

The Straight Girl on the Crooked Path



By Juanita Hamel

Whirling about, June found herself confronted by Dr. Platt.

JUNE was contented, in a certain sense of the word, with the life she was living. She was absorbing, learning, meeting life in a different phase. This, she felt, was the path that would eventually lead to the goal she coveted. If she had learned nothing else but that one must work and wait for that which is worth while having, she had learned in this a lesson valuable enough to more than compensate her for the heartaches and homesickness she endured.

She figured that her present situation at least enabled her to meet her living expenses. She would not be called upon to draw from her little sum of money which had dwindled down to a very small sum indeed. She had only \$60 left. She could live on this, without work, for perhaps six weeks or two months, if she needed only the bare necessities of life.

But June would not allow her mind to dwell upon the thought of what the consequences would be if she were down to her last penny. She simply raised her firm little chin to a higher angle and determinedly said, "It must not be." An admirable spirit indeed, but perhaps the beggar or the woman of the streets can tell the story of such a spirit that has been crushed by adversity. June, possessing the enthusiasm of youth and the splendid faculty of seeing the bright side of life, bulwarked her castles in the air while cynical fate smiled on.

She told Hilda of Delmores' attempt

to make an appointment with her and forthwith proceeded to forget it, except when that young man appeared at the physician's office and evinced his admiration despite June's efforts to discourage him.

One afternoon when the office was deserted, during the usual lull in the telephone calls, June sat at her desk outlining the pattern of a waist she had conceived the idea of making during her leisure time.

She glanced up from her task to find Delmores standing before her. He was looking at her so intently and so expressive of loathsome admiration that June unconsciously lowered her eyes.

"Dr. Platt won't be in for half an hour," she said as she looked at the clock.

"Well, that's all right. I don't mind waiting, so long as you are here, mi amore," Delmores answered with a chuckle. "Come—I want you to see my new car. It is standing across the street."

He motioned June to follow him to the window. There he directed her gaze to a stunning gray coupelette.

"Oh, isn't that a beauty!" June exclaimed, forgetting her reserve.

Delmores looked pleased. "No dainty feminine slipper has as yet graced the floor of yonder limousine. If you will it so, yours shall be the first."

His words were accompanied with a mock bow, and though spoken in a tone of raillery, June knew the invitation was sincere.

"It must be wonderful to ride in a car

like that. I should love to." June, with her usual naturalness, making no effort to conceal the fact that she had never known such luxury, spoke truthfully.

She yearned to sink into the comfortable looking cushions, to feel the throbbing of the muffled engine under the carpeted floor, and to be whisked through the city's beautiful thoroughfares.

She looked up at Delmores, her face radiant with childish anticipation. The expression she saw in his eyes quickly dispelled any thought she may have had of accepting his invitation. She shook her head slowly and with an air of finality.

At her refusal the look on Delmores' face grew more intense. He drew nearer to her and as she attempted to avoid him a strand of her golden hair brushed his cheek. Suddenly she found herself crushed in his embrace. His strong arms encircled her in a grip of iron. Despite her struggles he bent her lithe young body backward and pressed his lips again and again to her soft white neck. At the touch of those burning kisses from the lips of this man whose very presence filled her with repugnance June felt herself grow faint. All power of resistance seemed to slip from her and she lay inert in Delmores' arms while his eager lips

covered her neck, her cheek and her eyes with passionate kisses.

Then, realizing that he sought to press his kisses upon her lips, June centered her strength in one desperate effort and succeeded in freeing herself.

Delmores still held one of her wrists, and he attempted to draw her to him again. Quick as a flash June struck him a stinging blow with her free hand. The grip on her hand relaxed, and whirling about with the intention of putting the length of the office between herself and her tormentor, June found herself confronted by Dr. Platt.

The physician had entered the office just as June struck Delmores. The first part of the scene he had not witnessed. On his countenance was an austere smile and his brows were raised in an I-knew-it-would-happen sort of an expression.

Delmores quickly regained his composure and with an air of injured dignity followed Dr. Platt to his private office.

At the end of the week June was notified that her services were no longer needed. She had committed the offense of causing Dr. Platt to lose a good-paying patient. Dr. Graham's manner was kind but firm, and June realized the futility of making a plea in self-defense. She accepted her dismissal with a sinking heart, but managed to suppress her tears until she reached her room.

(To be continued)
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