
June (German Edition)

Forrester

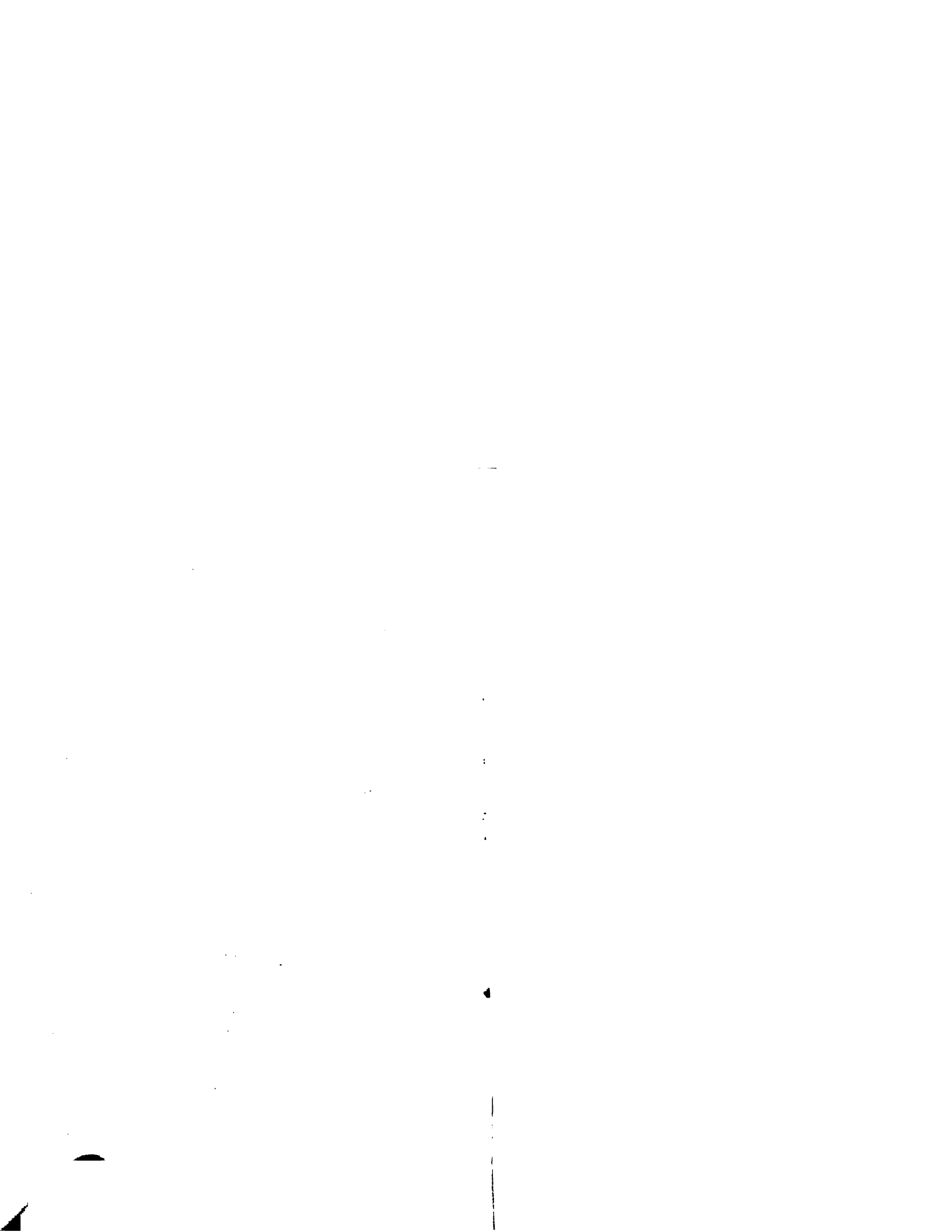
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JUNE.



BY

MRS. FORRESTER, (*pseud.*)

AUTHOR OF "VIVA," "MIGNON," "DOLORES," "RHONA," "MY LORD AND
MY LADY," ETC., ETC.

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J U N E.

CHAPTER I.

"JUNE! June! where are you?"

"I am here," answers a charming voice, and the owner of it trips out from behind a rose-bush, holding a cluster of half-blown crimson blossoms of which she has despoiled it.

June, the month, links spring to summer; in June the birds sing their sweetest, the senses are keenest; June bears the hope and promise of the year. June has hot fits and cold fits, summer skies and angry tears, balmy airs and chilling winds. June is young and fresh, bright and hopeful, gay and careless in the faith of good days to come; June, when fair, is fairest of the fair; and June the month is a fit prototype of June the smiling maiden who answers so promptly to the cry,—

"June! June! where are you?"

I shall not describe to you the form or features of my heroine. I will but tell you that she is fair, and leave you to make her picture according to your fancy. She has the love of approbation, the keen desire to please, to be liked and loved, without which a woman, beautiful as Venus, can never truthfully be called charming. This quality, indeed, is not, as a rule, possessed by actually beautiful women. Charming has become a cant phrase to-day, and is used to express a thousand things that it does not mean, is applied to a thousand people whom it is furthest from describing.

But June is charming because she desires to charm,—because she is eager for love and praise, and takes pains to win them. Though not from every one;—only from those she cares for. There is a certain proud wilfulness in her nature, and she likes, with the impetuosity of a young

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spirit, to be either friend or foe. She does not want the liking of those to whom she is indifferent, and there is not a shadow of truckling or time-servingness in her disposition.

As for her name, she was born in June, and her mother, from some quaint fancy, called her after the month, which then she thought the brightest, happiest in the year. It might be a good augury,—so she hoped and prayed.

“June! June! where are you?”

“I am here,” answered June. “What has happened, Madge?”

Madge, a hoyden of sixteen, pounced upon her cousin, thrust a vigorous hand through her arm, and cried, in jubilant accents,—

“Tom has come. Of course he asked for you at once, and Aggie said she thought you had gone home; but I said I knew you hadn’t, and that I would find you; whereupon Tom beamed, and Aggie looked like thunder.”

June smiled.

By this time they were half across the lawn, and a big, fair young man came striding out of the French windows to meet them. He looked, as Madge said, beaming. A joyous light shone in his blue eyes as he took June’s hand in an eager clasp. No one, seeing the expression of his face, would have entertained a moment’s doubt as to his feelings for the young lady whom he was greeting. And June?

She looked honestly pleased to see him, smiled in his eyes, returned the pressure of his hand, and said, kindly,—

“I am so glad you have come back, Tom. It was so dull without you.”

June did not blush, nor look coy or embarrassed, which was, perhaps, rather an unfavorable symptom for Tom.

“Was it?” he cried, eagerly. “I’m awfully glad to hear you say that. I’ve been longing, longing, I can’t tell you how, to get back. And now I have come a week before the time was up.”

Madge transferred her hand from June’s arm to Tom’s.

“Well,” she cried, for she never could bear to be left out of the conversation for a minute, “has aunt found a duke’s daughter for you, and are we going to have a real swell cousin?”

“They won’t have me,” laughed Tom, his eyes beaming

more than ever as they kept their hold on the face of which it seemed he could not have enough. "I don't suit them. I am not their sort. Fashionable young ladies don't care for me. I can't dance, and I can't talk their jargon, and I can't make believe to spoon them when I don't feel like it: so they don't think me worth the trouble of noticing."

"How disappointed aunt must be!" said Madge, laughing aloud. "It must have been as bad as taking out a plain daughter."

"Never mind, Tom," uttered June, giving him a friendly glance. "You have come back to people who appreciate you. And I am sure you are happier here, are you not?"

There was undoubtedly a shade of coquetry in her glance and manner as the young lady said this.

"*I should think I am!*" returned Tom, with an emphasis that would better be rendered by capitals than italics.

"Poor aunt!" remarked Madge again, mischievously, pretending to sigh.

"My mother had Dal," answered Tom, laughing, "and he is exactly after her own heart."

"But he is not her son," said June.

"What is he like?" asked Madge.

"He is 'quite lovely!'" replied Tom. "So I heard a lady say."

"That means he's like a hair-dresser's dummy, I suppose," said Madge, scornfully.

"It sounds like it, but he isn't a bit. He's a very good-looking young chap, and very manly and plucky. And he dances 'like a seraph,' as some other lady remarked, and looks at every pretty woman as if he loved her."

"How delightful!" cried Madge. "Oh, Tom, I wish you would have him down here!"

"Do you suppose," said June, with mock humility, "that he would look at such country bumpkins as we are?"

Tom bestowed on her a gaze of adoration, which implied that she was far superior to every other woman in the world. He would have said it in so many words had they been alone, but he was afraid of Madge, whose chaff was merciless.

"He has promised to come. He is really tremendously fond of my mother. I feel quite an outsider when he is there."

And Tom laughed a frank, honest laugh, entirely devoid of envy or jealousy.

June seemed to feel a touch of pique on her friend's behalf, and said,—

"We will leave your mother to entertain this 'lovely seraph' (with a scornful accent), "and we will make all the more of you."

Tom answered her by a radiant glance.

At this moment Agnes came out of the window, smiling, yet scarcely looking pleased.

"Mamma says, Tom, will you stay and have high tea with us? She is afraid it will not be a very good substitute for your dinner, but we shall be delighted if you will."

Tom felt himself rather in a cleft stick. If June were going to stay, he would accept joyfully; if not, he wanted to walk home with her, and he was not altogether indifferent to his dinner when there was no object to be gained by going without it. Yet he would not for the world be impolite to Agnes and Madge, though they were his cousins. He hesitated for an instant.

"June is not going to stay to-night," interposed Madge, reading his thoughts with her sharp instinct.

Tom flushed crimson through his fair skin: June tried to appear unconscious, and Agnes closed her thin lips tighter, and looked as if she would like to pinch her sister.

"Thanks, awfully," said Tom, after a moment's pause, "but there are one or two people I ought to see to-night. I dare say my aunt will let me come another night instead. Is she in the drawing-room? I will go in and see her." And he marched off.

"I don't know whether you know it, Madge," observed Agnes, viciously, "but your new waltz is on the floor, and Boz has torn it nearly to shreds."

"Oh, the wretch!" cried Madge, darting towards the house.

Agnes looked at her watch.

"It is ten minutes to seven," she remarked to June, with an acidulated smile. "Won't auntie be waiting tea for you?"

She wanted to get June away before Tom came out again. She was eternally trying to separate this pair, although she knew that Tom was deeply in love with her cousin. But she