

# Doctor Hudson's Secret Journal

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LLOYD C. DOUGLAS

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Doctor Hudson's  
Secret Journal

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**GRATEFULLY DEDICATED  
TO THE READERS OF  
MAGNIFICENT OBSESSION**

## Publishers' Preface

IN 1929 appeared the First Edition of a book with the odd title, *Magnificent Obsession*. Two well-known general publishing houses had declined the book — one because it was too much of a story and not sufficiently a religious book, and the other because it was too much a religious book and not sufficiently a story — and both on the ground that it was not likely to justify the expense of publication. The author had then offered the manuscript to a house that made a specialty of publishing in the religious field. There it was accepted and published. The first printing was one of three thousand copies; the second, one of fifteen hundred.

It is interesting to know that when the book was first offered to the trade it was sold as a religious work. Dealers placed it among the sermons and ethical essays. It was fully six months later before booksellers began to consider it as a novel.

Novels that appear in the Best Seller List usually achieve their popularity and their ratings immediately. If they are to become 'Best Sellers,' they give evidence of it within thirty days after publication. *Magnificent Obsession* did not reach the Best Seller List until a year after it was published; but having arrived there, it remained on the list for eighteen months. Modestly advertised in religious journals, its popularity came chiefly from the word-of-mouth publicity that it received. In this publicity the interest of several eminent clergymen in various parts of the country was strikingly effective. Those

men lent their influence to the book, reviewing it before their congregations and church conventions.

After the book had been out for a year the jacket was altered slightly by the addition of this sentence: 'It has frequently been said of this strange story that the people who read it are never quite the same again.'

The book evoked an amazing flood of letters from its readers. These letters came from every state in the Union, every province in Canada, and from Great Britain. Reading clubs in Germany studied it. London preachers reviewed it in their pulpits. It has been translated into many languages. It has been on the air and on the motion-picture screen. By a highly conservative estimate two million persons have read *Magnificent Obsession*.

Among the queries presented in those letters, several constantly recurred. One almost always found was this: 'Is the complete Journal of Doctor Hudson available?'

For several years it has been Mr. Douglas's intention to answer that question in the affirmative.

*Doctor Hudson's Secret Journal* is not a sequel to *Magnificent Obsession*. It is rather an expansion of the philosophy that made *Magnificent Obsession* important, illumined by other experiences of Doctor Hudson's than those recorded in the novel.

The persons who found inspiration in *Magnificent Obsession* will, we believe, feel a deep satisfaction in seeing the tenth anniversary of that extraordinary book celebrated by the publication of *Doctor Hudson's Secret Journal*.

## Author's Foreword

SHORTLY after the quiet appearance of *Magnificent Obsession*, ten years ago, the author became aware that he had not completed his task.

The letters which began to pour in were not of the sort usually referred to as 'fan mail.' Nobody wanted an autograph, a photograph, or a lock of hair. Not many bothered to remark that they had been entertained by the story. But they all asked questions and most of the questions were serious, wistful, and challenging.

The theme of the novel had derived from a little handful of verses midway of the Sermon on the Mount, but all references to the enchanted passage were purposely vague, the author feeling that a treasure hunt in Holy Writ would probably do his customers no harm. Within the first twelve months after publication, more than two thousand people had written to inquire, 'What page of the Bible did the sculptor carry in his wallet?' We left off counting these queries, but they have continued to come, all through these intervening years.

Second in importance to this inquiry was a very searching question, phrased in terms ranging all the way from polite hinting to forthright impudence: 'Do you honestly believe in this thing — or were you just writing a story?' After a while, letters began to arrive from persons who said they had tried it, and it worked; though they were careful not to be too specific in reporting their adventures, aware that if they told they would be sorry. A few lamented the cost of unrewarded experiments and denounced the whole idea as a lot of hooey.

The task of dealing sympathetically with this strange correspondence became a grave responsibility. No stock letter, done on a mimeograph, would serve the purpose. It was necessary that individual replies be sent to all earnest inquirers. One dared not risk the accusation that, having advocated an expensive and venturesome technique for generating personal power, the author was thereafter too busy or lazy to care whether anybody benefited by such investments. It was interesting to observe how wide a variety of people came forward with questions. A single post might contain inquiries from a high school boy, a college professor, a farmer's wife, a physician, a pious old lady, an actress, a postman, a preacher, and a sailor. Some of the questions were practically unanswerable, but it wasn't quite fair to limit one's reply to a laconic 'I don't know.' Frequently one's counsel was pitifully inadequate, but not because it was coolly casual or thoughtlessly composed. I suppose that if all of these letters were compiled and printed they would fill several volumes as large as the novel which evoked them.

A third question, which began to show up promptly, inquired, 'Is the complete text of Doctor Hudson's journal available in print?' The correct answer to that was 'No.' It not only wasn't in print; it had not been written. Occasionally someone would counter, 'How were you able to quote from Doctor Hudson's journal, if there never was any such thing?' — an amusingly artless question, to be sure; but an obviously honest tribute to the realism of a document which had no existence in fact.

Readers of *Magnificent Obsession* will recall that, early in the story, an eminent brain surgeon, Doctor Wayne Hudson, lost his life by drowning. Among his effects there was found a journal containing some amazing mem-



oirs. Because of the singular nature of these experiences, Doctor Hudson had concealed his story in a baffling code, hoping by this means to insure it against a hasty perusal by persons who might view it with careless indifference or a half-contemptuous incredulity.

Throughout the novel, 'quotations' from and adversions to this laboriously decoded journal provided the explanation of young Merrick's belief and behavior as he endeavored to follow in his mentor's footsteps. And perhaps it is not an unreasonable request if the people who have found a measure of inspiration in those brief and detached fragments from the Hudson journal should want to see the whole of it.

This book is related to *Magnificent Obsession* as an overture rather than a sequel. Therefore it may be read without any bewilderment by persons unacquainted with the novel.

But it is only natural if, during the belated composition of this journal, the author should have visualized an audience largely composed of those to whom Doctor Hudson is no stranger. I find myself surveying this audience — however widely scattered over the earth — as an assembly of people friendly to one another — and to me. I feel that we are somehow related in a common cause, a common quest. In this audience there are many hundreds of gracious souls to whom I am indebted for confidences and comradeships which have enriched my life and emphasized for me the significance of spiritual forces.

I am particularly hopeful that this book may be approved by my friends of the clergy who were primarily responsible for the wide distribution of the novel. Too frequently one hears discrediting criticism of the minis-

ters on the ground that they are too much occupied with the material success of their own denominations; that they are inhospitable to new evaluations of enduring verities; that they are more concerned with 'churchianity' than Christianity. This indictment is, for the most part, unfair.

In *Magnificent Obsession* there was no talk about the importance of attending religious services or supporting religious institutions in any manner whatsoever. Nobody in the book ever put his nose inside a church, except on one occasion when Bobby Merrick went to hear his friend, Doctor McLaren, by special and urgent invitation.

This attitude was not intended to convey a feeling of disregard for religious organizations on the part of the author. The Church was conspicuously and willfully omitted from the story for the reason that in almost all of the 'religious' novels the Church serves as the axis on which the plot spins. It was my hope to interest not only the people who rely upon the Church for their moral and spiritual instruction but to suggest a way of life to many others — seldom approached in this manner — who have never looked to the Church for answers to their riddles.

It was with some trepidation that the author adopted this course, for he had spent most of his life in the service of the Church; his closest friends were church people; he hoped they would take no offense; he wondered if they would understand. And they understood.

In spite of the fact that *Magnificent Obsession* had almost nothing to do with the Church, plus the fact that most of the people in the novel were distinctly worldly, and some were addicted to debatable habits, and a few were shockingly profane, it was the clergy of America and the British Empire who carried that novel to success.

They may have wished that it contained fewer cuss-words and cocktails, but they had the sportsmanship to overlook the frailties it admitted and approve the faith it upheld. It was well worth the bother of writing a novel — just to find that out.

Facsimile of the first page of the  
Hudson Journal

Ras Iosdrom jin u edren  
Leyuy red w Adom N y u  
preede u N C Medor Esorns  
w Honah E Ets blett u Aig cird  
Hau yo w Ratibo yua eloh u  
edhso Mohra ets w R G Toosi  
Mr Aoe u iht PS eat yron w  
Front I icpen lb. u Odig henibr  
ile w M D Pansop oed u Acliang  
mree w

## Translation

READER I CONSIDER YOU MY FRIEND AND COMMEND  
YOUR PERSEVERANCE HAVING ACHIEVED THE ABIL-  
ITY TO READ THIS BOOK YOU HAVE ALSO THE RIGHT  
TO POSSESS IT MY REASONS FOR DOING THIS IN  
CIPHER WILL BE MADE PLAIN AS YOU PROCEED

# Doctor Hudson's Secret Journal

*(Decoded and typed by Robert Merrick,  
assisted by Nancy Ashford.)*

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BRIGHTWOOD HOSPITAL,  
DETROIT, MICHIGAN

*October sixth, 1913, 11 P.M.*

**T**HIS has been an eventful day. We formally opened our new hospital this afternoon. The city's medical profession was ably represented and many of our well-to-do philanthropists came for tea and a tour of inspection.

Everybody commented on our astounding luck in disposing of the shabby old building in Cadillac Square for a quarter of a million. Lucky, they said, that our site had been chosen for the new skyscraping office building. And what a lucky dog I was, added the mayor, that this exquisitely landscaped four-acre tract came onto the market just as we had begun to look for a new location.

I nodded an appreciative assent to all of these pleasant comments on my good luck, but felt rather traitorous; for

it wasn't luck. Nothing that has happened to me since June of 1905 could be properly called luck. I am in the grip of something that I don't understand; but, whatever it is, there's nothing capricious about it.

But if I had blurted out some such remark to the mayor or good old Mrs. Arlington or Nick Merrick, there would have been a lot of explaining to do (or dodge) so I cheerfully agreed with them that I was lucky. Had I told them the whole story about our acquirement of the new hospital, they would have thought me stark mad.

Billy Werner called up from New York, about four, to offer congratulations and regret he could not be here. He said, 'We're square now, Doc, except for the interest on that loan.' And I said, 'Don't ever try to pay that back, Billy. It might upset the apple-cart.'

Frequently, during these past few years, I have fairly burned with desire to confide in someone. The weight of my secrets has been almost crushing at times. But I have this load to carry alone as long as I live. The strange events which have come to pass through my private investments do not permit of an airing: their good results might be jeopardized. I know a few other people whom I suspect of bearing the same sort of burden, but we can't discuss it. I often wonder if it is not more difficult to suppress a great exaltation than to conceal a secret sorrow.

An hour ago, Nancy Ashford paused at my office door to say good night. She was drooping a little with fatigue from the day's unusual excitements.

'Well,' she said, wearily, 'you have put over a great project.'

I wanted to invite her in and tell her how we got this new hospital. It wouldn't have taken very long. She knows the beginning of the story. I needed only to say,

'Nancy, do you remember the woman we had with us for six months, the one with the broken neck?'

And Nancy would have replied, 'Of course — Mrs. Werner — and her husband was sore about the bills.'

I would have gone on from there. Mrs. Werner had had the best room in the hospital and a deal of extra attention, much of which was unnecessary but expensive. Everybody assumed that the Werners were wealthy. He had a big store downtown, and they lived in a beautiful home. There was a rumor that they were extravagant. She was always traveling about, and he was reputed a gambler.

It wasn't my job to supervise hospital statements, but Werner's must have been pretty high. When he was billed for the surgery, the amount was not excessive, but it was in the same general bracket with the other expenses of his wife's illness. I was not informed, until some time afterwards, that when he paid the bill he made quite a scene, protesting that he had been overcharged.

About that time there was a story afloat about town that Werner was in serious straits financially. He had offended the president of his bank and had been unreasonably cocky with almost everybody else. He had no one to turn to in his emergency. Perhaps his irascibility, in his dealings with us, was all of a piece with his other blunders. But — once upon a time he had been able to build up a fine business. Something had happened to him. He needed to be rehabilitated.

One morning, in *The Free Press*, I noticed a conspicuous advertisement of Werner's home for sale at a cruel sacrifice. On impulse, I went down to his office immediately. He was reluctant to see me and greeted me with a glum grunt and a surly scowl. I told him I had come to lend him twenty thousand — the amount he had asked for his



house. He could put that into his business, and perhaps save his home. He was suspicious, and wanted to know what rate of interest I expected. I said I didn't want any interest because I intended to use it for another purpose. He asked me if I was feeling well, and brought me a drink of water.

Of course, that small loan wouldn't have been a drop in his dry bucket, considered as mere dollars and cents. But the fact that I had volunteered to let him have it when he was all but on the rocks, and it seemed like pouring so much money into a rat-hole — and he knew that I knew it — had the effect of a shot of strychnine.

He paced up and down the room, for a minute or two, and then snapped out, 'Thanks, Doc. You'll not regret it.'

'Not if you keep it a secret,' I replied. 'This must not be told.'

I made no effort to keep track of his activities but it was evident that Werner had gone at it again with tremendous energy. Perhaps he plunged recklessly. I do not know the details of that story. But soon he was enlarging his store and in command of his mercantile field. Three years after that, he organized the company that put up the new office building. Because he had conceived the project, his board of directors deferred to his judgment in many matters including the selection of a site. He urged the purchase of our old hospital.

So — that's the way we got the new hospital. But I couldn't recite any of this even to Nancy, who would have been stirred and mystified by the story. I can hear the way she would have murmured, 'Well — of all things!'

I did not detain her. I simply smiled, nodded, and told her to go to bed; that she had earned a good night's rest.