

# 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 reinstates 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. The only patient at the institution is a Mrs. Dana, demented 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 help 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 the victim of the morphia 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 despondency. 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-



"Well Done!" She said.

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 morphia; 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," an-

swered 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," flattered 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 morphia, 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 tape 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 morphia 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 morphia 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, the hammer in her hand. She saw 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.

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

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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The remedy with a record of fifty-eight years of surpassing excellence. All who suffer with nervous dyspepsia, sour stomach, constipation, indigestion, torpid liver, dizziness, headaches, coming-up of food, wind on stomach, palpitation and other indications of digestive disorder, will find GREEN'S AUGUST FLOWER an effective and efficient remedy. For fifty-eight years this medicine has been successfully used in millions of households all over the civilized world. Because of its merit and popularity GREEN'S AUGUST FLOWER is found today wherever medicines are sold. 30 and 90 cent bottles.—Adv.

**Much Coal in Old Canal**  
The Morris canal in New Jersey, abandoned for years and now drained, has turned out to be a veritable coal mine. The dry bed of the old waterway is thickly sprinkled with lumps of anthracite that fell from passing barges in years gone by. In some places there are little mounds of coal, as if a barge had tipped over. People in Hackettstown and Port Murray are getting in their winter's supply.

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Sold by druggists for over 40 years  
E. J. CHENEY & CO., Toledo, Ohio

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The name of a Wyandotte county (Kansas) man saved him tax money for many years. Albert H. Reid bought some property six years ago on time payments and received the deed this year. He asked the amount of taxes and was told that he did not owe anything, for the land was listed as M. E. Church, and church property is not taxed. Then Reid said: "M. E. Church is the name of the man I bought it from, and there isn't a church within six blocks of the property."

**Cuticura Soothes Itching Scalp.**  
On retiring gently rub spots of dandruff and itching with Cuticura Ointment. Next morning shampoo with Cuticura Soap and hot water. Make them your everyday toilet preparations and have a clear skin and soft, white hands.—Advertisement.

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Railway passenger cars of the future will carry eight times as many passengers as now.

A bank is run on a cash basis—and occasionally a cashier runs that way also.

**Divided in Thought**  
She—Are you married?  
Confirmed Bachelor—Unfortunately, no; thank heaven!

Some men look for work with about as much enthusiasm as they would look for a case of smallpox.

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**MOTHER:**—Fletcher's Castoria is especially prepared to relieve Infants in arms and Children all ages of Constipation, Flatulency, Wind Colic and Diarrhea; allaying Feverishness arising therefrom, and, by regulating the Stomach and Bowels, aids the assimilation of Food; giving natural sleep.

To avoid imitations, always look for the signature of *Dr. J. C. Fletcher*. Absolutely Harmless—No Opiates. Physicians everywhere recommend it.

Only fools and brave souls sacrifice the certainties of today for the uncertainties of tomorrow.

Men are tormented with the opinion they have of things, and not by the things themselves.



**Feel Stiff and Achy After Every Cold?**  
Do You Have Constant Backache? Feel Old and Lame and Suffer Sharp, Rheumatic Pains? Then Look to Your Kidneys!

**DOES every cold, chill or attack of grip leave you worn-out and utterly miserable? Do you feel old and lame, stiff and rheumatic? Does your back ache with a dull, unceasing throb, until it seems you just can't stand it any longer?**

Then look to your kidneys! Grip, colds and chills are mighty hard on the kidneys. They fill the blood with poisons and impurities that the kidneys must filter off. The kidneys weaken under this rush of new work; become congested and inflamed.

It's little wonder, then, that every cold leaves you with torturing backache, rheumatic pains, headaches, dizziness and annoying bladder irregularities.

Don't delay! Get a box of **Doan's Pills**. Give your weakened kidneys the help they need. Assist them, also, by drinking pure water; freely, eating lightly and getting plenty of fresh air and rest. **Doan's Pills** have helped thousands and should help you. Ask your neighbor!

**"Use Doan's," Say These Good Folks:**

**ALBERT COULSON**, fruit farmer, 597 Sixth East North St., Nephi, Utah, says: "My kidneys got out of order and they acted too freely. Mornings there was a lameness and soreness through my back. I began using Doan's Pills and after I had finished taking one box my kidneys were acting fine and I wasn't troubled any more with my back."

**MRS. GEO. C. PHILLIPS**, Third East Seventh South St., Nephi, Utah, says: "Sharp, twinging pains seized me in my back while about my housework. There was a heavy, dull ache through my kidneys and I became so dizzy that black spots blurred my sight. I also had headaches and my kidneys were weak and acted too freely. I used a box of Doan's Pills. My kidneys became normal and all the other symptoms left."

**Doan's Pills**  
Stimulant Diuretic to the Kidneys  
At All Dealers, 60c a Box. Foster-Milburn Co., Mfg. Chemists, Buffalo, N. Y.