

The Eleventh Virgin

Part II, Chapter III =====

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Summary: (DDLW #877).

CHAPTER III.

Everyone in the radical movement had gone to jail at some time or another for at least a few days, if not a few years. June had not yet had that experience, but she had heard many talk of it.

There were the eleven radicals living in a single tax colony in Delaware who had come into conflict with one of the old Delaware Blue Laws which read "Thou shalt indulge in no worldly amusement on the Sabbath."

A number of anarchist, as well as socialists and single taxers were living in the colony at the time. At a meeting of the socialist local a feud was begun between the anarchists and the socialists because the latter refused to allow one of the most insistent of the former to hold the floor. He had been in the habit of attending every meeting and pestering the members of the local with long speeches until they felt that they could no longer endure it. In a less civilized community, they would have thrown him out bodily or given him a thrashing on his way to the meeting-room to teach him better manners. A long argument was held as to whether they should use force to rid themselves of the nuisance. Deciding that it would savor of anarchy, they asked the help of the police and had their brother radical (although they did not consider him as such) arrested for disturbing the peace. For the sake of principle he refused to pay the fine imposed upon him and served three days in jail.

The result was a well planned revenge. With the aid of a lawyer (not an anarchist, one would suppose) he unearthed the aforementioned blue law and insisted that the baseball nine and tennis players of the colony, most of whom were members of the socialist local, be arrested for playing on Sunday.

They were fined thirteen dollars and fifty cents each and not to be outdone by the anarchist in the way of principle, they also declared themselves in favor of jail. In a spirit of retaliation, and merely to keep up the good work, they in turn threatened the Wilmington Golf Club which was made up of prosperous business men and even drove them from the links. For a while there was no more outdoor amusement on the Sabbath.

Because one of the eleven radicals arrested was the son of the man who had started the colony, another a well-known author who had made a fortune from his socialistic novels, the case received a good deal of attention in the newspapers. Somehow or other the anarchist who started the comedy was suppressed. Perhaps the socialists forgot their beliefs and became anarchists for a while. At any rate, all that the papers knew of the case was that the Wilmington authorities had swooped suddenly down upon the eleven members of the colony and on the most ridiculous pretext had arrested them. To all

appearances, it was a case of plain persecution and the socialists made much of it. The author derived all the benefit possible from the publicity and ten years later when the case was forgotten by all but those who had played a part in it, he revived it in a lengthy work dealing mainly with his own persecutions. And somehow the truth never leaked out, perhaps because the eleven who were persecuted forgot what the truth was.

Practically all the cases of short sentences that June knew of had an element of humor in them. It is unfortunate, but true, that the more seriously devoted to a cause the victims were, the less comic the situation looked to them.

June had heard of another case, that of a young radical who was arrested for playing marbles on the Mall of Boston Common. The small boys who had enticed him into the game were chased, but he, due to the fact that he came from a good family and should have known better, was arraigned in court. Unfortunately he took this opportunity—as many radicals do—to make a speech on freedom in general but was suppressed in the middle of the first paragraph and sent to jail for a day.

And then Billy Burton came along with her experience. She sauntered into the basement café where June was sitting with Ivan who had a night off and joining them, ordered a tall mint julep. She was looking as bedraggled as usual and her brightly rouged lips only served to accentuate the pallor of her sharp-featured little face.

“What in the world have you been doing to yourself?” Ivan asked her. “You look like the devil. You look as though you were full of dope.” It was usual with Ivan to be almost tactlessly frank with his friends.

“Just trying to be decadent, that’s all,” June told her. “There’s a sort of wave of it going through the crowd. If you hear anybody murmuring about cats that crouch on pianos and howl with hoarse sweet voices like women, don’t be alarmed. They’re only quoting Baudelaire. But where in the world have you been for the last month that you don’t know the local gossip? You’re usually the purveyor of it.”

“If you read the papers instead of ‘Les Fleurs du Mal’ you’d know where she’s been,” Ivan reproved his companion. “Miss Billy Barton has turned suffragette and has been in jail for the last thirty days in Washington. What’s got into you Billy?”

“I’m not going in for causes, don’t worry. I got hard up, that’s all. Ejected from my studio, pay for drawings delayed, and I was sick of being broke. I met one of the suffragists who was on her way down to Washington to go to jail and went along, That’s all.”

“You’re just trying to make a good story of it,” Ivan scoffed. “That wasn’t the reason you went. Are you really going in for suffrage?”

“The truth,” Billy insisted, finishing her mint julep and ordering a cocktail. “But do you know, now that I’ve been in jail and with those suffragists for a month, I’m really enthusiastic about it. They’ve created such a stir down in Washington that I’m sure they’ll get what they want. I wouldn’t use a vote if I had one, but that doesn’t keep me from joining them when they’re making such a good fight. I approve of violence, not necessarily as undignified as that of England. But it

is violence just the same when a crowd of women get arrested for picketing in front of the White House and sent to jail. And the way they've kept at it for the last year! You can't help but admire their persistence."

She beamed earnestly at them as she finished her cocktail and ordered a high-ball.

"For goodness sake," Ivan cried, "stop mixing drinks. Do you want to get sick and messy? You know I won't take care of females who haven't any sense in that way. If you want to get gently exhilarated take another cocktail, the same kind you had before."

"Lea' me alone," Billy mumbled with a straw between her lips. "I've dreamt of these drinks for the last thirty days and I must take the train and go back to Washington again tonight. They're going to have another demonstration tomorrow and I can't get a check for those drawings until after they're published."

Both Ivan and June offered to lend Billy whatever they had with them. "No, thanks," she said sweetly, "you know I just want to go. Why don't you go with me," she turned to June. "You're at a loose end now that the 'Flame' has been stopped. You might as well employ your time in doing something useful. You've served radicals of all kinds so why not be a suffragist for a time?" June considered the idea seriously. "I don't see why I shouldn't go. I hate not to be working and I don't see what there is I can do just now. There isn't a job in sight and Daniel has finally managed to get in the service and is going abroad and Kenneth is working for the capitalist press and Hugh is busy with his book Why not?" And at a remark from Ivan, "If you can't do anything but protest this evening, you'd better go join that poker game that I lured you away from. Billy and I can then discuss jail in peace."

But Ivan preferred to hear Billy's story of her experiences and refused to leave them and the evening ended with his escorting the two of them to the train at the Pennsylvania station.

"All you need is a change of clothing while you're waiting to get into jail and some books to read when you get there," Billy said, so there was no packing to do. "And don't take anything valuable because it will only be stolen or spoiled before you get out. They're getting more and more exasperated with the prisoners and they're liable to try some rough stuff."

After all, it was really for the sake of a cause that June decided to go with Billy on her second expedition.

"What the suffragists are going to do this time, is strike for the rights of political prisoners," Billy had told her. "You see up to this time the women have just stood at the gates of the White House and when they were arrested and tried for disorderly conduct, they've gone to the workhouse—not the jail exactly—and worked out their sentences. They've had to give up their own clothes and wear prison dresses, eat the filthy food that is provided by the authorities and sometimes they were allowed to have books and sometimes they weren't. And sometimes they got their mail and sometimes they didn't. What they want to fight for is the right to have the privileges that are granted to political prisoners in every country in Europe—to keep their own clothes, not to have to work, the

right to buy food and see their own doctors and lawyers and to have books and papers.”

“I think,” Ivan agreed with her warmly, “that that’s a cause that’s worth fighting for. It will be the first time in the history of America that political prisoners have fought for their rights and it’s about time.”

“Especially since all these promiscuous arrests have been made,” June chimed in enthusiastically. “This is a time for fighting and here’s the chance for me. I’ve been feeling rotten to be out of it when all my friends are risking arrest for conscientious objection and for writing and working for radical magazines and publications. I’ll go. Not for suffrage exactly, but for the rights of political prisoners of the United States.”

It was to be a bigger demonstration than any other which had been made up to this time by the suffragists in Washington. When June arrived there for the second time that year, she found that thirty-five women had responded to the organization’s call for picketers and represented many states in the union.

New York, as would be expected, was more represented than the others. There was Mrs. Bolton, the wife of a surgeon in one of New York’s largest hospitals. A young Russian Jewess came from the East Side, leaving her husband behind her to take care of her eight month old baby. And there were Billy and June.

Chicago was represented by a woman aviator and doctor who practiced neither one nor the other of her professions. Her machine was held because she could not afford to pay a repair bill, and she had been concerned in a scandal in Chicago which led her to give up her practice and come to the east. (After the suffrage disturbances were over she worked as a street-car conductor and still later as a munition maker.)

Mrs. Prindiville, sixty years old, was the dignified representative of an old Philadelphia family.

Eleanor Arnold came from one of the few stubborn families on Beacon Hill in Boston, who refused to move from their traditional home to Back Bay. June deduced from later conversation with her that the real reason she came to Washington and to jail was to worry her father and mother who refused to allow her to marry a young anarchist, whom she had met at a radical club on Ashburton Place.

Two young Christian Scientists came from California and their religious fervor was only exceeded by their enthusiasm for suffrage. One of them was about to be married to a soldier who expected to be sent to France at any moment. But she had postponed her wedding in order that she might give her full attention to the suffrage work.

Old Mrs. Angell represented Florida and newspapers made much of the fact that she was eighty-six years old. She had been working for suffrage all her life and when she learned of what seemed to her a quicker way of attaining her end, she took the first train to Washington. The organization accepted her gladly. She was the most effective figure in the demonstration.

The youngest demonstrator was eighteen, a slim thing just out of school who looked four years younger than she was. Her sister was one of the leaders of the party. She was a quiet, gentle little creature and it was infinitely pathetic

to think of her being locked in a cold "solitary" cell. She looked even more pathetic and young photographed.

And middle-aged maiden ladies and straight-backed school teachers completed the group.

After you had met the two women who were at the head of the movement it was easy to see why it was so many women clung to the cause and made a life work of it. They merely reflected the religious zeal which was undercurrent in the entire organization.

June had no opportunity to meet the head of the party. Jane Worth was already in jail—had already served two months of her sentence of six months and was now with one companion hunger-striking for the rights of political prisoners. The thirty-five women who were about to picket burned to join her, and when it was suggested to them that they hunger strike too, all agreed and ate the cakes of chocolate which they had been accumulating to eke out their prison fare. Jane Worth was a short, brown-eyed young woman of the south who had served her apprenticeship to the suffrage cause with her assistant, Helen Drummond, in London. Both had served jail sentences there and had returned to start a militant party in America.

There was something compelling about Miss Worth's eyes. It was said around headquarters that she could make a fractious devotee do anything she wished by just looking at her, backing up her steady gaze by a soft argument in a most ladylike tone of voice. June thought at first that these remarks arose from admiration, but the more she saw of the suffragists, the more she realized that it was something more than just admiration in the attitude of her followers towards her. There was a quality of blind adoration.

There was nothing militant about her appearance. On the other hand, her assistant Grace Drummond, tall, deep-chested, red-haired and vigorous, brought with her the atmosphere of combat. She was a type that appealed to June far more than little Miss Worth with her quietly compelling and assured eyes.

There was a story about her which some English friend must have repeated, for she never talked about herself, of a suffrage adventure which she had while she was in London.

She had been appointed by the suffragists as one having more than woman's usual share of poise, to smuggle herself into a reception given to members of Parliament and their guests and confront Lloyd George and make a speech. A thing which seemed at first thought impossible to do. In the first place it would be difficult to get into the reception as all the doors and windows were guarded against any outbreak of the suffragists. Once in, however, it would be easy enough to confront Lloyd George. The problem then would be to get him to listen to a speech. It wasn't to be thought that he would stand still and courteously listen to a suffrage appeal.

But Grace Drummond carried out the plan successfully. Enlisting the aid of a tall, broad-shouldered young man, and borrowing the elegant equipage which the people who attend such functions have at their disposal, she dressed in full evening costume and sailed up to the door like a queen. Tickets were expected by the doorkeeper and her companion turned to her.

“Where are the tickets?”

She started to open her bag and then desisted. “But I expressly said that I had left them in your dressing-room” in evident but well-bred irritation.

She lifted her haughty eyebrows, he shrugged, looked at the doorkeeper and smiled as a patient husband will do, and the doorkeeper allowed them to pass. What followed took more courage. In the midst of the reception when all the guests had arrived, Miss Drummond went quietly up to Lloyd George while her companion took his station directly behind the minister. When she began her little speech which she had been repeating frantically all the way in the cab, the strong young man seized the arms of Lloyd George from behind and held him fast. The minister couldn’t release himself from the iron grip and it would have been most undignified to wriggle. So he stood and listened to what Miss Drummond had to say. Her remarks were short and swift and to the point and no one had time to interfere or do more than stand thunder-struck until the little scene was over. Then miraculously enough, the two were able to get away and the end of the story was that she sat in the cab and wept on the way back to the suffrage headquarters.

This was the woman who was to head the line of picketers and join Miss Worth in jail. Not that the headquarters were to be left without control during the thirty days or six months that the women were in prison. Many were there to carry out the directions and work of the militant party.

The parade began at the close of the late fall day, just at the time when the workers in the government buildings were on their way home from work. It was expected by both police and outsiders that the parade would take place, so the little park across from the White House was crowded with spectators, and the workers did not go directly home, but stood around and waited for the excitement. Many policemen held back the crowd and kept the road clear for the suffragists.

They started out, two by two, with colored ribbons of purple and gold across the bosoms of their dresses and banners in their hands. June was reminded as she walked in the slow and stately procession of the man at the head of the choir in the Episcopalian service who carried the cross. There was a religious flavor about the silent proceeding and a holy light shone on the faces of the suffragists. They forgot at that time the various reasons for joining the demonstration (June felt without doubt that there were various reasons besides that of suffrage, save perhaps in the case of Helen Drummond and those who had been working for the cause for years.)

To get to the White House gates you had to walk half-way round the little park, and as the procession moved forward in groups of six, the bystanders grew in number. There were old women, who cheered, young women whose faces glowed or were apathetic. Men were generally indignant, except perhaps the newspaper reporters, and they were enthusiastic because the suffragists were providing them with so many good stories. Some men shouted, “Shame! In wartime too! Hasn’t the president enough to bother him?” and others hissed. By the time the third contingent reached the gates and took their stand there, small boys were jeering and trying to throw stones and groups of sailors and soldiers

had come to the front of the crowd and were trying to wrest the banners from the hands of the prisoners.

The police had been very busy. It was all they could do to keep back the crowd and the little boys slipped between their legs and were unmanageable. But at the sight of the first group of suffragists, patrol wagons had been called for and when June took her place and began wrestling for her banner with a red-faced young sailor, the first one came clanging up the street, pushing its way through the crowd. One by one, the suffragists were passed along a line of policemen to the curb and assisted into the wagon. Their banners would have taken up too much room, so they were piled on the roof. Then the wagon clanged its way out of the crowd and speeded through the streets of Washington to the Central Station, making as much of a demonstration owing to the banners on top of the car, as the parade had been.

All that was required of the women at the police station were their names and addresses and then they were released. Bail had already been provided and trial was set for the following morning at ten o'clock. But the next morning, the judge refused to do anything but pronounce them guilty and postpone sentence. "He's afraid to sentence all of us at once," the suffragists said triumphantly. "We are too much for him!" And they picketed again that afternoon with the same result. Sentence was again postponed.

"We can go on picketing indefinitely," Miss Drummond pointed out, "but that is not what we want. We wish to be sent to jail because in that way more attention is paid to the cause and it's more likely there will be results. We've got to get to jail and hunger strike, otherwise Miss Worth and Miss Britton will be kept there hunger striking indefinitely. People won't be worried much at the idea of two women striking for a cause, but when thirty-five go to jail and start a strike, the United States will have to sit up and take notice."

So there was more picketing that afternoon and when they were asked their names in the police station, they refused to answer or to give bail. The result was that they were sent to a detention home which had no facilities for so many prisoners at once. They slept fifteen in a room which usually held only two and the next morning were again arraigned before the distraught judge.

"Isn't this fun?" Billy whispered to June when all were being sentenced to from fifteen days to six months in the city jail.

What she was alluding to were the speeches which all the middle-aged school teachers took the opportunity of making as they received their sentences. Their attitude was that of their profession and indeed the judge looked like a miserable small boy who knows he is in the wrong but doesn't quite know what to do about it. The same judge had acquitted some of these prisoners when they started their militant tactics and now he had to follow the order of someone higher up and send them to jail. He reminded June of her father, with his patient Southern drawl. He seemed to feel that what he was doing was not what a Southern gentleman should do. But without doubt, the women were, as Mr. Henreddy would say, "ornery."

Both June and Billy were sentenced to a month in jail. Old Mrs. Angell by reason of her years and feebleness was given five days. She stood up bravely

and spoke scathingly to the judge and her little speech was almost the only one which June and Billy didn't snigger at.

Miss Drummond by virtue of being leader of the picketers received six months.

By general consent, the hunger strike started after they had received their sentences. So the scant meal of weak coffee and bread and oatmeal was the last one which they expected until their demands were granted or they were released. Not that they wanted to eat. There was too much excitement around to allow an appetite yet.

For many hours the women had to wait in a little room back of the court and then at four o'clock more things began to happen. Prison wagons were brought, wagons that had only slits along the top for ventilation and were otherwise closed. Two of them sufficed to carry the prisoners to the jail and when they reached that barren institution on the outskirts of the town, backed by a cemetery and surrounded by dreary, bare fields, there was a long halt at the entrance. Evidently there was some hitch in the proceedings. After a low argument at the entrance, an argument which none of the women could hear, the wagons turned away and started off in another direction.

"Well, I'm surprised," Billy's pert little voice broke through the darkness. "They don't seem to want us. We were sentenced to the city jail and I know that there isn't more than one in Washington."

"They're probably taking us out of town to the workhouse," another woman said in a sepulchral voice, for many stories had been told of what the suffrage prisoners suffered at the hands of the violent keeper there. Talking was carried on in whispers until the two wagons reached the station.

It had been completely black in the prison wagons, but when the thirty-five women were ushered by a number of policewomen into a waiting train which rolled out of the station immediately, the lamps along the roads had not yet been lit.

June pressed her face against the window and watched the blue twilight pierced with the bare black shapes of many scrawny trees. Here and there lamps glowed in the farmhouse windows. In the west the sky still held radiance which gradually faded. It was drearily beautiful at that time of night, and all feeling of excitement dropped from the girl. The eager low voices of the suffragists coming through the noise of the wheels jarred upon her. Billy, sitting across from her also gazed silently out of the window.

"Somehow," June told her when they reached the little country station which was their destination, "life and struggle seem very tawdry in the twilight. This bleak countryside makes me feel that I should struggle for my soul instead of my political rights . . . I feel peculiarly small and lonely tonight. I'm glad you're with me, Billy. We must stick together and probably they'll put us in the same cell."

But they weren't cell mates that first ugly night.

There was more waiting after they had been driven from the railroad station to the administration building of the workhouse. There a matron asked them their names and histories, which all refused to give.

Miss Prindiville, the stately representative of the Philadelphia family, was appointed spokesman and announced to the matron that they wished to speak to the superintendent before they were assigned to their cells. The matron sniffed, turned to her knitting and the thirty-five suffragists found chairs for themselves and prepared to wait. It wasn't until ten o'clock that Morrison appeared upon the scene.

He entered the room like a storm cloud, leaving the door open on the large porch outside, from which came the sounds of shuffling feet and expectant coughs.

"We wish to announce a hunger strike unless—" but Miss Prindiville was allowed no further words. Morrison turned to the door and beckoned and immediately the room was filled with men, two of whom seized the elderly lady under the arms and giving her no chance to accompany them voluntarily, lifted her out of the room. As she was pulled backwards through the door, she looked like the stiff figure of a dressmaker's dummy. Billy laughed hysterically and was immediately seized in her turn.

June made an instinctive movement to join her and was grabbed at by Morrison who stood there blazing triumphantly. As he reached his hand towards her she struck at him contemptuously and she had the satisfaction of seeing him start back and swear viciously before she found two men holding her fast by either arm. She had the feeling of being lifted, carried over the porch and along the path, before she felt her feet dragging on firm ground.

"I'm perfectly capable of walking," she told them fiercely. But they held her the more tightly, so she vented her wrath by kicking them on the shins whenever she had the chance.

They passed many white buildings gleaming in the darkness before they entered a bare stone building smelling strongly of steam heat and dampness and antiseptic. There on the other side of the room she saw Billy, sitting very straight on a bench which ran around the room and chatting brightly with her guards who tried hard to remain grim and unsmiling. June retained an antagonistic attitude and when she got up from her bench and started to walk to her friend on the other side of the room, she was pounced upon by not only her own guards but two more and pulled this way and that until she finally found herself at the bench she had set out for. She had little consciousness of struggling, but dimly, through the restraining arms, she heard a suffragist (even in that moment she identified her as one of the school teachers) screaming and futilely trying to pluck off one of her captors, which merely served to make them cling the more. Billy was laughing again, not hysterically but with whole-hearted enjoyment. June was too mad to laugh, but she knew she was grinning, grinning as she had seen David grin as a small boy when he was giving and receiving hard blows, a grin of pure wrath.

And then she was shuffled into a cell and the gate clanged on her and she breathed a sigh of relief.

"My dear child, are you hurt in any way? And isn't this splendid? It's the worst treatment the suffragists have had yet and with all the influential women we've got in here with us, the newspapers won't stand for it. They've been pretty hostile so far, but now they'll have to protest."

And June turned to find Helen Drummond straightening her disordered hair and dress.

"It reminds me of a stiff hockey game," June said, "when the other side plays dirty," and she too straightened her middie and felt tenderly of her arms and legs.

One by one, the suffragists were being led past the cell door and placed in cells along the corridor. Miss Drummond called to each as they passed, asking them if they were all right and trying to find out what had become of all her thirty-four charges.

And while she talked, Morrison stood at the door, his black eyes burning and his grey hair disheveled and threatened her with the straight-jacket, a gag, handcuffs—whatever he could think of. But he received no attention whatever and wrathfully ordered the guard to bring the bracelets and chain her arms high to the door of the cell. Which was done, much to Miss Drummond's satisfaction. "Splendid," she murmured to June, her eyes shining. "It gets worse and worse." She was almost disappointed when an hour later the old guard who had obeyed Morrison's orders, shuffled quietly to their cell and unlocked the cuffs around her numb wrists.

"Got to keep 'em on all night, I'm sorry, Miss," he said. "I call it a shame the way that old brute—" and he went away mumbling to himself.

"Well, child, you'll just have to help me off with my shoes and you'll find two blankets over there in the corner. They're filthy, but we can't sleep without covers in this dampness. Do you suppose we can squeeze up together on that little slab?"

A slab was all it was and obviously meant for only one person. But Miss Drummond and June both being very slim, were able to stretch out on one of the coarse thick blankets which they had spread beneath them and keeping the other one well away from their faces, tried to rest.

And ever after that night, June loved the memory of Helen Drummond, not because she was a suffragist, but because she didn't talk of it at a time when it was quite pardonable to talk of nothing else. It was Conrad's novels and travelling and the spell of the sea which they talked of until they fell asleep which was very shortly, for both had the healthy weariness of youth which enabled the one to sleep in spite of handcuffs and the other in spite of continuous fear of falling off the narrow ledge on which she was poised.

They were awakened by a guard who came to the cell in the early morning to lead Miss Drummond away to what June afterwards learned was a padded cell reserved for delirium tremens patients. Not that any such slight matter could disturb her nerve.

All the long morning, June lay there on her stiff blankets waiting for something to happen, and nothing happened. Guards were stationed at the end of the corridor and when any of the women tried to call to each other, they were immediately silenced harshly. There was a disagreeable feeling of suspense in the air, and the suffragists worn out with the excitement of the day before, remained silent. Through the narrow ventilators at the top of the rear wall of the cell, the sun shone dimly for a time and then disappeared. But there was a

remaining brightness which allowed June to examine her surroundings. It was a small, square stone room with an opening into the corridor which was barred. At night the guards hung blankets from the outside to keep out the light from the electric lamp in the middle of the hall. There was a straw mattress flung in one corner which the two women had not noticed the night before. This June put on the bunk which had been built in one side of the cell and covered with one of her blankets. At that, it was anything but comfortable. There was nothing else in the cell, which was scantily heated by a pipe which ran through one wall. Towards noon, June judged it must be noon because the sun had disappeared from the slit at the back of her cell, the guard came and told her she was allowed to wash and she accompanied him thankfully to a toilet room at the other end of the building. And her oppression lifted for a moment when she saw Billy being led out of her cell at the same time, evidently for the same purpose. There was just time for a few moments whispered conversation while the two guards waited outside the wash-room door. "They've taken all the older women somewhere else," Billy told her "and there's just six of the youngest left here. These are the punishment cells and I guess they think we can stand it better than the old ladies." "We'll probably all get pneumonia," June said cheerfully. "This is worse than I thought it could possibly be. I'm aching with the cold and starving besides. How would you like to have a big steak from Brown's Chop House?" "Shut up, for goodness' sake. Look, I slipped a couple of pencils in my shoe and some paper down the front of my dress. I've been drawing cartoons of Morrison all morning. If I only had some pins or something, I'd hang them on the wall for his approval when he makes his rounds." June accepted her friend's offer to share the paper and take one of the pencils. "I've gone through every pocket I have and only found a nail file and three handkerchiefs and I've been driven to making rag dolls as I did in school when I was bored to death." "I'm two cells away from you," Billy said. "Get close to your door and holler to me whenever you want to. I'm not afraid of their old gags." There was no time for more than this for the guards were indelicately pounding at the door, and Billy just as indelicately irritating them by calling "come in," which they could not do with the door locked. However, the girls thought it best to obey, fearing that the two men would vent their anger on the others when they were brought to wash, and went back quietly to their cells. Somehow the afternoon passed and twilight fell, and the lights in the corridor were lit and shut out by blankets hung at the bars. And surprisingly enough, June fell asleep immediately, worn out by hunger and the aftermath of excitement and slept until late the following morning. She woke cheerfully to the sound of Billy singing at the top of her lungs. She had no voice and evidently little sentiment, for the song was one of the Indian Love Lyrics, "Less than the dust beneath thy chariot wheels." "Stop that noise," one of the guards bawled.

“Don’t you like it?” she asked them gently. “Maybe this one is better,” and she warbled a popular tune. But as soon as the men ceased to protest, she seemed to lose interest in music and there was silence again.

June had no opportunity to talk to her friend when they went to wash that morning. The prisoners were taken out one by one and locked in their cells before the next one’s return came in order that they might not pass in the corridor.

At noon the prisoners were offered milk and toast, but refused to touch what was brought to them. An hour later it was taken away and the ceremony was repeated that night. The guards did not bring the same milk and toast that had been refused that noon. No, it was piping hot and gave forth a most delicate odor through the damp smelliness of the cell. It was a refinement of torture.

“It’s a great temptation,” one of the girls called out, “but it’s much easier when you remember that if we once start to eat, we’ll go back immediately to prison fare and the work room. Remember the worms in the oatmeal!” Evidently she was one of those who had served sentence before.

And the third day of the hunger strike ended, drearily.

The vague greyness all about her became unspeakably depressing to June. The bar of gold which the sun left on the ceiling every morning for a short hour taunted her; and late in the afternoon when the cells were dim and the lights in the corridor were not yet lit, a heart-breaking conviction of the ugliness and futility of life came over her so that she could not cry, but only lie there in blank-eyed misery.

She lost all feeling of her own identity. She was no longer June Henreddy who regarded the obstacles of life as things to be met with a lifted chin and a smile. She could not throw back her head and shrug her shoulders and cast pain from her. A dull weight of it had descended upon her, the weight of the sorrow of all the world.

She thought of the little street girls she had known and talked and laughed with at Miss Prince’s home. She thought of the months they had sat in cells and ugly work rooms of prisons before they were sent to Miss Prince. What was there to look back on in life and what was there to look forward to?

She remembered the stories she had heard before she came to the work-house of how Morrison had treated the prisoners handed over to him. The prison was one of the most modern. It was built on the cottage plan and men and women worked in the fields or sat at machines and sewed. Yet here were these solitary confinement cells, more bleak and barbarous than she could have imagined such cells could be. And there were stories of prisoners left in them for six months at a time. Six months! And thirty days stretched out before her interminable in their length. She would be utterly crushed by misery before she was released. There were stories too of a whipping-post, and bloodhounds wandering through the grounds to terrorize the prisoners. These things had been sworn to before a notary public by a former matron of the work-house and the superintendent had not taken the trouble to deny them.

And June lay there, passively enduring, after forcing her way into jail with thirty-seven other women—all in order that the papers might give the cause

publicity and make the public think about suffrage. She could not realize what good suffrage would do when it came. Prisons had been undergoing a process of reform for a good many years and they would continue to be reformed until all prisons were abolished. Then Miss Prince's dream would come true.

The ultimate idea of the women who were at the head of the Birth Control Movement was the same. They alleviated conditions by starting a clinic and teaching women how to limit their families to the number they could afford to care for.

But many of the women who belonged to the suffrage party didn't believe in birth control, women in the birth control movement sniffed at the militant tactics of the suffragists, and both thought that Miss Prince's work to help street women futile. While Miss Prince in turn disapproved of both birth control and militant suffrage and was in favor of the war. And pacifist women sniffed at the others. If they would only work together! But each group worked for its own end and ignored all others when they were not in active opposition to them.

The war entered too in June's survey of life. Most women were blindly patriotic and accepted the idea of war without knowing what war was. Everybody agreed that wars must end but as long as women who did none of the fighting entered into the idea of war with more than masculine enthusiasm, fighting would go on forever.

What was needed was a radical party whose platform would include such planks as birth control, pacifism, suffrage. You might as well indulge in the dreams of the Utopians and ignore the present day.

Meanwhile the incomplete and sullen silence of the place was broken by the far-off squealing of pigs at their evening meal, by the twitter of a sparrow just outside the ventilator, an occasional shuffle from a cell along the corridor as someone turned on her straw mattress.

These suppressed sounds tortured June. But worst of all were the hurrying footsteps. They were never moderate or leisurely or happy or complacent. Even the slowest of them hurried in a drugged sort of way.

If she could only detach them from the crowding thoughts of her mind. If she could only set them apart for what they were as she could the twitter of a bird. But do what she would they aroused a frantic feeling. A rush of thought, of expectancy came with them. She knew that something was about to happen; she hoped with all her heart that something would happen. And then nothing happened.

She had not realized before how grey footsteps could be. When she went to the bars of the cell to ask the guard for a glass of water she suddenly realized that her footsteps were as grey as his.

That night heavy dreams came upon her. She could remember few of them afterward, but there was one that aroused her trembling with perspiration and shaking all over. She had been in a theatre where a benefit performance was about to be given to a crowd of little children from a house of correction. They filled the main floor and the balcony and were chatteringly expectant. No one tried to keep them quiet and it was an ominous leniency.

When the actors came on and the play began a dread silence came on the young

audience and whimperings of fear. For the players wore frightful death masks and were crippled and gruesome in body. One little child in the balcony gave a sudden shriek as he leaned over the railing and then as suddenly died. His limp body hurtled down on the children below and June's horror awakened her.

The cry seemed to ring in her ears still and the darkness fell against her so oppressively that she felt she could push it away with her hands.

There were other nightmares which came to her those nights of the hunger strike. One she had several times in her childhood and her mother had always come to her bedside to hold her hand until she fell asleep again. Somewhere, it seemed, someone was making cake batter in a huge bowl and the beating began far off in the distance and became louder and louder until she was totally surrounded by the hideous clamor and wrested herself from sleep.

Harder to shake from her was the feeling which came to her as she was about to drop into a doze. She felt herself swelling larger and larger and nothing would dispel the impression until she sat straight up in bed and pinched at herself to keep awake.

She lay and sobbed finally at the futility of trying either to sleep or to remain awake.

For five days the toast and warm milk was brought to the cell three times a day, and three times a day it was taken away. If you drank all the hot water you could when you were led tottering to the wash-room at the end of the corridor and then clamored all the rest of the day for more hot water, you could get rid of the empty feeling. The hunger wasn't so bad, it was the dimness and the cold. One of the Christian Scientists asked the guard for a Bible and Bibles were passed around to all of them.

"Know the truth, Betty dear," one of them called out to her sister and the other one said, "Yes, I'm reading the ninety-first psalm."

June tried to memorize it but the verses became strangely jumbled. Occasionally Billy piped out at her and sometimes she sang. June blessed her.

The sixth day came with hurrying footsteps and this time something happened. The six girls who remained in the punishment cells received visits from no less than three doctors and later in the day were taken out into the cool, crisp autumn day where they could see the sun setting over the woods at one side of the colony.

Their new quarters were in the hospital building where the rest of the women had been confined and owing to lack of room, two were put in each narrow room. Billy and June were together, and there were no nightmares that night. Whenever they pleased they were allowed out of their rooms by the matron who sat sewing in the warm hall and two by two they could go down to the shower room at the end of the hall and bathe and drink all the water they wished.

And the next day the strike was broken by the announcement that in a few days they would be transferred to the jail where they should have been received in the first place. Their clothes were returned to them and the chubby-faced matron and white-clad interne tried to provide them all with books and magazines.

The remaining days were marked by delicious but hardly satisfying

meals of milk, toast and finally a chicken dinner. Then the thirty-five prisoners were piled into touring cars and driven to Washington through the invigorating air with a smell of snow in it. It was the first week in November and the woods still glowed in spots and the sun was warm.

"The Washington jail is a joke" said Billy. "In fact the whole thing is a joke, now that we've got out of those damnable punishment cells. Notice the protesting way they accept us when we came this afternoon?"

"They've certainly granted our demands to be treated as political prisoners," June agreed, "even though they haven't formally announced the fact. I've been put on a diet of four eggs and a quart of milk a day and given permission to buy all the fruit I want. And this morning I received a package of letters from my admirers, all unopened and I have four books to read."

The cell that had been assigned to the two—or rather which they had chosen for themselves, for they had been turned loose in the female section and allowed to choose from three tiers of cells—was on the top tier and furthest from the matron's prying eye. There was more air there, too, for the high windows which stretched from the first to the third tier were kept open at the top by the request of the suffragists, a request which was granted after previous skirmishes. The first prisoners who had come to the Washington jail had broken the windows with whatever there was at hand to throw when the matron refused to keep them open. Also they had been kept locked in their cells while the present thirty-five were allowed freedom to wander around the female quarters from eight o'clock in the morning until eight at night. Then the gates clanged and the lights went out and all you could do was lie in bed and talk.

On the other side of the female quarter were the cells for colored prisoners, most of whom worked around the jail. There were three girls awaiting trial for murder and many who had been arrested for disorderly conduct and drunkenness. They kept up their chatter after eight o'clock at night and giggled and sang and quarreled, laughing at the matron who puffed up and down the steps to quiet them.

Before the gates were closed and the work for the day was over there were card games on the third tier while one ducky kept a look-out for the matron; and shimmy dances up and down the corridor while a row of black faces gleamed along the line and hands beat time to the steps of the dancers.

Saturday night the six tubs at the end of the corridor—the suffragists could not bathe because the same tubs were used by the colored girls—were filled again and again and there was a steady tumult while the girls scrubbed and primped and bound their hair down around their heads in order that it would be straight for the next day.

For Sunday was the one day in the entire week that they caught a glimpse of a man. There were two services held during the day, and both times, the two balconies on either side of the auditorium were filled. Hundreds joined in the melancholy hymns. The men and women were separated by the width of the little hall, but during the two hours of worship they sat there casting hungry eyes at each other. June saw sex and felt it at its crudest and was stirred by it, yet somehow disgusted that the excitement should affect her.

And that night the dances of the colored girls were wilder than usual and they quarreled more viciously than ever, before the three tiers of cells were finally silent.

The days passed, each one like the other. Billy drew pictures of the colored girls dancing in their shifts, and June as she appeared when descending from her upper bunk in the morning. June read "Fortitude" by Walpole and somehow regained the personal consciousness which she had lost at the work-house. Life ceased to seem so futile and all endeavor regained a semblance of nobility.

"I begin to feel as though it were about time I did something," she told Billy.

"What do you mean 'do something'?" Billy asked, looking up from the free verse poem she was writing to a former lover. It was her twelfth and she said she was going to write a book of them.

"Sitting in the solitary confinement cell for five days has made me think—made me want to perform some useful labor instead of frittering away my time as I have been doing. I want to really and honestly work." (June had a feeling that split infinitives were emphatic and used them as writers do italics.)

"I should say you have been working," her friend assured her. "Goodness, I've never held down a regular job in my whole life and I can't really consider my drawing useful in the world of art."

"Very few people we know do anything useful except those who write good books and they are few. I can't think of more than two or three artists who are serious in their work and as for newspaper reporters, they are the most useless creatures in the world. They get a lot of fun out of life, but they don't advance themselves or develop much.

"I'd feel as though I were of some use in the world if I believed in socialism or if I thought by working for the birth control league or suffragists I could benefit the world in some way. But I don't feel that any of these things are solutions and if I worked among these people with their single-track minds, I'd go crazy. I'm ignorant and I feel that all these people with their causes are one-sided. I either want to retire from the world and study for the sake of acquiring wisdom or else I want to do something simple and useful."

"I shall throw myself screaming against the bars unless you stop talking of the simple and useful life," Billy complained and June shut up.

But some yeast of revolt was in her and it continued to work, even after Winkham, the warden, came into their midst on the sixteenth day and waved a release in their faces.

"A pardon signed by the president," he cried joyfully. "Now you'll all be home to eat Thanksgiving dinners," for he was a jolly soul.

"But we don't wish a pardon," Miss Drummond said stonily. "We have committed no crime to be pardoned for."

"Just the same, out you go," and the little fat man almost danced in his glee. "If you don't go out, I'll have you all put out, so better pack up your things."

That was how the jail experience ended and when it was over June and Billy hastened to the best restaurant in town and resumed smoking cigarettes which somehow had the flavor of meringue.

“I can’t feel that I have done a very useful thing by going to jail for sixteen days,” she complained. “And when suffrage comes I won’t feel as though I had been instrumental in making it come. We are bound to have it sooner or later and how the government is going to be anything more than irritated by the disturbance of the militant party when it has an impressive war on its hands is more than I can see.”

“At any rate this is the best roast duck I have ever tasted,” Billy comforted her, “and we leave to-night for New York.”

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