a good plan to be where I could get the news quicker than the others."

"You'll do!" said the manager.—Boston Transcript.

The Humble Daisy

Children sometimes remove the white petals from daisies and then use the yellow center as pumpkin pies for their dolls' tables. By clipping off the rays to shape a cap and leaving two long ones for strings, with a little ink, a capped grandmother's head and face are made. In literature the daisy has a place second only to the rose. In church lore the daisy is the flower of St. Margaret.

POINTS ON KEEPING WELL

DR. FREDERICK R. GREEN
Editor of "HEALTH"

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THE HEALTH VALUE OF SWIMMING

SWIMMING is not only a delightful recreation, it is also one of the most valuable of health exercises. It is a natural method of locomotion for practically all animals and is as natural for primitive races as walking. Saving peoples learn to swim about the same time that they learn to walk. Civilized man has gotten out of the habit of swimming, so he has to learn. The earlier in life he learns to swim, the nearer he is to the savage, and the easier and more natural swimming becomes.

As a universal exercise swimming is even better than walking, since it exercises the muscles of the legs and trunk quite as well and develops the arms and chest even better. For this reason, it is free from the objections made to some sports which develop only certain parts or groups of muscles. A few moments' study of photographs of champion swimmers, both men and women, will show that in no other class of athletes is the body so symmetrically developed.

Not only is swimming a splendid means of muscular development; it is equally valuable in developing the nerve control of the muscles, coordination of different groups of muscles, self-control, presence of mind and self-confidence. It develops the heart without overtaxing it and so is a much safer form of exercise than many land sports, such as sprinting, hurdle racing, football or baseball, which are apt to be carried to extremes. Swimming is so safe from the danger of overexertion that it is often ordered for weak persons or those below par, since by it weak muscles may be developed without danger. Physicians advise swimming for persons crippled as a result of infantile paralysis. The body being supported by the water, the patient is relieved of the fear of falling, his comfort is increased, and he is able to exercise his muscles with a freedom not possible on land. Tanks for the use of victims of infantile paralysis are found in most of hospitals for crippled children.

Many of our universities, colleges and high schools require ability to swim a certain distance as one of the conditions of graduation. Every child should learn to swim as naturally as it learns to walk. If a lake, river or pond is available, open-air swimming is best, but if there are no natural advantages artificial tanks can be easily and cheaply constructed in these days of concrete building. If every school-house had a swimming tank as part of its equipment we would have stronger and healthier boys and girls.

GOITER IN COLORADO

AS SOON as a new method of treatment or a new and better reason for the existence of a disease is announced, scientific men all over the country begin to investigate conditions in different localities.

The interest in goiter in Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin and other states, has caused a study of this condition everywhere. In a recent issue of "United States Public Health Reports," Dr. Robert Olsen, surgeon of the United States public health service, presents a report on the prevalence of goiter in Colorado. Doctor Olsen was sent to this state at the request of the Colorado board of health to determine the extent of goiter in that state and, if possible, to ascertain the cause.

A survey of the Denver city schools showed that out of 9,656 girls between the ages of eight and twenty-two, 2,643, or 27 per cent, had some kind of enlargement of the thyroid gland. A Red Cross survey in eight cities showed that out of 1,762 children, or 825 boys and 937 girls, between the ages of nine and twenty, thyroid enlargement was found in 53 per cent of the boys and 73 per cent of the girls. In Colorado Springs, 38 per cent of the boys and 44 per cent of the girls had enlarged thyroids. The total results for the entire state showed about the same proportions.

As usually happens when special attention is given to any particular disease, it was found that goiter was much more common than had been generally supposed. On account of lack of time and money, the survey was confined to the cities, no attempt being made to find out how prevalent goiter is in the country districts or whether it is more or less common there than in the towns.

Regarding the cause of goiter, it is now pretty generally agreed that most of simple enlargements of the thyroid are caused by lack of iodine, either in the food or the drinking water. Naturally, the easiest way to remedy this condition is to provide enough iodine for the body. Iodine is found in sea water, sea weeds, and sea foods of all kinds. It is lacking, both in the soil and in the water, in localities far removed from the sea coast. Perhaps this need of the human body for a certain amount of iodine is due to the fact that all life came originally from the sea and we still need some of the elements furnished by the sea to keep us strong and healthy.

Harsh Old English Law

Less than a century ago a child of nine was condemned to death in England for stealing paint to the value of twopence-halfpenny.

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