The TRUANT SOUL

by Victor Rousseau

Copyright by W. G. Chapman

SOMETHING HIDDEN

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 she 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.

CHAPTER IV—Continued

—6—

The girl, after a moment's hesitation, preceded Mrs. Fraser into the building. She saw a long corridor, with a number of doors on either side, and the stairs in front of her.

"You would like to see the building, Miss Wentworth?" asked the matron. "Or perhaps you are tired and would prefer to go to your room."

"No, I should like to see it. Have you many patients?"

"Only Mrs. Dana. She's always here, you know. There was a boy with a broken arm, but he left this morning. In winter, though, we're often crowded. It isn't much of a place, Miss Wentworth, but we do a little good. This is the doctor's apartment. He sleeps here; next door is the clinic, and next to that the operating room. Here we keep the supplies. This is my room. Mr. Myers, the secretary, has his room opposite the doctor's. This is the dining room, and here is the kitchen. Now I'll show you your room upstairs, Miss Wentworth."

The corridor above was a replica of the one below. At the head of the stairs a little passage branched off toward a large window in the wall, with a door to one side of it.

"Mrs. Dana occupies this room," said the matron. "Perhaps the doctor mentioned her?"

"Doctor Lancaster said something—"

"She is out of her mind, poor woman, but she is perfectly quiet. You see, Miss Wentworth, she is like an infant mentally. She will not trouble you. Excuse me a moment."

She drew a key from the bunch that hung at her waist and unlocked the door very softly, and with a certain furtiveness, Joan thought. Looking in, the girl saw a strikingly handsome woman of about seven and thirty years, seated in a chair beside a window, with a shawl over her knees. She was in a dressing gown, and her hair hung over her shoulders in two braids. She did not look up or stir as the matron entered, and Mrs. Fraser, after closing the door behind her, presently came out and locked it again.

"I'll show you your room now, Miss Wentworth," she said. "You will be alone on this floor except for Mrs. Dana, but you are not afraid of her?"

"Not in the least. Is she incurable?"

"Yes, quite, poor thing. She has sat in that chair all day for nearly three years."

"And never goes out?"

"Out? No, we don't let her out. It might excite her. But I am not supposed to speak about the cases. It's very sad, though. She comes of a very good family, and they neglected her when she was in trouble, Miss Wentworth, and she's as good as dead to everyone now. She never speaks, but I don't know whether she could. I've never heard her since I came here three years ago. This is the ward. And this is your room."

The open doors along the corridor had revealed clean little rooms with iron bedsteads and plain furniture; the room at the end of the passage, however, was well furnished, with a heavy new carpet and old mahogany furniture. Outside the window, through the twilight, appeared the distant mountains.

Joan, turning, was surprised to see Mrs. Fraser watching her intently. As their eyes met the matron lowered her own in some confusion. There was a furtiveness about her glance that momentarily revived Joan's uneasiness. It was a strange journey, and Doctor Lancaster's behavior had been strange. Then there was the man Myers. Joan felt a sudden sinking of the heart; she was almost regretful that she had come.

A colored maid brought up her suitcase.

"This is Lucy," said the matron. "She will do anything you tell her. She sleeps overhead in the attic. And my room is underneath," she added; "so if you should want anything at any time, just tap on the radiator, and I'll come up at once. And supper will be ready as soon as you are."

In the hall Joan found Mrs. Fraser, ten minutes later, talking to the secretary.

"Miss Wentworth, this is Mr. Myers," she began.

"We've met already," said Myers, scrutinizing her closely. He seemed now to wear the same furtive air as Mrs. Fraser; it seemed part of the atmosphere of the institution. Joan had perceived it in the coachman, too.

"Miss Wentworth is to have charge of the nursing under Doctor Jenkins," said Mrs. Fraser.

"I hope I shan't conflict with—" began Joan doubtfully.

"Not at all, not at all," said Myers, speaking with false heartiness. "I hope we shall all get along well together."

Joan refused to face the problem of Myers' undoubted hostility. She went into the dining room, and found to her relief that the table was only laid for one.

"Mr. Myers has had supper?" she asked.

"You are to have your meals alone, Miss Wentworth," answered the matron.

"But I should not wish—"

"It is the doctor's orders," said Mrs. Fraser, in a tone of finality.

Coming in with the dessert, Mrs. Fraser found her nodding at the table. The girl had begun to feel an intense fatigue after the all-day journey. She began to realize, too, that her work at the hospital had been harder than she had known.

"I believe I shall go straight to bed," she said.

"The best thing you can do, Miss Wentworth. Everybody feels sleepy when they first arrive here. It's the hill air. You must rest well, Miss Wentworth, and please remember it's you who give the orders."

She preceded her up the stairs, carrying an oil lamp. She set it down in Joan's room, and then she seemed to hesitate.

"Miss Wentworth," she said, "the doctor wants us to do everything we can to make you comfortable. There

She Would Remain. She Decided That While She Was Dressing.

isn't likely to be any work unless some patient comes in. You were not to attend Mrs. Dana, I think?"

"I was told not."

"That's so, Miss Wentworth." The matron's air was a very decided one, and again conveyed the impression of something hidden, which was, further, meant to remain hidden. "The doctor wired me that. I don't suppose he said anything about Mrs. Dana to you? Or—or Mr. Myers?"

Her stealthy watchfulness now seemed of ominous portent, and the matron made no attempt to suppress the eagerness with which she awaited Joan's answer.

"No, Doctor Lancaster said nothing," answered the girl.

Then, seeing that the matron was still regarding her doubtfully, she added:

"But is not Doctor Jenkins resident here? I have not seen him yet, you know."

The matron stared at her in astonishment. "Why, Miss Wentworth, that was Doctor Jenkins who drove you up from the station! Didn't you know?" she asked.

"That was Doctor Jenkins?"

"I thought Doctor Lancaster would have told you about him. He's a graduate of Johns Hopkins. Old Doctor Lancaster wanted to build up an institution here where we hill people could work among our own. But the plan fell through. You see, the hospital in Avonmouth got hold of most of the money, and then—there were other difficulties. I don't know about them—I've only been here three years, and Doctor Jenkins wasn't graduated then, and we never pay attention to the gossip of the villagers."

She checked herself hastily, as if she was afraid of compromising herself.

"Doctor Jenkins has given up his life to the work here," she continued. "He lives at Milliville, but we hope some time that Doctor Lancaster will build up the place again, if only—if only he—"

There was almost a look of agony on her face, and again she turned her eyes upon Joan's face as if to search out her thoughts. Then, with an abrupt "good night," she turned away.

Joan called to her as she was leaving the room. "Mrs. Fraser," she said, "I understood there was a patient here besides Mrs. Dana."

The matron turned slowly round. "There was the boy who left this morning," she said inquiringly.

"But I understood from Doctor Lancaster—at least, he didn't tell me in so many words, but he gave me to understand that there was a special case here, requiring care and sympathy."

The matron stared at her. "No, there's nobody," she said. "Nobody except—"

Suddenly she uttered a convulsive sound, and, putting her hands over her face, ran from the room. Joan heard her stumbling down the corridor outside as if she had gone blind.

She stood irresolute in her room. Her sleepiness was gone; she was afraid, and she seemed to have got out of her depth. It had begun with John Lancaster's strange behavior in his office the evening before. She had not been able then to reconcile him in any way with the Lancaster whom she had seen, smug, self-satisfied and vain, in the operating room, the bully who kept the nurses in agitation and fear, though he was the traditional John Lancaster of whom she had heard. Then there was the man Myers, equally strange; and the matron. Some mystery was at the heart of it all; and Joan was the more afraid because the reason for her fear was unknown to her.

Her sleepiness was gone. She stood beside the window, looking out into the darkness. A whippoorwill was calling monotonously among the pines; here and there among the hills a solitary light was twinkling. The air was cool and balsam scented. It was like the dearly remembered days at home. But in the heart of that peace was apprehension.

Looking back now, Joan thought that she had undertaken a rash and extraordinary adventure in coming so far from Avonmouth alone, and at the proposal of a man whose reputation was an evil one. She would go home on the morrow.

Something was wrong, and in spite of his apparent kindness an inner prompting warned her to beware of Lancaster. He was at the heart of all this, and had enmeshed her in some scheme for his own purposes. She locked her door and went to bed, to sleep restlessly.

Chapter V

When she awakened it was morning. The sun was streaming brightly into the room. Through the window Joan saw a scene of exquisite beauty in the rolling hills, the winding road, the forest glades. Underneath the chickens were scrambling for the corn which the matron was flinging to them. A thousand birds were awing, the universal robin and the bluebird of her beloved home. The dew lay heavy on the leaves and grass. Joan felt a sudden ecstasy. This was her own country, and she had come back to it. Her fears were dissipated with the night shadows.

She would remain. She decided that while she was dressing. And yet a doubt was in her heart. And with it came the remembrance of something that had disturbed her during the night. Filtering into her consciousness came the recollection of an automobile rolling up to the door, and of men's voices conversing in low tones under her window. Then the machine had rolled away. It must have been about two in the morning.

Perhaps a patient had been brought to the institute, thought the girl, as she went downstairs. Mrs. Fraser's door was closed, and the only person astir seemed to be the colored maid, who nodded and smiled as she looked up from her sweeping. Joan began to pace the long verandah in front of the building, looking out across the hills and thinking over her situation.

Perhaps it was only morbidness, or mental fatigue, that had made her read things in the faces of Myers and Mrs. Fraser which did not exist there. Perhaps the day would disclose her position more definitely.

She was walking past the open door of the building when she saw a man leaving the doctor's room. It was Myers, the secretary. He saw Joan and came briskly out upon the verandah.

"Good morning, Miss Wentworth," he said, in his rasping tones. "Pleasant weather, isn't it? Much better here than in the heat of Avonmouth!"

"How do you do, Mr. Myers," said Joan, trying to overcome her instinctive disgust of the man. "You have a new patient here, haven't you?"

He looked at her with a sort of quizzical shrewdness. "What makes you think that, Miss Wentworth?" he inquired.

> Evidently the institution is a place of mystery. And what brings Doctor Lancaster?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

No Danger From Comets

The Naval observatory says that the mass of a comet is never large; and the material is, for the most part, exceedingly tenuous. It is probable that the earth, if struck by a comet, would witness nothing more than a meteoric shower. The explosions, if any, would be similar to those hitherto observed in the case of large meteorites.

CROSS-WORD PUZZLE

(© by Western Newspaper Union.)

Horizontal.

1—Glaring
9—King of the beasts
10—Lure
12—Expressing negation
13—End of day
15—Drain
17—Midday nap
20—To affect with pain
22—Staring
24—Proceed
25—Cowboy's rope
27—Roman emperor
28—Beehive (abbr.)
29—Perform
31—Like
32—Not out
33—Greek letter
34—South American Indian
37—Tear
40—Small divan
42—Near
44—Fray
45—Possessed
46—For a short time
49—A boy
50—Period of time
51—Consumed
53—State
54—Variety of apple
55—One who hires workers

Vertical.

1—Appendage of a fish
2—Not tight
3—Opposed to
6—Encourage
7—Pertaining to a fleet of ships
8—To make a knot
11—Salary
14—To get up
15—Picnic delicacy
16—Equal
18—For example (abbr.)
19—Thus
20—Inquire
21—Crooked
23—Imaginary belt in the heavens
26—Confirm
30—Over
31—Part of "to be"
35—Biblical character
36—Food brought back to be chewed second time by an animal
38—Unit of measurement
39—Tidy
41—Woman's quarters in a Mohammedan residence
42—Ejaculation
43—Titanium (abbr.)
44—Unit of length
47—To twist out of shape
48—Resembling lace
50—The first woman
52—Organ of hearing

The solution will appear in next issue.

Solution of Last Week's Puzzle.

ANIMALS OF NEVERWERE

By DON W. REI

THE FILE-TAILED BEAVERBOO

The File-Tailed Beaverboo is a beast with eyes of blue;
His ears are red, his hide is heliotrope;
His tongue is pink and long; his bark sounds like a song;
And his whiskers look like strands of yellow rope.

This beastie's sole ambition is to raise a new addition,
To his bungalow of breadth the whole year through.
He's forever working hard, in the woods at his back yard,
With his tail, a-filing big tree-trunks in two.

He will thump, and scrape, and hammer, 'till he spreads an earful clamor,
Which attracts his foe, the Sharp-Toothed Kattayae,
Then he scurries through the door, and he will come out no more,
'Till the bad old Kitt gets tired and goes away.

YOUTH MAY BECOME WORLD'S STRONG MAN

An extraordinary display of strength was shown recently by a London (Eng.) youth. He crushed a firm, rosy-cheeked apple to pulp between his fingers, drove a nail at one blow from his hand through two thick planks, broke a chain with his teeth, made a horseshoe out of an iron bar 14 inches long and, lastly, allowed five men, two trolleys and an anvil, a quarter of a ton in weight, to pass over boards supported solely by his chest. Slight in build, he looks much younger than his years. He attributes his great strength to his chest development. As a boy he was puny, and after his father died of consumption his mother urged him to do chest exercises, which he did with simple homemade apparatus, consisting of a single elastic strand with a metal ring at either end. But his chest muscles alone do not make him keep his title of the "World's Strongest Boy," as he showed when he lifted an ounce weight with his ear. Standing with feet apart he hardened his muscles and the ring at the end of the clip, which had pulled the top of his ear downward as he stood easy, gradually rose until the ear was upright. He repeated the feat several times; each time the body relaxed the ring fell again.

FIND SECOND MOON AND BECOME FAMOUS

If you are interested in popular astronomy and if you own or have access to a small telescope, you have the opportunity of a lifetime to make a momentous discovery, one that might eclipse the discoveries of the world's greatest observatories, writes Scriven Bolton, F. R. A. S., in Popular Science Monthly. You have a good chance to find a suspected second moon to the earth—a comparatively tiny meteoric ironstone ball, some four or five hundred feet across, without atmosphere and frozen to the core.

This strange little body, pulled from its course by gravity, is believed to revolve around our earth once every three hours, traveling at a speed of about three and one-half miles a second. Its orbit may lie about 2,500 miles from the earth's surface. A modest three-inch telescope should reveal it.

Watch to see if a small black speck ever passes across the solar or lunar disk. If the suspected second moon really exists, it is reasonable to assume that occasionally it must pass between us and the sun and moon, moving rapidly across in six or eight seconds. Reports have been received that such a body has been observed, but these must be substantiated.

Have a complexion that everyone admires

NO matter how beautiful your features are, you cannot be truly attractive with a rough, blotchy, gray-looking skin.

Resinol Ointment, aided by Resinol Soap, is what you need to overcome such troubles. The gentle, but unusually cleansing properties of the soap, together with the soothing, healing qualities of the ointment, make the Resinol products ideal for any skin. All druggists sell Resinol Soap and Ointment. Use them regularly for a few days and watch your complexion improve.

RESINOL

Why Forest Fires

Of the 556 forest fires that took place in the Adirondacks and Catskills last year 172 were due to careless smokers, 88 to locomotives, 82 to fishermen, 70 to campers, 29 to hunters, 28 to berry pickers, 18 to lightning and 17 to incendiary causes. One of the worst of the lot—and one of the worst in the history of the Catskill region—took place in July in the Shawangunk mountains and was started by the pickers of the famous Shawangunk blueberries.

"Poisoned" by Radio

Mental patients held in British asylums have recently made a wide variety of complaints to the royal commission into lunacy, which has been investigating the asylums and the patients intrusted to their care. One of the patients complained that he was being poisoned by radio, while another said that communism was being injected into him by psychoanalysis.

Boschee's Syrup

Allays irritation, soothes and heals throat and lung inflammation. The constant irritation of a cough keeps the delicate mucus membrane of the throat and lungs in a congested condition, which BOSCHEE'S SYRUP gently and quickly heals. For this reason it has been a favorite household remedy for colds, coughs, bronchitis and especially for lung troubles in millions of homes all over the world for the last fifty-eight years, enabling the patient to obtain a good night's rest, free from coughing with easy expectoration in the morning. You can buy BOSCHEE'S SYRUP wherever medicines are sold.—Adv.

Traced to Fourth Century

Archbishop Trench says the proverb that one should not "look a gift horse in the mouth" is as old as Jerome of the Fourth century, who, when some one found fault with certain writings of his, replied that they were free-will offerings, and that it did not behoove one to look a gift horse in the mouth.

The Unspoiled Prince

The various stories about the prince coming back with a strong Yankee accent are of course all nonsense. I didn't risk a watery grave by going to the closing solemnity at Wembley, but I listened-in from the depths of a comfortable arm chair to the prince's speech and he didn't emit even a solitary "Gee."—London Opinion.

Watch Cuticura Improve Your Skin. On rising and retiring gently smear the face with Cuticura Ointment. Wash off Ointment in five minutes with Cuticura Soap and hot water. It is wonderful what Cuticura will do for poor complexions, dandruff, itching and red, rough hands.—Advertisement.

Golf Ball's Speed

When a golfer drives from the tee he probably little realizes the terrific speed at which he has sent the "wee sma' ba'" on its travels. He would probably be astonished to learn that he has imparted to it a speed more than twice as great as an express train, and considerably greater than that of any bird that flies.

Where Ignorance Is Bliss

The man who claims to understand women always arouses in them the desire to put one over on him.—Don Marquis in the New York Herald Tribune.

FOR OVER 200 YEARS

haarlem oil has been a world-wide remedy for kidney, liver and bladder disorders, rheumatism, lumbago and uric acid conditions.

GOLD MEDAL HAARLEM OIL CAPSULES

correct internal troubles, stimulate vital organs. Three sizes. All druggists. Insist on the original genuine GOLD MEDAL.

KEEP EYES WELL! Dr. Thompson's Eye Water will strengthen them. At druggists or Dr. Thompson's Eye Water Co., Troy, N. Y. Booklet.