

The Eleventh Virgin

Dorothy Day

Part Two, Chapter 1

Mother Grace was proud of her daughter with her restless brain in spite of the crudities of her adolescence. Cigarettes and her freedom of speech were not so objectionable as her religious pose, nor indeed as that phase which comes to all youth when they feel that they are misunderstood.

Mother Grace's pride was not that of a mother whose egotism is satisfied that she has produced an intelligent continuation of herself.

"No, you recognize me as an individual," her daughter pointed out in what Mother Grace had come to term as one of her frequent harangues. "Most mothers refuse to recognize their children as individuals with minds and aims of their own. Usually the instinct of motherhood is merely a desire to perpetuate themselves or their husbands. At least women act that way. And when their children are born they say, 'this is mine,' or 'this is my husband's child,' and they don't recognize their children's rights at all.

"Now the fact that you gave birth to me, Mother, I shall regard merely as an incident. If you hadn't done it, somebody else would. So we won't let the mother and daughter relationship stand between us in our friendship. Just the same, there are ties of blood, of course and I shall always cling to you just as I cling to Adele. I don't expect her to exert any authority over me and I don't expect you to. But you can give me advice of course, because you are older and more sensible than I. But you needn't ever expect me to follow it, or get mad if I don't. If I make mistakes by not taking it, I'll have to suffer for it."

"And so shall I," added Mother Grace mentally, for after all she knew what it was to be a mother.

All this was rather irritating to her at first but after thinking it over, she decided it was part of June's new-found ability to reason, to flaunt her ideas in her mother's face. And further reflection showed her that it was the flaunting of them and not the ideas themselves to which she objected.

On the occasion when her mother did venture to remonstrate—"Oh, June, don't be such a prig!" her daughter disarmed her by an immediate acceptance of the word.

“How can I help but be, when you and Adele insist on thinking differently about human relations?”

Yes, she was a prig, she thought, and the real reason for it was her ever changing and modifying ideas.

Day by day they twisted into new shapes, and while she held them she must needs state them with all earnestness and conviction. And with all the more conviction because in so short a time another thought would come, bringing doubts.

Why couldn't she formulate a satisfactory program for life and stick to it? Why couldn't she reach some conclusion about human relations and then hold it?

If she could only see clearly as her father obviously did, distinguishing exactly between right and wrong, good and bad.

There was Regina for instance. She knew exactly what a good woman was and what a bad one. Not that she would ever condemn what she considered a bad one. She prided herself too much on her tolerance. She knew too, exactly what her principles would allow her to do, in her relations with men, present and future.

When June stopped to think about it, she realized she was capable of doing anything—capable of following her desires, wherever they led, and justifying herself for so doing. And whether her reason would be treacherous in this justification she did not know.

There are certain stock situations in one type of novel which the very young girl reads. June and her friends at the age of thirteen had often discussed them with mingled and pleasurable emotions. Why the words blush and bride were always associated. What a wedding night felt like. Why a wife always hid her face in her husband's breast and dilly-dallied about telling it when she was going to have a baby. Why be so reticent about it, anyway? All the world gave birth.

June had decided upon the way she would act. She'd face her husband triumphantly across the breakfast table and announce: “I'm going to have a baby!” And if she acted immodestly proud, it would be with the consciousness that she was taking part in a grand movement. It was quite proper for the husband to be astonished and pleased as though he hadn't thought her capable of it. “Why you cute dear! What a wonderful thing to do,” he should say, showing a befitting admiration for a function he could never possibly perform himself.

As it was, the situation could only be treated that way once or twice. Each time it happened there would be less triumph for the woman and less wonder for the man. Hadn't she heard her mother say, before Glubb's arrival, “Yes, damn it, I'm going to have another.” Then why all this flumdididdle about the little shirt or bootee hidden in a work-basket?

Still considering the stock situations, the most delightful one of all was that in which a girl was forced to confess to her husband that she had had a lover

before she met him. It was full of emotional possibilities and more interesting to consider, from every standpoint, than June's favorite romance writers ever meant it to be. At the age of twelve it was easy and interesting for June to conceive of herself facing the realization of a loss of virtue and the necessity of confessing it to a husband. At the age of eighteen, more sexless and unemotional than ever before by reason of increasing mental activity, it was harder than ever to see wherein lay the crime of love out of bounds. In all the books she read—English as well as Russian and French translations—conventions were forgotten, love was treated aesthetically and morals, as the world knew them, ignored. It was for the weak to be uplifted or cast down by the world's opinion. In literary history people had lived as they'd seen fit to live and the race had benefited by the stimulating companionships of men and women even though they rested on the basis of sex.

"But—" Mother Grace pointed out when once June was trying to give expression to her muddled thoughts, "I don't see how the convictions of genuises as to sex and life in general, affect you who have to live and work with the great mass of people in the world."

But didn't Mother Grace herself condemn the conventional reaction of the husband in the case of Tess of the D'Urbervilles? Who had been wrong in that case—the husband for leaving Tess on the wedding night because a momentary weakness made her the victim of a man she'd have to submit to even if she had struggled? Or Tess?

"But that's only a novel you're talking about."

Continuing her line of thought June decided that the only reason to condemn Tess was for her submitting without love. That made an unbeautiful splotch on her life. If she had loved her seducer heart and soul, however, it was still less probable that her "sin" would have been forgiven by her husband. Why should a woman justify herself by saying it was only her body which sinned, not her soul?

Suppose she said to her husband—"Yes, this man was my lover and every moment I spent with him was beautiful. The experience made me more alive to the beauty of the world and I am more human because I loved so much. But it passed. We grew past it, and now we are not lovers, but friends." June could not imagine it said without disastrous consequences.

It seemed that love with all its possibilities of bigness could not stand such a revelation. It was always demanded of a woman to say that a former lover had been just an incident, bringing no beauty or gladness into her life. This was jealousy. And when June tried to contemplate that she could not, for she could not yet realize love.

"Why is it so unusually hard for me to think straight?" she demanded.

"God knows," said Mother Grace, "I don't. But I'll trust to your instinct not your mind, to take care of you through life." And blessing her, June went out to find a job.

At dinner time several days later she burst into the house after an afternoon in the city and told her mother with glowing eyes that she had found work to do.

“Every afternoon this week I’ve taken my clippings from the school paper and the town paper and gone to newspapers. And even though I visited several every afternoon, I’ve only managed to see three city editors. Those office boys are the devil to get past and I wouldn’t tell them I was looking for a job. I just said I wanted to see the editor on business, and didn’t look important enough to have business, or else the city editors were really busy, so I didn’t get in. I saw the editor of the Tribune and he told me I was very young and that newspapers weren’t the place for young girls. So did the next one. He said he’d never allow a daughter of his to work on a paper. I wish they wouldn’t be so paternal. Both of them said my stuff was good and that a country newspaper was a nice place to work and one of them even gave me the address of an agency where you can apply for work in the country. They were very nice and after I got in to see them, relaxed and chatted very affably.

“After trying to get in on all the big papers I thought of that little labor paper that I brought home the other day. It’s socialist and has most of the news of the big sheets even if it hasn’t the advertisement. That’s the difference in bulk, really. You didn’t read it and I’ll get another for you. The editorials are all for labor and most of the news is written from the standpoint of the socialist.”

“Oh, June,” Mother Grace protested, “you know how opposed your father is to any socialism or anarchy. He thinks reformers all foreigners or laboring men. This is much worse than it would have been if you found a job on a regular paper.”

“It’s quite a respectable looking office,” June assured her. “It looks like all the other newspaper offices, only smaller and all the men working there were Americans that I could see.

“They didn’t seem to have any office boys—only a copy boy and he was rushing downstairs to the press room when I went up and didn’t pay any attention to me. You could see right in the editorial room over a counter. Some men were working at typewriters and three men were sitting around a desk reading copy. A little blond man with a nice face went by and asked me what I wanted and I told him the editor.

“‘I’m it,’ ” he said, and opened the swing gate for me to go in. He led me in a private office on one side marked ‘managing editor’ and I was scared. The managing editor seems to be so much more important than the city editor.

“I told him what I wanted and he laughed, not nastily, but as though it were a great joke.

“‘Why, we have hardly enough money to pay the office boy,’ he said, ‘let alone a woman reporter.’

“‘That’s all right,’ I told him, ‘I wasn’t expecting a big salary. I am sure you need a woman reporter. I can picket with strikers, and write human interest stories

of strikes, and as you know the clothing workers and waitresses are striking now. And they're predicting it will be a hard winter and there are all sorts of sob stories to write.'

"‘I know,’ he said, ‘women reporters are always a good thing, but we’re broke, simply broke.’ And then I showed him the things I’d done and he approved and I told him I could live on a small salary. You see after being to all the other papers I’d made up my mind that I’d have a job.

"He went on to tell me that some weeks the paper was so broke they had to issue half pay, and sometimes they had to take up a collection from the staff to pay for cuts for the next day’s paper. He seemed to really want to hire me, but not to see his way clear to do it.

"Then I had an inspiration. You’ve noticed accounts of this squad of policemen who are living on a diet and showing how cheaply working people can live if they do it scientifically. And those society women in Chicago who are feeding themselves in a club on a quarter a day. I asked Mr. Bright—that was his name—why I shouldn’t constitute myself a diet squad of one and live on five dollars a week. Lots of factory girls are living on that and I had lived comfortably on nine in the country. I pointed out to him that working girls couldn’t very well club together the way these ‘squads’ are doing and that I’d like to show how it would work out.

"‘Of course it won’t,’ he said, ‘but if you’ll try that for a month, and work for five a week, I’ll raise your pay to twelve.’

"So I told him I would and now if you don’t mind, I’m going to move and live in a tenement."

"Well I’ll be damned," cried Mother Grace.

"You can tell father I just decided to go away and be independent just as I did that last year at college. Then he can’t blame you. He’ll only commiserate with you at having a thankless child. And you know, Mother Grace, I always wanted to live away from home and be independent."

"*Why* you want to, I don’t see," cried Mother Grace in despair.

"It’s just a case of living one’s own life, though that’s a trite way of putting it."

"But I never wanted to live my own life." And June in her triumph forbore to point out to her mother that hers was a new and more adventurous generation.

"There’s another reason why it’s best for me not to live at home," June added. "The Clarion is a morning paper and I start to work at three in the afternoon and don’t know exactly what time I’ll be through. And it’s quite possible I’d run into father around twelve or even get home later than he did. And it wouldn’t only be one row but many of them. He’d quarrel about my working and about what I’m working at, and the hours I work. You know very well, too, he wouldn’t quarrel with me. It would be with you. He doesn’t seem to realize that we’re

old enough to reason with. Why, only last Sunday at dinner he turned to you and asked you if I liked the breast or the dark meat, just as though I weren't old enough to speak for myself. And instead of coming to me he'd ask you why I wanted to work and why you couldn't persuade me that it was impossible for young girls to be out at night alone."

"I know—I've always borne the brunt of the misbehavior of all of you."

"But if I actually got out, and proved myself to be beyond your influence, he couldn't scold you for what I'd done, could he? I've got to go, mother dear. I've been home two months now and there is no work or anything to look forward to. It will be easier for you and for me too. I'll just pack my suitcase and leave."

The upshot of it was that June, with a thrilled feeling of adventure at her heart, kissed Mother Grace and Adele good-bye and took the car to the Clarion office the next afternoon.

"I'll telephone you every afternoon, and come home on my nights off. And you and Adele will have to come often and have dinner with me. I have about an hour off and we'll go to Chinatown and have chop suey. It's near the office."

Mr. Bright, the editor, had told her that in view of the fact that she had to find a home, she need not appear at the office until five. So leaving her heavy suitcase by the side of the desk which had been allotted to her, she set out through the East Side streets.

The Clarion office did not occupy a place of dignity on Park Row. You got off the subway, the elevated, the surface car, whichever you happened to be riding on, at Brooklyn Bridge, and walked down that dingy section of the Row given over to pawnbrokers, saloons and recruiting stations. Just before you reached Chatham Square, that gloomy crossroad where all streets lead out under shadowing elevated tracks to still gloomier regions, you turned down a little side street to the east and after passing three saloons, this was before prohibition, and two warehouses reached the Clarion offices which occupied a loft above the Meisel Printing Company.

To get to June's room which she found that afternoon you continued east on this street. In another block it ends at Madison Street which digs straight into the East Side, running parallel with the river. It was a cheerful and lively street with horse cars which jogged every half hour through the crowds of children playing in the gutters and hiding among the ash cans. The air was full of shrill child voices, shouted admonitions from the mothers hanging over their fire-escapes which front the buildings like grim skeletons. Street organs surrounded by little girls played the latest popular tunes and every once in a while a merry-go-round set on a wagon was drawn to the curb by a lean and deafened horse. Rides were for a penny and the music which the man ground out as he turned the handle which set the carousel spinning held an invitation which gathered the children from blocks around.

Mulberry Street runs into this thoroughfare and spills a delta of tenements

with shops where long cheeses and sausages and chains of red pepper and garlic contribute their smell to the cluttered air. There are Greek and Turkish coffee houses with strange colored curtains at the windows. When the curtains are not drawn you can see the men inside playing cards, smoking long water pipes. Sometimes there are dancing girls and often at night comes strange music which, with the echoes of daytime street pianos, haunts the silent street.

Late at night June found it a strangely sinister neighborhood. It seemed at first that she, alone in all the world, was awake. Her footsteps so stirred the silence the first night she went home that she had rubber heels attached to her shoes the next day so that she could swing along without feeling so gruesomely alone.

And soon she discovered she was not alone. A whole silent world was alive, a world that slept at dawn as she did. There were huge sleek cats, furtive pariahs that prowled through the hallways and gutters. And their cries and calls answered the dreary rustle of the wind in the trash of the street. A dull murmur came from the coffee houses, a subdued bustle from basement bakeries, the door of which opened sometimes to give out a warm, sweet smell of coffee bread and a glimpse of a perspiring and floury baker sniffing the night air.

Up dusky side streets you could see occasional pushcarts and beside them slept dim, bowed figures who occasionally roused themselves to hold murmured conversations.

Sometimes on a corner a little tobacco shop gleamed brightly. There was one on Rutgers Slip which was always open. A young Russian stood guard over tall jars of candy and colored syrup and neat stacks of cigarettes. It was nice to stop and chat with him before the nights got too cold.

Later on there was a woman who ran along the silence of the streets and broke it with her calls. Occasionally June heard her, darting down this side street or that and once she saw her running, stopping to get her breath, then running again. And every now and then came that long shrill cry of seeking.

When November with its flurrying snows sought to disguise the tawdry street, June made the acquaintance of two policemen who met each night for a chat under Manhattan Bridge while they ate their midnight meal of coffee and rolls. As the nights grew colder they had a glowing fire in an ash can, and June stopped to warm her hands by it. She was offered the seat of honor on a dry-goods box, and presented with a cup of hot coffee. The bulky ham sandwich she refused.

They asked her what she did so late at night and she told them, showing her newspaper police card.

Convinced that they didn't have to waste professional curiosity on her, an easy friendship was established between them. Her office was two "beats" from home, they told her, and often one met her as she turned into Madison Street and escorted her to the ashcan fire under the bridge and from there the other took her to her door.

“We’ll watch out for you,” they assured her as if dangers lurked in every doorway. And they gave her a police whistle to blow on, if ever emergency should arise. They vied with each other in telling her long fantastic tales of tenements, haunted by crooks, catacombed with secret entrances and exits, tenements in which if a man once gained shelter, it was impossible to trace him. There were tales of gangsters, of the Cherry Hill gang and their hangouts along the docks, street battles and gang feuds.

Once as they sat there and talked over steaming coffee, the stillness shattered every now and then by the heavy trains far above the houses on the bridge, a woman came running with little steps down the street, and seeing the policemen’s fire, approached it slowly, shivering. June recognized her as the woman who called in the night, and listened curiously as the policemen welcomed her.

“How about it, mother? You haven’t found him yet? Better come and get warm and have a cup of coffee. You’ve hunted long enough tonight. Better luck next time.”

“You haven’t seen him?” she asked piteously at first, but after she drank her coffee she seemed to forget and babbled of Sadie and some other women with whom it seemed she shared a basement room; of the way they swore and fought and stole; how she had to wear her shoes to bed or they’d go and pawn them for a drink; (and to illustrate her point, she pulled open her ragged coat and waist and showed how in lieu of an undershirt she had to wrap newspapers about her bony chest to keep warm, “Went and washed the shirt one night,” she said, “and hung it hidden in an oven to dry. Next morning it was gone.”) of Ike, the Jewish bartender in the saloon on Pike and Front Streets and how he let her sit around on cold days and sometimes gave her soup.

Her breath was heavy with the smell of whiskey as she talked, an ingratiating smirk on her lean old face. The horrible sadness of her calling and the tragedy of her running feet was gone. It was life which was sad and tragic. She was tawdry.

“‘Dis-audrey conduct,’ they call her,” one of the policemen told June. “Her name is Audrey and she’s an old street girl.”

“Not now!” June shuddered, incredulous.

“Sure. They keep it up until they die along the docks. There’s always some rotten foreign sailor so far gone with dope or drink to pay her. You see she seemed pretty sensible while she talked to us, yet every now and then she goes off her head and starts running through the streets till you’d think she’d drop dead. You see it was this way. She had a kid once, a boy. No father, of course. She took care of him and hung on to him until he was shot in some street fight when he was eighteen. He’d joined a gang when he was twelve. It didn’t seem to bother her an awful lot until the last year or so. It happened twenty years back. Now she’s taken to looking for him—and not the grown boy that he was either, but a little tot of five. She thinks he’s lost and every week or so when the fit’s on her she drops in the Madison Street station and asks the captain for him.”

Facing a tiny square which was overshadowed by warehouses and tenements and which led down to the river, was the six-story tenement where June lived. Back through a long passage-way, she walked, past doors through the glass panes of which came a dim flicker of light or the occasional wail of a child. Sometimes in the narrow entry way, a couple stood, as in other doorways along Madison Street, lingering in their silent farewell. Sometimes cats were the only evidence of life in that huge tomb. They crouched on the stairs and glared with flaming eyes. Up five flights of steps, stepping over children's playthings and treading carefully to avoid any stray bits of garbage, June made her way. The door of her room, though it was one room of a four-room flat, opened on the hall, and she let herself in with a key which fitted any other door in the house.

The single bed took up half the room. A table and one chair left enough space to open either of the two doors, one leading into the Warzinsky kitchen and the other into the hall. Over the foot of the bed hung a wardrobe, and covering the window which opened on an airshaft was clean white muslin.

Candle light hid the dingy woodwork. A rubber hose attached to the one gas fixture was connected with a one burner gas stove on which she cooked her breakfast and late supper.

A row of books—poetry and fiction—decorated the table and pictures of Amenemhat III, Stefansson the explorer, and Bellmonte the bull fighter, decorated her walls. They could not approach Mr. Armand, of course, but she admired them all. She liked the first for the dissolute line of his broken nose, and the pleasant sensuousness of his expression. Stefansson typified high endeavor and Bellmonte, arrogant strength. It amused her to have them share with her her tenement bedroom.

Her rent was five dollars a month, including gas. She could walk to and from the office and other carfare incidental to her work for the paper was paid by the office. On the day she started to be the "Clarion diet squad of one" as the editor put it, she sent for a budget from a charities bureau, which gave weekly menus for families living on starvation wages. Not that they called it that. The adjective was the Clarion's. According to the organized charities a family could live, eating scientifically and keeping track of the calories, on very little indeed. After June had adapted the "menu for a family of five—\$10 a week" to herself, it ran something like this:

Breakfast:

1 pt. of milk .05

Cereal .01

Fruit .02

Rolls .02

Late Supper:

Soup (potato, pea, bean) .02

Rolls .02

Egg .03

Milk .05

Butter .03

.25

For her dinner at six, she found she could get a passable meal of soup, fish, bread and coffee for twenty cents at most of the East Side bakery lunches.

To her great surprise when she finished figuring her rent, she discovered she still had almost a dollar left over. This, of course, according to the organized charities budget, should be saved for “doctor, dentist, clothing, entertainment and education,” but seeing no need of any of the foregoing, June was not content until she had devised a way of spending it.

One of the advertisements in the Clarion pointed out that a dollar down and a dollar a week, for fifteen weeks, procured for you a phonograph. This June proceeded to buy, receiving a contribution from Mother Grace in the shape of fifteen records. For something had to be done to make the diet palatable, she pointed out in her second article. This it accomplished and more.

For the morning after the bulky parcel was carried up the five flights of stairs, she was awake at eight, eager as a child to survey a Christmas present, unpacking, putting together and finally, winding up the machine and adjusting the needle to the first whirl of one of Sousa’s most stirring marches.

There was a little rustle in the hall and then the patter of many baby feet. Downstairs and upstairs they came, leaving their play on the tenement stairs to snuffle around June’s door like a litter of puppies. June could hear Mrs. Warzinsky shoving them away, but back they came, to listen. She opened her door to them when she had dressed but they were shy at first and hung back. When she paid no attention to them and devoted herself to the cooking and eating of her cereal, a book propped against the milk bottle, they edged in, sat shyly on the bed, stood close against the wall, or peered from the hall around the corner of the door.

June felt like the Pied Piper of Hamelin at first and wanted to laugh. But she didn’t. They were all so seriously attentive. As she cooked and ate and read, she changed the records, and when the last bite of cereal and roll had disappeared, she shoved them out, locked her door and proceeded to cover her afternoon assignment.

But they came back every morning even before she was awake. In a half sleep she could hear them whispering and shuffling, tentatively trying the door-knob,

Mrs. Warzinsky hushing them wrathfully. “Smootchy-faces,” she called them, the only two English words she knew.

But June loved them all—little Jews and Poles and Russians, loved their appreciation of her morning concerts, loved their bright eyes and curly heads, black, blond and red.

Mrs. Warzinsky liked the music too. Often she came in with a bowl of soup or some coffee bread and many times June found a carefully covered dish of pickled fish, redolent with onions, standing on her table when she returned at night.

She and her landlady could not talk together but there was no restraint between them. By expressive smiles and eyebrows they could say all that needed to be said of soup, music or babies.

June’s room was cleaned by little Ruth who was twelve and who attended the public school around the corner. She was the eldest of five children who slept in the kitchen and living-room in the front. In the room next to June the parents slept with two younger ones. They were all clean and healthy and well-cared for, for their father was a tailor and never out of work. Ruth read when she wasn’t housecleaning or ironing or taking the younger children to the baths around the corner. She showed June the life of Helen Keller one Saturday morning when she came in with the little ones to listen to the phonograph and timidly asked leave to borrow of an evening some of June’s books which stood on her combination of desk, stove and dining table. Her brother, who was eleven, studied Hebrew in addition to his school work. June liked the little family.

She too used the baths around the corner. They were all showers and rooms were kept clean, though much frequented by the foreign mothers in the neighborhood. June enjoyed scrubbing under the hot spray and listening to the mothers bathing their children in the little rooms on all sides. Occasionally they burst into Russian folk songs, strange harmonies in a minor key with a sad happiness running through them.

She was given her afternoon assignments the night before, so she did not go to the office until she had covered them. There was much to do—meetings to attend of protest against labor, capital, the high cost of living, war-profiteering, entering war, not entering war, conscription, anti-conscription. There were meetings to start strikes, to end strikes, to form unions, to fight against other unions. Food riots came. The city hall was stormed—if you can call it storming (as the papers did) when a crowd of fat Jewish women from the East Side with babies in their arms, stood in front of the city hall and scolded that institution of city government. Heroically they paraded Fifth Avenue and “stormed” the Waldorf under the mistaken idea that the governor was staying there. There were birth control meetings—trials of birth control leaders, meeting of the Anti-conscription League, the Emergency Peace Federation—and interviews galore.

The city editor of the *Clarion* at this time was a young Russian Jew, twenty-five years old, who had lived all his life in New York and who had worked for the last

five on the Clarion. Every now and then after six months or so of intensive work, Ivan failed to show up at the office and his place was taken by one of the desk men, older but less qualified for that position of responsibility. It was generally understood on these occasions that Ivan was on one of his poker sprees which lasted until he returned to the office several weeks later, a nervous wreck and in debt to the extent of several hundred dollars. In spite of his trembling hands and bloodshot eyes, he was always welcomed like a prodigal son. For the paper never ran so smoothly as when his shaking fingers were fumbling among the evening papers for rewrite stuff and among the syndicate news sheets for features.

No one knew how he had been educated—how he had come by his knowledge of languages and literature. Nor was anything known of his family. (Most of the young men and women, in fact, that June came in contact with were remarkably reticent about families. For all she knew they might have been spontaneous growths with no background but their hall bedrooms and the newspaper office. June was engagingly frank about hers. Mother Grace and Adele often met her in the office around six for little dinner parties at which Ivan or Chester or Emil clamored to be the host.)

The Guillotine column, a special feature of the paper was run by Chester, who had a nose like that of Cyrano—his favorite character—keen eyes, a Rabelaisian tongue which June soon got used to, and ferocious ambition. He ran the column for the fun of it, and was paid for sitting at the desk as a copy reader from five in the evening until one in the morning. Outside of the office he toiled at a three-act problem drama, relaxing from his great work by writing verse and short stories that were usually rejected.

When the three of them could leave the desk at the same time it was usual for them to eat together. June protested at first, thinking of her diet. In spite of her attempt to satirize diet squads, she wanted to treat the matter fairly. "If I can get a dinner for a quarter, I'll go," she told them the first time she was invited. "That's the most my budget allows."

So the boys took pains to find cheap eating-houses and she overruled all their attempts to treat, and stuck to her regime as nearly as possible.

So far, June's only dissipations had been at Child's on lower Park Row when she sat with her three new friends and talked, over pancakes and coffee. There was no longer a chance to indulge in the ranting to which Adele and Mother Grace took exception. Everybody always wanted to talk at once and June was content to sit and listen, throwing in a word now and then to keep them at it. Often they sat till three, June smoking surreptitiously, although at that late hour the manager smiled leniently. Other newspaper workers came in and soon left. Pressmen with smudged faces came to eat and took away coffee in pails. Occasional trucks rumbled by through the cold night and every half hour a Third Avenue car clanged as it passed the Bridge. Diagonally across the street, a fruit stand with glaring lights kept busy. Continuously street cars came around the loop of the Bridge, received one or two sleepy night workers and went their

fan-shaped way into Brooklyn. Paper boys shouted even at that sad hour of the morning, and newspaper wagons clattered along the cobbles to receive their load of papers and raced off.

And Ivan and Chester and June talked on and on. Emil, another reporter, usually rushed away after half an hour's chat. "He's got a girl uptown," they told June regretfully. "But he'll get over it in a couple of months and be a night owl once more. We all have our spells when we desert the pack for a while. Yours will come."

"No, indeed," said June, stretching luxuriously. "I intend to be free and have to answer to no one."

Ivan was sympathetic but Chester ridiculed her. "In the newspaper and artistic crowd, nobody remains free. They are all the victims of their desire for love, and because they have so-called freedom—to experiment and taste and try—they are all the more victims of their passions."

"Shut up, Chester! Don't disillusion June. She's too young. Besides all this talk of yours has just sprung up in the last couple of months. You're the slave of a chastity ideal. If anyone ever had a complex, you have one now."

What a complex was, June did not know at that time, but she soon found out where he got his purity ideal. One freezing night when she shivered at the thought of her cold little room, into which the breath of seven sleepers stole through the cracks around the door if she did not open the window, Chester insisted on her accompanying him to the flat of a friend of his, Ellen Winter.

"It's steam-heated," he told her, "and she'll have coffee ready. She usually waits up for me if I let her know I'm going to stop in. I live on the next block."

In a little book-lined sitting-room, Ellen received the three of them, sitting graciously behind an electric percolator. She had a mass of bright golden hair, prim features and a decisive way of talking. June felt immediately that here was one of those comfortable people who always know exactly what is right for them to do and whose principles never waver.

Ellen also was working on a play, and when June finally fell asleep curled up on the cushion-strewn sofa, talk of technique and criticism of everything that had been written for the last twenty years ran in her ears.

After that, Ellen often telephoned June in the evening and asked her to spend the night, an invitation June was glad to accept. Ellen was a self-reliant young woman with a sharp tongue and rigid ideals which kept other women at a distance. She took the woman of the world pose with June and the latter listened to all she had to say in silence. She was ten years older than June and she had a gratified feeling that June realized those ten years and looked up to her as an experienced woman.

June admired her abilities and secretly condemned her intolerance of other peoples' morals. But then, she reflected, she had a reason for her condemnation.

For Ellen, as she soon found out, was in love with Chester and was unable to marry him. Chester had referred darkly to a tragedy in his life on one occasion when June dined with him alone. Another time it came out. He had made an unfortunate marriage when he was twenty and had one child. (He was twenty-five now.) The girl was continually unfaithful to him, she admitted it, but he could get no proof that would procure him a divorce and give him the custody of the child and he had no money with which to hire a lawyer to conduct the case for him. As a consequence, whenever he and Ellen remembered it, they looked darkly on life and all women.

“A pure woman in these days is the rarest thing under the sun,” Ellen often told June solemnly. “Modern women think nothing of their virtue and sacrifice it without giving it a thought.

“My dear, your virginity is the only thing you have. Hold on to it.”

On reflection, June did not think the attitude a nice one.

“She keeps harping on virginity,” she told her mother. “She talks of it as though it were a commodity, a thing we have to sell. We give up our virginity and a man gives us a home, and permission to bear his children and his name. If we haven’t got virginity, we’re to be cast into outer darkness. Nothing else we’ve got is of any account—only virginity. Oh—I’m sick of the word.”

“This Ellen takes the worldly attitude which is the only sensible one to take seeing the world is what it is,” her mother told her. “She’s probably a very fine woman and you can’t come to any harm through listening to her talk.”

June made another friend of whom her mother could not possibly approve. This was Billy Burton, a pert little artist, whose one idea in life was to follow the whim. That her whim often created situations bothered her not at all. Situations were the breath of life to her. As she herself often signed rapturously, “Ah, that was a situation!” and she defined the word as a scene, a mass of complications, a melee, a ticklish moment—in fact a mess.

She and Ellen Winter never spoke to each other if they could help it, but a conversation between them would have run something like this, didactically:

Billy— “Sex is a barrier between men and women keeping them from a complete understanding of one another. Barriers are made to be broken down. If I meet a poet or artist or writer that I feel to be big of soul, that I feel I can learn from, and sex comes up between us and might prevent me from having a more perfect understanding of him, I let it be broken down. Once there are no barriers and men don’t want to get something out of a woman in the way of sex, there is complete freedom between the sexes. At no other time will you have that.”

Ellen— “But think of the value men set upon a woman’s virtue.”

Billy—sniffily, “I suppose that’s why you set such a value on it.”

Ellen— “A woman’s virtue is a gift which a woman brings her husband. She always feels the lack of it if she hasn’t it to give.”

Billy— “I count the gifts of the mind of far more worth than the gifts of the body. I’m spiritually better off than you are, because I put the body where it belongs. Dust to dust and that sort of thing. You exalt it.”

Ellen— “It’s only by keeping purity of the body that you can have purity of the mind. The men with whom I came in contact know that I am pure and I get the best and purest in them in my intercourse with them. And they know they can expect nothing from me, so sex doesn’t come up between us.”

Billy— “But I don’t want to know the best and the purest in life. I want to know the good and the evil, the pure and the impure. And I do know both and I love all that life has to show me. I can’t hate anything and I can’t judge anybody or anything, so I am very happy.”

Ellen— “According to your lights. But once you come up against love which is the biggest thing in the world, and the man scorns you for looseness of living, and refuses that which other men have taken so lightly, then you will know remorse.”

Billy— “My love affairs are to me merely incidents in an erotic education. And this education ought to make any man love me more instead of less. Think of all I can teach the man I love. For a woman learns more by a free life than a man ever does.”

Ellen— “Men don’t want to be taught, they want to teach.”

But a conversation of this kind could never have taken place between Ellen and Billy, for their intercourse was of the briefest. It could not have taken place between what the world considers a good woman and a not-good one because each has such conviction of truth that they would never argue.

June, being eighteen and of few convictions made her mind the battleground and often, unknown to themselves, Billy and Ellen fought it out there. That neither side had the victory, it is unnecessary to say.

June became acquainted with Billy through Ivan who was a special friend of hers, and the two girls became immediately fond of each other. The fact that Billy “sexed” as she called it, and June didn’t, was no barrier between them. June liked the little artist because she felt that at heart Billy had as few convictions as she did. Her proclaimed attitude towards sex was a justification for whatever she did, and June could not help but admire the ease with which she formulated a creed for herself.

After the diet squad had retired and June was living as precariously on her twelve dollars a week as she had on her five, she often made her way to Billy’s hovel of a room to find her still in bed, hair uncombed, unwashed, wrapped in a soiled kimona in which she had probably slept, puffing furiously at a cigarette in a long green holder that matched her eyes. This morning there was the usual pad on her lap and she was listlessly drawing one nude and decadent woman after another and throwing them on the floor.

“Hell, hell, hell!” she kept muttering softly to herself, as she saw June come in. Then, “Oh, you darling. Just in time to prepare me some moral support. I’ve been awake for an hour and haven’t had the gumption to get up and get it for myself.”

Curtained off on the other side of the room June found coffee and when she had put it on the little gas stove she sat on the edge of Billy’s bed and surveyed her work. The utter clutter in which the little artist lived had repelled her at first and she had wondered how it was that anyone so unaesthetically untidy could have so many friends. But dropping in of a morning when she always saw her at her worst, she soon became used to externals and devoted her attention to Billy’s whimsical gossip.

“You’re wasting enough paper there,” she remarked as another sheet fell to the floor.

“I can’t exactly get it. Is that the moral support which I hear boiling? If it is, you’ll find cream on the window sill and an extra cup in the closet on the floor. Whew! That’s hot,” and she set the cup of coffee on the floor by her low bed. “And now I’ll tell you what else you can do for me. Just strip off your clothes—the room’s warm enough, and while you’re drinking your coffee I’ll sketch you.”

Although June would not have thought of undressing before her mother or Adele, it was impossible to refuse Billy’s request. So June quickly slipped out of her clothes and curled up on the end of the sofa which was softer than the chair and solaced herself for the discomfort of unaccustomed nudity with a cigarette.

“You have just the sort of impalpable figure that I am expected to draw for that blooming magazine,” Billy said with satisfaction as she started to work. “Don’t try to sit still. Move around all you want to. I want just a general impression, anatomically correct and yet impossibly lissome. I really think you more nearly approach the sort of stuff I draw than any body I’ve ever seen. You’ll probably have a beautiful figure by the time you’re thirty. Have the men around here started to make love to you? You’re just the type, you know.”

June didn’t know what the type was, but she told her friend, “Yes, very nicely. But not violently enough to be convincing.”

“What do you want them to do? Rape you? Violence has gone out of fashion, don’t you know that?”

“I enjoy it immensely until they try to kiss me. But there is a sort of futility about their love making. It’s purposeless—as though they did it because everybody else does it. I don’t get half so many thrills as I thought I would when I became grown up and untrammelled.”

“Unawakened,” said Billy with her pencil in her mouth.

“No, pure, Ellen Winter would say,” June put in rather maliciously.

"It's a lucky thing I don't live at home now," June told Adele on one of her frequent visits home. "I'd have so much to talk about that you'd never get a word in edgewise. It's all about causes, too,—the poor working girl, the police system, homes for fallen women and how they should be run, birth control, pacifism and any number of other things. But all I have time to tell you about are my adventures."

"We'd a great deal rather hear them than the conclusions you draw from them," Mother Grace said. "They're bad enough for a mother to hear about anyway. Can't you manage to avoid some of these experiences of yours?"

"I don't go out of my way looking for them," June protested aggrievedly. "If they worry you, I won't tell you any more."

"Of course you'll tell me. I'd rather know exactly what I'm worrying about. I should worry in any case. If you didn't keep me informed as to what you were doing and where you were living, think how shocked I would have been when Mrs. Gunther called me up that time."

The woman that Mother Grace referred to was the chief factor in an unpleasant experience June had had several months after she had left home. On the lower East Side near the river she stumbled upon an old parish house next to an Episcopal church that had a slave gallery. She explored the church which had been opened for a vesper service and wished also to explore the parish house next door when she noticed a small sign tucked unobtrusively away in one window announcing that there were rooms for rent. She was immediately fascinated by the somber atmosphere of the place, and the result was she rented the room (two dollars a week) and moved in the next day. It was the completeness of its desolation which attracted her. The first floor was occupied by a young woman with an old husband, the rector of the church. Mrs. Gunther puttered around the two rooms on the first floor of the house where she and her husband lived, leaving her lodgers to care for their own rooms as best they could. The beds were never made, the floors were never swept, clean towels were scarce and hot water was unknown.

On four sides of a square hall four doors opened into the lodgers' rooms. June heard them open and shut in the morning, but she never saw the occupants in all the two months she remained there and since the doors were never open, she didn't have a chance to peep in to see if they were as bleak as her own. Her room was on the side next to the church and Sunday mornings as she lay in bed, the mournful music of the organ seeped into her open window and lit up the greyness about her. Even in the middle of the day it was never a light room and on cold nights when she heated it by means of a gas stove which was attached to a solitary burner, she had to read by candle light. There was no carpet on the floor and no curtain at the one window which faced the church. It was perfect in its dreariness and silence, and when June came in after a busy day and evening when she had interviewed and notated and written and lived the day with the clatter of voices and of typewriters in her ears, she stood still and drank in the

silence. She enjoyed the damp old smell of the house, she enjoyed her complete apartness from the city.

On one occasion when she paid her rent, Mrs. Gunther detained her for a moment in chat. The subject of their conversation was the iniquity of a little servant whom she had employed.

“The girl was fourteen and I paid her three dollars a week to work for me, sleeping at home, of course. It was a great help to her family—poor Irish and very shiftless. Anyway, one morning I caught her on the front porch (I’d sent her out to shake a duster) dancing to the music of a street piano, and what do you think—she didn’t have any pants on. I had her brought up before the children’s court for misconduct and she was put on probation. Any more looseness and she goes right off to a reform school.”

“Pants!” June thought, with disgust. What an idiotic word, especially when you considered the disastrous consequences. She might have said “drawers,” but then, nobody wore drawers nowadays. It’s envelope chemises, teddy bears, bloomers or more elaborate still—pettibockers. On the East Side—from what June saw of the children, they didn’t wear anything. And the little maid-servant was only fourteen.

Yes, “pants” was just what a Mrs. Gunther would say. She couldn’t have said anything else.

The conversation left a disagreeable impression on June’s mind and was increased the next week when her landlady informed her that she had just had the tobacco store on the corner closed because she was sure that it was the hang-out of gangsters.

But the reform tendencies on the part of her landlady didn’t linger long in June’s mind, unfortunately, and when, two months later, she was confined to her room with the gripe, she didn’t hesitate to telephone Ivan (who by that time had become her close friend) to drop in after work and bring her cough medicine, lemons and some whiskey. She had been in bed for two days, only dragging herself out twice to get some milk toast at a nearby bakery. Mrs. Gunther had not been near her.

According to June’s instructions, Ivan whistled “Poor Butterfly” as he came along the silent street, in order that he would not have to ring the front doorbell. June kept her window open and soon after one o’clock slipped down to the door to let him in.

“Hell of a place for you to be sick in,” he grumbled as he deposited lemons, oranges, whiskey and cough medicine on the table by the side of June’s bed. “Why in the world don’t you move up to Eighth Street where the rest of us live?”

She liked the piquancy of an Episcopalian parish house in a Jewish neighborhood, she said, and she liked the ancient odor of her surroundings. She liked the sound of the organ on Sunday mornings and she liked to feel solitary. She wouldn’t move.

She hadn't told her mother she was sick for fear she would visit her and display the same distaste for her surroundings which Ivan had. She didn't want Ellen or Billy near her, because Ellen would talk chastity and Billy would talk about men. She was enjoying being sick—having a great reading-fest and she'd probably be able to come to work in a day or so. So he might as well join her in having a hot toddy and tell her all the gossip of the office.

The paper was getting along the same as usual. Mr. Bright was still insisting on giving a lot of space to the A. F. of L. and the Board of Control continued to row about it. Ivan himself favored the Amalgamated Clothing workers and every time he gave a column to them Mr. Bright rowed. It was a three sided feud and probably the latter would have to give up his job. On the whole the socialist board was more hostile to the A. F. of L. than they were to the Amalgamated. The very fact that the latter union was fighting the American Federation inclined them to look with more latitude on the clothing workers. It was a mixed-up affair and the more they bickered, the less faith Ivan had in the working classes.

Chester had found some more evidence and was going to start proceedings for a divorce. But then he'd been doing that for a long time. Vic had left the paper for higher pay on a Connecticut sheet. Benny Leonard had contributed largely to the Clarion bond issue. June was to take Benny as an assignment next week and have lunch with him. A good story for the sporting page—the class-conscious prize fighter.

Emil had left the paper for a job on a magazine as reader. They had two new men, not much good.

Several more pacifist meetings had been raided and there was talk of declaring war on April first.

He (Ivan) had brought her an article on Maxim Gorky to read and he had written two poems. He read them to her. They would appear in the Guillotine tomorrow. What was the book he had brought with him? "Gosta Berling". It was marvelous—a masterpiece. That woman certainly could write. Nobody could equal the Scandinavians these days. Wait, he would read a chapter or so to her.

And so the night wore on.

At seven Ivan left her and brought in a huge cup of hot milk and six slices of thin buttered toast from a nearby bakery and when she had assured him that he had saved her from the complications of boredom, pneumonia and slow starvation, he left her to sleep. Which she did all that day.

That night she was able to show up at the office to assist in rewrite work although Ivan refused to send her out on any assignment.

The next noon the blow fell. She had just stepped out of a cold tub and was leisurely dressing when a tap came at the door and Mother Grace came in.

"Well, my dear, *I've* come to your rescue."

“How in the world did you know that I’ve been sick? Did Ivan call you up? I told him not to. I’m all right now—went to the office last night.”

But Ivan hadn’t called her up. Mrs. Gunther had taken note of June’s midnight visitor and had called up the office that morning, asking for Miss Henreddy’s home address, saying that she was ill. The business office, contrary to the policy of the office had given it and the result was that Mother Grace had been forced to listen over the telephone to a long diatribe against June and her loose habits.

“I was absolutely furious, my dear.” But not at June. “Nothing in the world is worse than having somebody light on you over the telephone. It was so difficult to put her in her place. I dropped into the office to find out how to get down here and fortunately ran into Ivan there. He told me that you’d been sick and that he had dropped around after work and that your brute of a landlady hadn’t come near you for the two days you kept to your room. Oh, I told her just what I thought of her!”

Then after Mother Grace had announced casually that it wasn’t considered quite the thing in her day to receive young men in bedrooms at any hour of the night or day, she made herself comfortable on the bed with a glass of whiskey and water and lemon which June had prepared for her, listened to the records, commented on the quality of tone of the phonograph. Then, with June’s packed suitcase they went out to lunch together and that was all there was to that.

June was always making discoveries in the way of homes for herself in those days. She hadn’t lived in Eighth Street for more than a week before she came across the Shelter for Probationers from Blackwell’s Island and Bedford Reformatory. At least that was the name given it in the women’s night court by the deep-bosomed matron when she sat down to fill out the prisoners’ reports. When you spoke of it, you said Miss Prince’s. The judge called it Miss Prince’s. Whenever a girl was brought before him who had broken probation and who was given the name of “flagrant repeater” by the other probation officers, he’d say, “Well, call up Miss Prince. Maybe there’s room up at her place.”

There wasn’t another place exactly like it in New York. The only thing like it in literature was Jo’s farm in “Little Men” where she coddled and nursed and educated her waifs and strays.

The girls who were sent there were a distinct type, too. Actually “flagrant repeaters” who couldn’t be trusted with a probation officer were always given another sentence in the reformatory.

Those girls who had no previous record in the court were lectured on the sacred flower of womanhood and motherhood and girlhood, while the probation officers who sat on a bench in the first row beamed and nodded at each other, and then they were turned over to one of the latter.

The judge who was fat and Rabelaisian and always in a high humor at life and the part he had to play in it was inclined to favor the youthful and attractive type of offender.

“That girl has something in her, I’m sure,” he would tell Miss Prince solemnly. “She’s young and her face isn’t so hard, do you think?”

“She does seem to have better taste in rougeing,” Miss Prince would agree dryly.

As far as June could see, it didn’t matter whether they were young or old with Miss Prince, as long as they weren’t of the “moron type.”

“Give me a girl with some brains to start out with, who is half way normal and I may be able to do something with her,” was her ultimatum as to what she wanted in the way of raw material. “It’s hopeless work enough without wasting time on the regular ‘hooker.’”

It was her occasional slang probably more than her attitude towards her work which attracted June. Certainly Miss Prince was unusual. She didn’t regard her charges sentimentally as fallen women as the other probation officers did. Education, not religion, was her panacea for the social evil.

After she had heard Miss Prince use the word ‘hooker’ she asked to be allowed to visit her home to write a story on it for the paper. An invitation to lunch was the result and June went up there the next afternoon.

Somewhere around Fiftieth Street the island of Manhattan juts out into the East River and forms a little promontory across which a side street runs for two blocks. If you absent-mindedly walked for more than two blocks in either direction you would find yourself walking through some iron railings, down a steep cliff and into the river.

There are prim brownstone houses on either side of the street and it is a stark, plain unprepossessing place, at first view. There are no lawns, no trees to soften its hard outlines. But all the houses on the east side of the street have back gardens with lilac and syringa bushes and beds of early purple orchids and lilies of the valley. If you look over the back fences of these yards you will see that on this side, too, the land slopes down in a steep cliff.

It isn’t a city-like cliff at all. It is fascinatingly irregular, offering many nooks and crannies for small boys’ foothold. If you climb down you will find that there is a natural beach extending for two blocks. It is a narrow beach, but it is not too narrow to sit there even when the big steamships and freighters pass and the waves wash in.

Before June pulled on the bell of number twenty-seven she walked up and down the street (for she was early) charmed with this quiet haven where there was not a sound of trolley car or a rumbling elevated train. The tall, quiet houses seemed to be hiding with their skirts, and protecting with their tapering railing fingers, that little beach. All the rest of the east shore of Manhattan had been gobbled by great corpse-like buildings and rotten creaking docks that jutted out like the tentacles of some mighty insect into the river.

As June described the place to Adele—“It’s four stories high counting the basement where the kitchen and dining-room are. You’ve seen some of the tea

rooms in Greenwich Village. That's exactly what this kitchen and dining-room are like. Painted to indulge a kindergarten whim, and all bright and shining. The kitchen is immense and old-fashioned with a huge stove that fits into what once was a fireplace. There's an enormous white sink and plenty of hot water to make the housework easy because the girls divide it up among themselves, taking turns at kitchen police the way they do in the army. The tables in the dining-room are long and painted blue and have blue runners down the middle of them and yellow curtains at the windows and there's a fireplace at one side that makes the room even more cheerful.

"On the first floor there's a big sitting-room and sun parlor facing the river with a grate fire there too and couches and easy chairs and books and a piano and phonograph and every night the girls play ragtime until ten o'clock and then they all sing Nunc Dimittis before they go to bed. The big front room belongs to Miss Prince and her assistant, and they share it so they'll have more room for girls. All the lovely furnishings go in the sun parlor and sitting-room for the girls.

"On the two upper floors the rooms have been turned into dormitories and it's as though there were upper and lower berths. One hall bedroom has been made into a nursery and they have two new babies. Two other girls are going to have babies. One of them comes from a small country town and before she met Miss Prince she was going to commit suicide.

"Down the street Miss Prince also keeps a house which has been made over into a nursery for babies whose mothers have to go to work. She only charges ten cents a day.

"Who supports the homes? Miss Prince herself. Every day she goes out among rich friends (she seems to have a lot of them) and collects money and clothes and food, free tuition to business colleges, anything that she can use to go on with her work. Her idea is to start a whole chain of these homes with an idea to do away with prisons."

"Rather hopeless in this generation, I should think," judged Mother Grace.

That was the trouble, June decided—the hopelessness of it all. For every girl who turned out well, there were five who went back to the cabarets and eventually the streets. Miss Prince confessed it herself, acknowledged the apparent futility of any kind of social work, but saw no reason why that should prevent people from doing what they could.

And just when June began to mourn the futility of all endeavor, birth control was given to her for an assignment and through her newspaper work she was able to fling herself into another cause and forget the fallen women.

Of course birth control would solve all the troubles in the world. With birth control you wouldn't have any more children than you could afford to support and educate. Economic necessity would no longer be an excuse for the woman of the streets; and with education, a moral and social sense would be developed.

No more poverty. And when women were not forced to have more than two children, they would have time to look into the laws. There would be a better educational system and a better industrial system. Given two children instead of nine and there was room for the maternal instinct to work. All you need is birth control.

These were the things June wrote for her paper every day when she had attended meetings where the leaders of the Birth Control League spoke. A clinic had been started somewhere around Havemeyer Street in Brooklyn and there was daily expectation that a raid would take place. June had to keep her eye on it all day. Sure enough, there was a raid and the next development was the trial of Edith Burns, a trained nurse and worker in the movement.

Then came those thrilling days after Mrs. Burns had been taken to Blackwell's Island and started her hunger and thirst strike. The first prisoner in America, the Clarion pointed out, to hunger strike for a cause. Forcible feeding began and June found an English suffragist who had hunger struck in a London jail and wrote a column on how it felt to be forcibly fed. Even the capitalist press was aroused and printed headlines on the condition of Edith Burns. One afternoon she was dying. The next afternoon the jail doctors vehemently denied the report. As a matter of fact, they said, it was all bluff and the prisoner had probably secreted cakes of chocolate on her person when entering the jail with the intention to strike. Five days and there were rumors of brutal treatment. Four men, the papers reported, had held the frail little woman to the bed while nourishment was being poured down her throat through a tube. They clamored for the governor to take action and pardon her. Birth control as an issue was disregarded. The important fact was that an American woman was being brutally treated by jail authorities and it was up to the chivalric American press to object. These things might take place in England, but not in New York. Here the Anglo-phobes had their chance.

Then the governor signed the pardon and dark rumors went around that clemency had come too late. There was a mad rush among the reporters to see who could get the first interview from the released prisoner, who would take her dying words.

"She's not to be released until eleven to-night," the Sun reporter said. "That'll just give us time to [missing text]"

"That's the trouble. Can we get ahold of her?"

"Well, there's four of us. We'll work together and if one gets the story first, he's to call up the others when he gets back to the office."

One reporter chose the Twenty-third Street ferry house where the Department of Correction landed their prisoners from the island. Another took the Fifty-ninth Street ferry. Another heard Mrs. Burns was to be brought to the Central Hospital and took the train uptown.

“And I’ve got a hunch on sticking around her home,” decided June, and proceeded to the artistic little apartment on the west side.

Mrs. Burns had several rooms in an old house which had lately been redecorated and fitted with modern improvements and rented out as studios to artists. She had furnished them very tastefully. Pongee curtains, a shade darker than the ivory tinted walls hung at the windows. The huge couch at one side of the room, covered with brown corduroy, served also as a bed. Between the couch and the wall was a bookcase stacked with modern poets, sets of Wells, Conrad and Hardy, books on nursing and several sociological works. There was a grate fire opposite the couch, several easy chairs, a low phonograph and cabinet of records. There were no pictures on the walls.

June, as a radical and reporter for the socialist press, was treated with more familiarity than other reporters and when she lifted the brass knocker that night, she was ushered into that more intimate room of Mrs. Burns. Mr. Waldor, the long-haired young poet whom she had met at Joel’s, was there alone, dismally trying to arrange huge bunches of yellow daffodils in green vases. Having failed in trying to establish a magazine of new verse he was at present acting as secretary to the Birth Control League.

“I wish I were a madrigal,” he murmured wistfully as he accepted June’s offer of help.

“I wish I were a madrigal

Upon a crimson stem.

I’d ask the yellow daffodils

The how and why and when.”

Or do you like this—

“Oh, if I were a madrigal

Upon a crimson stem

I’d lean down o’er the daffodils

And yerl around at them.”

“Don’t think much of either,” June decided. “You’ve been drinking.”

“Miss Henreddy, if you knew how my heart bleeds for that noble woman who has sacrificed her life for the cause—”

“Good Lord, you don’t mean to say that she’s dead,” June burst out, more overcome at the idea of a big exclusive story for the paper than with pity for the fate of Edith Burns.

“No, but she’s dying.”

“Rot! That’s newspaper talk. You know she isn’t dying. You don’t really think she’s seriously ill, do you?”

“According to the reports of her doctors, she is in a very serious condition,” said the young poet with dignity.

“Yes, and both of her doctors are radicals and will give out misleading reports for the benefit of the League. The newspapers are making a big story of it just because there isn’t a murder on hand to serve up in headlines every night. I don’t think five days of hunger-striking could hurt anybody. The only way she’s suffered is from forcible feeding and that must be uncomfortable to say the least. Use you common sense, Waldor, if you have any. And you know she’s going to be brought here tonight rather than to any hospital. Otherwise why would you be here making a fire and putting daffodils around?”

“Where are the other reporters?” he asked with a gleam of sense that June had asked for.

June told him. “And don’t try any of your sob tactics on me, because you know I quote you and the doctors with the understanding that you’re faking. Save that for the capitalist press.”

Impatiently, June turned to the phonograph and the bookcase. She hoped to goodness Mrs. Burns would arrive on time so that she could telephone the story to the paper before twelve. She had no patience with poets or with long hair. And she had no patience with the League when they over-reached themselves in providing sensational stories for the press. She thought of the other three reporters tramping around in the cold, waiting for a first interview with Mrs. Burns.

Two hours passed and she was beginning to philosophize on the idiocy of modern newspaper work, to wonder whether it were not rather debasing work, when she heard a taxi hooting downstairs. Immediately she was as full of glee as a child playing a game. She raced with Waldor down the stairs, raced across the curb to the taxi where the two doctors who were on the case were helping Mrs. Burns, somewhat pale and languid, out of the car. She got her interview in three sentences (the most interesting one of which was that Mrs. Burns’ teeth had been knocked out while being forcibly fed) and raced to the telephone across the street. It was ten minutes to twelve and she had been just in time.

And then June was hit by a police club. That was the next exciting event in her life as a reporter. The surprising thing, she discovered, was that you could enter into the spirit of the mob even when [missing text] descended against her ribs with a hollow sound did not call up any resentment in her breast. She felt it, but it did not hurt. She felt it, but it did not disturb in any way the curious, detached, mad feeling that flowed through her veins as the crowd seethed and shouted and fought. June looked at the policeman who had used the club and perceived that he could see but dimly through a veil of blood that clouded his eyes. He had a cut across his forehead. At the moment of the blow, as she looked up at him, he smeared the blood from one eye and glared forth like one of the giants that Jack killed.

“Excuse me,” he said politely, “I can’t see.” And went on clubbing at the crowd to keep them from obstructing the patrol wagons which were gradually being filled. The crowd continued to surge and howl.

That it seemed was all they could do and after June realized that they couldn’t shout themselves to a more bloodthirsty pitch and she could not push through to see the fighting that was going on, she lost her enthusiasm and turned to the bloody policeman.

This time, he could see the police card that was pinned to the front of her coat and allowed her to stand at the wagon and survey the prisoners as they were pushed through the crowd and handed in. It was impossible to find out names. There were too many of them. One after another, five wagons drew up, received their load and departed. When no more arrests were made, the crowd dispersed.

June found time to observe from her position of vantage that nine-tenths of the prisoners were well-dressed youths, quite tottering drunk. By their tattered American flags they were in favor of the war which was to be voted on the next day. It was harder to tell which were pacifists and which bystanders who had become involved.

But it was easy enough to complete the story by calling up the Baltimore police station where the prisoners had been taken. There she found that five were professed pacifists. The captain was affable enough to tell her that most of the crowd had been enthusiastic young city men of reliable parentage who had been released on cognizance.

“My dear,” she told her mother, “it was just fun. It was like a holiday or a picnic and I’m tickled to death that I got the assignment. There were four young women in the party and about fifteen young men, all from Columbia, but me.” (It was when she had returned to New York and was relating the exciting adventure. She had left on such short notice that there was not even time to telephone her mother that she was going to leave the city for several days. She just arrived at the office in the morning, found a note there from Ivan to take the Chinatown bus at Union Square and go to Washington.)

“The two drivers of the bus were such a strange contrast to the students who were so enthusiastic. It seemed to me that they typified the American people. They were just ordinary bus drivers and didn’t have any conviction one way or the other. Their usual work every day is to station themselves on the corner of Thirty-fourth Street and Broadway and make up excursions of sight-seers. And here they were hired for this funny job.

“We rolled out of New York, crossed the river on a ferry and went through Newark with placards all over the car demanding peace. Some people cheered, but most of them were indifferent. They didn’t seem to care whether war were declared the next day or not. And everywhere we’d stop and some of the students would make speeches in favor of peace. Or at least try to make speeches. Most of the time, a policeman would come along and tell us to move on. They were very good-natured about it and accepted it as a lark.

“We stayed in Philadelphia the first night and had a long, long drive the next day to get to Baltimore that evening. We all were sunburned and our lips got chapped and we had lunch at a farmhouse. A professor from Columbia chaperoned the party and paid all the bills.

“And then Baltimore and the riot. After that it seemed that the declaration of war on Monday was an anti-climax—at least in personal experience. It’s really too huge to realize, even to think about.

“I was treated as a person of authority because I had to send stories by telegraph once or twice every day—on the condition of the countryside on the brink of the declaration of war. Most of it was imaginative, because the country people were all quite solid, too solid even to care whether we were rabidly pacifists or not. And then we got to Washington, too worn out and dirty to care whether war was declared and that was the end of the assignment.”