



THINGS UNHEARD OF

The year 1915 did bring Margaret "things unheard of " The first was that Ellis developed into her full-scale teacher He became even more He became her guru and possibly her lover, in his limited sense In any event she developed for him an almost mystical reverence Whenever in doubt she turned to him for advice, just as he turned to Olive Schreiner He met her every other morning at the British Museum, getting there first and reserving two seats, as well as readying books and pamphlets on birth control for her to read

Now for the first time in her life Margaret read selectively, Ellis told her the same thing Leonard Abbott had told her—that she must stop scattering her energies and concentrate on one cause That cause, Ellis insisted, should be neither anarchy nor socialism, it should be birth control, a cause she was far more likely to win It was also a cause in which she could become the Queen Bee because, as far as he knew, no one in America was promoting it vigorously at the time But this could happen only after she had studied it in a far more scientific way than she had before and had learned to speak in a more moderate tone

So she read only as he directed, studying hard for most of each day She was surprised to learn that every group of people since the world began had in some way tried to control their fertility A papyrus written as far back as 1800 B C described how Egyptian women would put

crocodile dung or other gumlike substances into their vaginas, hoping that these would trap some of the sperm. Luckily, dried dung has no odor. The Egyptians also used lint tampons dipped in honey to slow the sperm, while Chinese women used wet tea leaves or thin pieces of oiled paper derived from bamboo.

And even the Jewish Talmud had a suggestion. Place a small piece of sponge around the cervix or tip of the womb, if slightly hollowed out, it would be held in place by suction.

But the most common method in every country was coitus interruptus or withdrawal of the man's penis before ejaculation. And along with these quite rational methods, there were irrational ones. Women told each other that sneezing hard immediately after intercourse would expel the semen. So, some said, would a sharp exhalation of the breath, spitting three times into a frog's mouth, or making magical passes over the bed.

During the sixteenth century came the first reliable method—a good male sheath. Crude sheaths made of strips of thin bark or mats of woven leaves had been used for centuries to protect the wearer in combat or to guard against tropical diseases. Then Gabriello Fallopius, the Italian who discovered and named the Fallopian tubes, came up with a male sheath of fine linen which was held in place by drawing the foreskin over the tip. He invented it, he said, to protect the wearer from venereal disease, which spread through Europe in epidemic proportions at the time. Fallopius claimed that he had tested his sheath on a thousand men, and that it had the further advantage that it could be carried inconspicuously in a trouser pocket and quickly slipped on just before intercourse took place.

But Fallopius was thinking only of protecting men. He didn't give a thought to protecting women from either disease or pregnancy. It took another century before a Dr. Condom introduced a sheath made of sheep's gut into the court of Charles II of England, a sheath he hoped would protect both men and women. Fine sheaths of this kind were made smooth by stretching them over oiled moulds and made pleasant by scenting them with perfume.

Still, such condoms were bought mainly by men who wanted to "take trips into Merryland" or consort with prostitutes, and so were also colored as gaily as possible, with green or scarlet ribbons threaded through the top end. A poem published in 1728 reads

* * *

Happy the man who in his pocket keeps
 Whether with Green or Scarlet Ribband bound,
 A well-made C—— He nor dreads the ills
 Of Shankers or Cordees or Buboes dire

(In the late sixteen hundreds a Frenchman rummaging through a prostitute's room reported finding, among other things, a box of alum, useful in contracting the mouth of the womb, three flasks of weak nitric acid, an anti-spermicide whose action is similar to vinegar, a small syringe, a sponge, and a little bag of mercury powder, a potent, if more dangerous, chemical than weak nitric acid)

Oddly enough, it was the eighteenth century lover Casanova who spread knowledge of the condoms In his autobiography he calls them "English overcoats, little preventative bags invented to save the fair sex from anxiety against an accident which might lead to frightful repentance " Such concern for women in general was unusual for a man of his time

In France during the eighteenth century, women, too, began to protect themselves Mothers gave instructions like this to their daughters "Wet a sponge in water mixed with a few drops of brandy as an anti-spermicide, and insert it exactly over the neck of the womb Even if the pervasive semen goes through the spores of the sponge, the extraneous liquid (from the vagina), mingling with it, may destroy its power " They added that a light silk cord sewn into the sponge would provide a means by which it may be drawn out

Having absorbed this much, Margaret decided she needed a rest, and started spending a good deal more time with Ellis New Year's Eve of 1915 was a special occasion As Big Ben began to toll the hour of midnight, Margaret impulsively leaned over and kissed him on the cheek He noted in his diary that the kiss had taken him "by utter and sweet surprise "

In New York Bill Sanger was in no such high spirits It was on that very New Year's Eve that he found Margaret's goodbye letter when he got home After reading it over and over, he charged out of the house and headed for the Hudson River docks For hours he wandered in a daze among the gloomy docks, sat for a while, wandered again, then headed back to his studio where he threw himself on his cot and fell into the deep sleep of utter despair

It wasn't until January 10 that he was able to answer her in another agonizing letter

Peg, after receiving your letter, I vowed I would not write you again—the letter excommunicating me from your life was cold & calculating—brutal almost and without compassion Yes, you timed your letter right—it landed on New Years, that night for the first time in my life I felt to go on would be useless and as I wandered down towards the docks alone—I thought of poor (name unreadable) He went that way no doubt—why not I? I live or exist now because I was too cowardly to die I touched rock bottom on all the illusions one has in life

Your letter just indicated to me that at a time when this new personality came in you seized the opportunity

Tonight I could not love anything, not even the finest woman that lives I want to destroy within you now once and for all any illusion you might have that I am the legalized marriage type I never was If you were married and had ten children I would have taken you because I could not live without you and that's the secret of my life

Now I care for nothing I revelled in serving you But your letter indicates that I am a hindrance in your life, so now I shall retrace my steps and seek seclusion in *my work* and *my thoughts* and *my children* I shall not see you now I brought thee roses on New Year's Day and you!—you—gave me a stone

Margaret, as usual, didn't answer Bill's letter She continued to read in the Museum daytimes and visit Ellis evenings, talking eagerly with him about what she had learned

These relaxed evenings were soon interrupted, however, for Ellis began to tell Edith about Margaret Shortly after the New Year, he sent Edith a series of letters in which he spoke of his "new friend" in enthusiastic terms He said she combined the best traits of the American and the Irish, being quick, daring, impulsive, and utterly charming

Several such letters reached Edith in Chicago on February 3, the day before a major lecture she was to give in Orchestra Hall Exhausted from the struggle of an unsuccessful tour, as well as from rapidly developing asthma and diabetes, she was shattered Unable to sleep, she got up at dawn on the day of her great lecture and wrote her husband a

six-page letter, she used a word to describe Margaret which was so bitter that Havelock, quoting the letter in his autobiography, used only a blank space in its place. Her letter, in part, read

MY DARLING BOY,

Here on the great day of my public life I awake at five and write my English letters. Of course I got a fearful jump when I realized there is another — in your life. If it makes you happy I am glad, but somehow it is a kind of strange realization which makes it easier for me to die. I *want* to die, and yet I am at my Zenith, and if I can only live two or more months I shall not die in debt. Thank God someone has put life and joy in your sad face. (But) be careful, for I realize here how much hero-worshipping is like drugtaking. I am terrified of tonight. But my voice carries, even in a whisper, all over the big hall. I wonder how you spent your birthday, Dear one. Which of the — came, or did they come in relays?

YOUR WIFIE,

P S I drank to you and your new — in a cocktail last night

Edith continued her tour as best she could, though after all her expenses were paid she found she had cleared very little. Her health grew steadily worse, too, and her letters once more carried the same refrain. She probably would never return to England, she longed for death, she was a waif and an alien who should never have been allowed to grow up. Finally, she urged Havelock to come to the States and comfort her, but he replied that it was impossible. He had never traveled that far, he was sure she could manage without him.

At this point her health became so bad she collapsed. Ulcers in her throat burst, she had a bad attack of angina, and her handwriting became almost illegible.

Eventually, she got a passage home, though the journey was sheer hell, made even worse when a fellow traveler told her she had heard Havelock was planning to meet her in Liverpool "to break the news," possibly with Margaret at his side.

In her fevered state of mind the first question she asked Havelock when she saw him on the Liverpool wharf was "Are you alone?" It had never occurred to him not to be, and he tried to reassure her that everything was all right by agreeing to stay overnight with her at a good ho-

tel before they took the train to London. He went so far as to sleep in the same bed with her, something he almost never did now, to put his arms around her and comfort her, she said it was the best rest she had had in weeks.

But when she pleaded with him to stay on a few more days, he said the hotel was too expensive, she could rest just as well in their flat in London where he could get on with his work. To Edith this was another test of love he failed to pass. He had refused to come to America to get her, now he was refusing to stay alone with her for even a few more days.

By the time they got to London Edith was close to a breakdown. Havelock put her to bed, but when he left her alone for a few minutes he returned to find her looking very strange.

"Is there anything wrong?" he asked.

"I've swallowed the whole bottle of morphia tablets," she replied.

He glanced at the empty bottle near her bedside, quickly mixed an emetic for her, and the tablets were thrown up. "I think she was rather pleased at the concern I showed," he later said.

When they went to Cornwall together soon after, she rallied enough to try to work on a book she had started. But it was too late. She sank again into a deep depression, made a second, unsuccessful suicide attempt, and was diagnosed by the country doctor as having what was then called "circular insanity"—a form of madness which comes and goes. She had had a spell of this before her marriage, the doctor thought she was having one again. Havelock refused to believe it and for a time kept her home and nursed her himself, waiting on her as tenderly as he could. But the nursing wearied him, and he accepted the doctor's suggestion that she be sent to the Convent Nursing Home, a place run by nuns. Remembering the convent school she had gone to as a girl and the gentleness of the nuns there, she agreed to go.

Havelock visited her almost daily and she seemed enormously comforted by his presence. But when he left she would call out "Havelock! Havelock!" so fearfully that the nuns had to run in and silence her.

The Convent Nursing Home had no experience in treating mental patients, and when Edith regularly began to have night screams, in addition to those she had during the day when Havelock left her, they asked that she be removed as soon as possible.

Hearing this, Edith made a third suicide attempt by throwing herself out of a window. As her room was on the first floor and she fell on

soft earth she didn't hurt herself, but after that the Convent Home insisted she leave immediately

Her doctor, with Havelock's consent, put her into a regular mental hospital. Within a short time she was swinging from depression to such euphoria that she seemed cured, and they let her go. But as soon as she was released, she insisted on going to a lawyer and having a legal separation drawn up between her and Havelock so that he would never again have the authority to put her anywhere. She took a flat in London, tried to get some lecture engagements, decided that maybe the theatre was an easier way to make money, and dashed off a play which brought her in fifty pounds.

But she began to slip fast. She wrote a letter to Margaret saying how much she would like to meet her because Margaret was "certain to be sweet and good if Havelock said she was," but she signed it "Lady Tobias," the name of a fictional character doomed to wander around the world in search of peace. Within a few months she went into a diabetic coma and died.

It was Ellis' turn to be shattered. In his grief he clung to Margaret more than ever, clung all the more because Margaret insisted nothing that had happened was his fault.

But soon there was a turnabout. A letter from Bill Sanger, awaiting them in London, told her that he had been arrested for handing out a copy of her *Family Limitation* pamphlet to a Comstock decoy who played on his sympathy with a personal visit.

Bill was arrested by Comstock himself, who hinted that if Bill would divulge Margaret's alias and whereabouts, he would get him off with a suspended sentence, otherwise, as a distributor of the pamphlet, he would be subject to a year's imprisonment and a thousand dollar fine. Bill told Comstock to go to hell.

Like Margaret, Bill decided to serve as his own lawyer in court and to make a stirring speech to get publicity for the cause.

Another letter soon followed in an angrier tone. "The whole affair was not of my making. It is your cause I will be defending, and I would have liked it a damn sight more if you had been here to take up the work from the start, though I would not have liked you to have gone through the humility of being arrested by Comstock and thrown into a filthy jail."

Either Margaret didn't answer these rather startling letters or they, too, were destroyed. But she did immediately send dramatically word-

ed letters explaining Bill's situation to the Socialist and I W W locals who had been distributing her *Family Limitation* pamphlets in the States

There is no doubt that my husband's arrest is but a trap of the Government, set to secure my return to the U S A , as well as to silence the propaganda of birth control. But we who have hatred and contempt in our hearts for these authorities whose high-handed officialism is running riot in America are not to be deterred from our cause nor trapped in our work because of sentiment, and just as I refused to go meekly like a lamb to slaughter when I saw that the Court was prejudiced against me, so now do I refuse to be tricked into rushing to the side of my comrade and pal, or to the aid of my three little ones who will be left unprotected by his imprisonment, until I have finished this work which I began to do. The sufferings of one who is loved by me could be no more deeply burned in my soul than the sufferings and anguish of thousands of other women's loved ones left alone in sorrow by death which has been caused by abortion.

Meanwhile Margaret was tired of reading at the Museum and started attending lunches with British suffragettes and members of the Neo-Malthusian League. Through Ellis, she also met important writers like H G Wells, Bernard Shaw, and Arnold Bennett, and leading doctors like Sir Arbuthnot Lane and Norman Haire.

How Margaret supported herself in London is a mystery, except for the money she received from the sale of her pamphlets by the radicals at home, money which came in slowly if at all, she had no discernible income. Now she needed more money in order to travel to Holland, which Ellis had told her was the most advanced country in the world in regard to birth control. For years it had been running government-sponsored clinics which told women about every known device, especially diaphragms. Indeed, one form of diaphragm had been perfected in Holland by a Dr Mensinga, and was known as the Mensinga Diaphragm or Dutch Cap.

Ellis got her letters of introduction to the doctors and midwives in charge of the Holland clinics, and when a fair amount of money finally did come in from the sale of her pamphlets in the States, she left for Holland immediately.

Her reception there was not all roses, however. Dr. Aletta Jacobs, director of a clinic, dismissed her as a mere nurse, who was not entitled to the same consideration as a fellow doctor. Fortunately, another clinic director, Dr. Jacob Rutgers, was more cordial. He personally conducted her around, gave her samples of the Mensinga Diaphragm, showed her his records, and explained how each patient was followed up to see if the method she had chosen was successful. He then had Margaret accompany the government midwives who went to the homes of women too poor to travel to a clinic, there the midwives showed her how to insert diaphragms properly and easily.

Dr. Rutgers also gave Margaret a copy of the birth-control pamphlet given to all Dutch women on request. It was an impressive pamphlet that had changed little since it was first published in 1875. On its cover was a quotation from a Minister of Finance, who declared that "no true improvement in living conditions can be hoped for if the number of births be not considerably diminished." On the inside a description of all the known methods was divided into "Methods for Husbands" and "Methods for Wives."

Under "Methods for Husbands," the first was absolute continence. This was dismissed as practically impossible for men. The second was periodic continence or restricting intercourse to the "safe period," though the period prescribed—abstention the week before and the week after menstruation—was the opposite of what we now know to be correct.

Next came Karezza, which was poetically likened to "the ability of intelligent people to hold back tears even when deeply moved."

After that was withdrawal, which needed little description since it was widely known. And finally there was the condom, made either of sheep gut or of rubber.

Under "Methods for Wives," the diaphragm headed the list. This, the pamphlet explained, had the great advantage of "permitting the woman to be free from care during the night," and was especially valuable because the husband need not be consulted in the matter since, properly fitted over the neck of the womb, the husband would not know it was there."

If a diaphragm was not available, the rubber sponge was second best, chiefly because it was much less expensive than the suppositories containing quinine or other acid substances which French women

used Douching was next described but dismissed as useless, since it was almost impossible to use it in time

Finally, a woman was advised to keep a supply of condoms on hand and try to slip one onto the penis of an amorous husband when he was too drunk to do it himself. This was particularly good advice in a country where gin and beer were consumed by the quart.

By early March Margaret was ready to leave Holland. But instead of going back to London as Ellis hoped, she went straight to Paris, writing Ellis that she was merely going to meet a "comrade" there. The comrade of course was Portet.

Soon she sent Ellis another note saying she would not be back in London for quite a while, she was off on a holiday to Spain. Though Ellis considered jealousy a base feeling, he was openly disturbed. "Didn't you know that Spain is one of my favorite places and that I have written a book about it? If you had invited me to join you, I could have shown you so many lovely places there."

But Margaret had no intention of inviting Ellis along. During all of March and April, she was joyously visiting first the South of France and then Spain with Portet. And though Portet, a known anarchist, was shadowed everywhere, they had a high time drinking cheap wine and brandy in the little cafés and going to museums and concerts. She was particularly delighted when he took her to a small shrine dedicated to an anarchist, Augiello, who in 1897 had been shot after he assassinated the Prime Minister of Spain. "Augiello at least sacrificed himself and did something," she wrote in her diary. "Here's to your name and your memory, Augiello. May your spirit and courage be born again—your kind is needed if the rulers and despots shall be overthrown."

Another highlight of her Spanish holiday was a letter from Stuart—the first she had ever received because, at the age of twelve, he had just learned to read and write. "Dear Mother," he wrote in childish printing. "How are you? I am fine. When are you coming home? I received a letter from Aunt Nan. I sent her a bunch of flowers."

She also received her first letter from Grant who also wondered, as Stuart had, when she was coming home.

A week or so later, after reluctantly saying goodbye to Portet, who had to get back to his Paris business, she finally returned to London where another letter from Bill was awaiting her, telling about his ar-

rest and trial This letter did not have the angry tone of his previous letter, but returned rather to his concern for her and her safety

According to Comstock, you're likely to get five years at hard labor So I can't decide whether you should or should not return Maybe you'd better remain in Europe until my trial is over and see what the outcome is, or not come back to the States at all, but go to Canada and direct the cause from there instead, as at one time you thought you might

On May 31 Margaret replied

I have no intention of going to Canada You seem to think I was planning to go there to have a lovely time Instead, I was trying to go there to relieve you of the children & of course to be with them myself For even tho you have given the impression I have deserted my children & have turned people against me I can wait until these storms in life pass,

Allow me Bill once & for all time to relieve you of any duty toward me which you might have at one time performed, and on the receipt of this letter you may feel privileged to send the three children to me on the first boat & consider your duties to them & to me ended for all time

Your stay in Paris was one big sacrifice to me I have no regrets, unless it be that my sacrifices were made for one too childish & unworthy to appreciate the depth of their sincerity

I am resolved to remain where I am You may go on with birth control propaganda All that any of them will dare to do will be done legally and when you ask me, or suggest, without any responsibility (I recognize the Sanger in you there) to come and give myself up to the United States government, I wish to reserve a decision until I see what they do with you before I do so

You will please send me any money sent to me, either through Maisel (a fellow radical) or any other people who contribute to the propaganda Also, send the children on to me anytime you are tired of them No doubt the same charity exists in Europe as you have solicited in America If you can't write to me in a spirit of comradeship you will save yourself and me much unhappiness by not writing at all

* * *

Margaret's anger at Bill was caused, in part, by jealousy. She realized that his arrest resulted in good publicity for the movement, but she felt it was publicity which should have come through her directly. She resented his being in the limelight.

She calmed down when she got a letter from Seattle from Caroline Nelson, a co-worker on the *Woman Rebel*. Caroline reported that the cause was moving along in America, slowly to be sure, but moving. Two Birth Control Leagues had been started on the West Coast—one in Portland, Oregon, and one in San Francisco—though these were comprised entirely of middle- and upper-class women, working women were quite uninterested.

It seems strange, but it is almost impossible to interest the workers in this. Of course, it is because they are ignorant. I have been trying to talk this matter up among the workers. While they want to get contraceptive information in secret, they cannot discuss it in public without giggling and blushing. The Western groups will simply keep it as a semi-fashionable League. They are people who don't need the information and never did, and how we are going to get it to the workers is the problem that I constantly harp on. They wouldn't know how to use it, is the answer that I constantly get. They have no bath-rooms, they are too tired after a day's work to get up and douche, they are too timid to ask for the material in the drug-store, etc. I myself think that if the Leagues are ever to amount to anything, they must send trained nurses into the workers' districts who speak the language of the district. Our Leagues will do some good, however. When you come back they can protect you and bill you on a speaking tour through the country. I hope that we will soon have you back among us. Even across the border, is better than away over in Europe.

Nevertheless, Margaret had no intention of returning to any part of America until Bill's trial was over and she saw how powerful Comstock still was. She was willing to be a prison martyr, but for a short term only. She would wait where she was.

Meanwhile, she went back to work at the Museum reading the history of the birth-control movement in England mornings and visiting Ellis evenings. He was getting more and more intimate. Since she had

come back from Spain, he had taken to addressing her as "Dear Rebel," "Dear Woman," or "My sweet Margaret Woman." One short note written late at night said "Just a goodnight kiss. You are and always will be very lovely to me!" For a man as shy as Ellis, this was progress indeed.

At the Museum she learned how in 1800, Francis Place had distributed free handbills advocating the sponge method. Though these handbills had a high moral tone and were addressed "To the Married of Both Sexes in Genteel Life," they were labeled "diabolical" by his contemporaries, and he was so vilified he had to stop distributing them. (Since he didn't date these handbills, it is hard to know whether they were written before or after he fathered fifteen children.) In 1826 Richard Carlile had printed a discreetly worded pamphlet called "Everywoman's Book or What is Love." He, too, was condemned. After being called a "corrupter of youth unfit for human companionship," he was run out of town.

By 1841 the pregnant Queen Victoria herself had gingerly advocated contraception. In a letter to her uncle, King Leopold of Belgium, written shortly after her marriage, she complained

I think, dearest Uncle, you cannot *really* wish me to be the mama of a *nombreuse famille*, for I think you will see the great inconvenience a *large* family would be to us all, and particularly to the country, independent of the hardship and inconvenience to myself. Men never think, at least seldom think, what a hard task it is for us women to go through this very often.

Yet, inconvenient or not, Victoria went "through with this" nine times in rapid succession, her pregnancies ending only with the death of her husband.

The same story kept repeating itself. The upper classes were trapped as much as the lower. Beatrice Webb, the wealthy co-founder of the English Fabian Society, remarked that whenever she visited one of her nine married sisters, she usually found her either pregnant or suffering from the aftereffects of a miscarriage.

Now Margaret began to read American history. In the mid-nineteen hundreds a Massachusetts country doctor, Charles Knowlton, had fervently taken up the cause of contraception, privately giving his patients advice for which they were extremely grateful. Then he wrote a

book called *The Fruits of Philosophy, or the Private Companion of Young People*, by a Physician, but could not find a printer for it until he took it to New York Still, he was prosecuted in Massachusetts and sentenced to three months at hard labor A member of the jury remarked to him later "Well, we brought you in guilty Still, I like your book and you must let me have a copy of it "

Knowlton's conviction and sentence brought him so much publicity, however, that his book sold ten thousand copies in America and a British edition soon was published

Knowlton was followed by Charles Bradlaugh, a public-spirited Englishman, who kept republishing the *Fruits of Philosophy* when its first publisher died Bradlaugh took as a partner an equally public-spirited woman, Mrs Annie Besant, who at eighteen had married a clergyman because the clergy seemed "such angelic creatures " But after the Reverend Besant hit her in the stomach when she was pregnant because she begged him not to make her have another child again soon, she ran away from him Although she was penniless, she was soon supporting herself by doing "fancy work" in the Victorian tradition, meanwhile she wrote articles on "The Political Status of Women " When these articles caught Bradlaugh's eye, he chose her to be his publishing partner

Both Bradlaugh and Besant were arrested and tried for "promoting foul and indecent literature," found guilty, and sentenced to six months in prison, although the verdict was reversed on appeal But again the trial had gotten so much publicity that it redounded in the book's favor Also, for forty years Knowlton's work had been selling in England at the rate of seven hundred copies a year, in the next three months sales reached a hundred and twenty-five thousand While contraception was still a controversial issue, it had finally become a household word

The Bradlaugh-Besant trial, too, also revived what was perhaps the best book of all on the subject, Dr George Drysdale's *Elements of Social Science*, signed once more only "by a Physician " This had originally been published with little success in 1855, now it was swept along on the publicity wave, particularly after Dr Drysdale's son, Dr C R Drysdale, testified forcefully in favor of Bradlaugh and Besant

At the end of August Margaret began to tire again and took a rest from her studies She revised her *Family Limitation* pamphlet to include the information she had acquired in Holland, sold several thou-

sand copies in England, and used the proceeds to go off to Paris to visit Portet. He offered her a three-year contract as an editor, her job would be to find American and English books on anarchy worth translating into Spanish or French. But while the salary was attractive and Margaret was very much in love with him, she hesitated because it would mean staying abroad for a long time. Another series of strange dreams were beginning to trouble her. (She had joined the Rosicrucian Society during a trip to Ireland with Ellis, and a belief in dreams was a strong element in Rosicrucianism.)

Her most frequently recurring dream was about Peggy. Bill had recently written her that Peggy was getting out of hand, when he stopped by to see her evenings, he found her hard to manage. Thinking that this might be because she was living among strangers, he had thought she might feel better if he asked Aunt Nan to visit her. "Don't want Aunt Nan. Want Mother," Peggy had replied.

Margaret now dreamt that Peggy was calling her. Morning after morning she would wake up to hear "Mother, come home! Come home!" The dream, too, was in some way connected with the number 6.

She told Portet she would not sign his contract until she went back to England and talked things over with Ellis, who had just published *The World of Dreams*, then, if he thought she should, she would slip into New York on her Bertha Watson passport and try to find out what her dream was all about.

So, early in September, she returned to England. Ellis dismissed the dream as a "night-thought," and advised her to stay abroad until she saw how Bill Sanger's trial turned out.

This was especially hard to do after she heard that five thousand more copies of the original *Family Limitation* pamphlet had been secretly distributed in Chicago, and that the women in the stockyards had kissed the hands of the person who distributed them. Despite her restlessness, she decided to listen to Ellis and await the result of Bill's trial.

Bill was tried on September 10 before three judges, the chief being Justice McInerney, a Catholic. Insisting on going to court alone, without a jury, as Margaret had done, Bill had prepared a long speech on his own behalf, a speech he had worked on for months as it was designed to express what he called his "burning thoughts of years of conviction." It started with the impassioned statement, "I am charged

with having violated a statute of the Penal Law of this State which makes it a crime to furnish information regarding the prevention of conception I admit that I broke the law, and yet I claim that, in every real sense, it is the law and not I that is on trial here today "

He had barely started when McNerny cut him short "We don't want to hear all that Let's get on with the trial " "You don't want to hear me out?" Bill shouted "I have been deprived of my constitutional rights to a jury Now you want to stop me from making a statement on my own behalf?" "Sit down," commanded the judge "I don't want to sit down You can't intimidate me," Bill shouted even louder Then, walking to the railing, he glared at the three men on the bench and tried to continue But McNerny interrupted again

Persons like you who circulate such pamphlets are a menace to society There are too many now who believe it is a crime to have children If some of the women who are going around advocating equal suffrage would go around and advocate women having children they would do a greater service Your crime violates not only the laws of the State but the laws of God

Bill tried for a last time to continue his speech but McNerny cut in with "I declare you guilty You have a choice of paying a fine of \$150 or spending thirty days in jail " At this, Bill leaned forward, raised his fist, and declared "It is indeed the law that is on trial here today I would rather be in jail with my convictions than be free at a loss of my manhood and self-respect "

As he made this statement, pandemonium broke loose among the radicals crowding the listener's benches Judge McNerny cleared the court and rapped for silence "I sentence you to a fine of \$150 or thirty days in jail," he repeated Bill chose the thirty days, hoping that his trial might at least get the movement good publicity and make Margaret's lot easier if she decided to come home

But it didn't get the publicity he hoped for, in fact, most of the papers ignored the matter Under the circumstances, Bill wrote from prison on September 13 advising Margaret to stay in England, he was afraid she'd get a far longer sentence than he had gotten On stationery headed "The Tombs" he wrote "The walls are high and there are many keepers " Also, he would leave without a dollar to his name He had cabled her his last hundred dollars as a birthday present A week later he

wrote her that the wealthy wife of the Public Service Commissioner, Mrs John Sargent Cram, had offered to pay the board and keep of the children during the month he was in jail He also wrote that Nan had been to see the "little darlings" and that Peggy, "dear little soul, wants to fly to her 'mudder' on wings " Bill was mainly worried, however, that Margaret might "have to spend a long time in one of these Hell Holes," and he didn't know what to advise her She'd have to make up her own mind whether to come home or stay abroad

She decided to come home

Margaret sailed at the end of September and arrived in New York on October 4 She hurried first to the Village to see Peggy and Grant, then out to Long Island where Stuart was in school Oddly enough she did not go to jail to see Bill, or even let him know she was back He wrote her on October 6

Peg Dear Soul, today the glorious news reached me thru Abbott that you had at last come back a thousand emotions seize me My memories recede back to the good old days of White Plains and all past differences recede to nothing

I hope the impression you receive from the news incident to my trial will be a favorable one I shall be sad indeed if you will conclude that my thirty days in prison shall have cast a cloud over your ultimate acquittal I come out October ninth, Saturday, 9 A M

You beat me to see the kids and get that first smack I was looking forward to the time when they would recognize you and give you that first kiss in a year! But some things are denied me I shall be curious to hear how Peggy took it all when she beheld you Did she know you, I wonder, and Granty, little soul, he is a joy Now sleep long and well and eat well If on receipt of this letter you need anything write me to 277 W 11th, (mark it hold until called for) and I'll arrange to bring over what you wish

Love as of old from Bill

As soon as he was released he rushed over to see Margaret who was staying at an inexpensive hotel But she was not in a good mood She angrily berated him for having no money to give her, as well as for letting Comstock's decoy wheedle a pamphlet out of him He lost his temper and the meeting ended when he stormed out

On October 13 she sent him a chilling note

* * *

BILL DEAR

As we do not seem able to talk things over without each insulting the other I am going to try to write the things I want to say to you

First, let us *not* discuss the causes of our feelings toward each other I recognize that you feel exactly the same toward me that I feel toward you Just what to call that feeling I do not know for it is a mixture of memories, beautiful, ugly, disappointing, inspiring, happy & sad It has no name, only its existing means a parting of the ways because it causes pain every time we meet The fact is we can not forget You have had a trying winter thru which you have blamed me for your sufferings I have had a trying winter thru which I blamed you for my sufferings No excuses, no intentions now can erase the scars those bitter thoughts have left in either of us I knew my feelings toward you would be this way before I came here I could have told you the same things in February, but after your arrest I wanted to help you and I did not want you to blame my letters to you for any failure you might meet But I find it was a foolish way to do

I give up, Bill Your vindictiveness & the reports & lies you have passed on in either anger or confidence (I do not accuse you of inventing them You have repeated them, which from you stamped them with the truth) have increased the break which can never be bridged Your insulting remarks & actions last night before the porter & hall boy only convince me that I subject myself to abuse & insult each time we meet I should like to return your name to you or drop it, & unless you will come to a sane & agreeable or mutual understanding with me I shall be forced to proceed in a way much against my inclinations Sincerely & affectionately,

MARGARET

A few weeks later Peggy suddenly took ill with pneumonia Margaret moved in with the friends who were caring for her and tried to nurse her, but Peggy became worse and was moved to Mt Sinai where Ethel was on the nursing staff There were no antibiotics in 1915, and the child, already weakened from her bout with polio, sank quickly She died at midnight on November 6

Margaret, Bill, and Grant all went wild with grief Grant had lost

his closest friend Sixty years later he bitterly described her death "They took my little sister up to one of the best hospitals in New York All the hot-shots worked on her, yet four days later they handed us back a dead body "

Bill seemed to go mad Before Peggy was buried he made a plaster cast of her body, put the cast into a suitcase and kept it with him for ten years His second wife, Vidia, discovered it, by then broken to pieces Bill still refused to part with it, but Vidia insisted

"You can't keep it, Bill You must let it go You must "

"What shall we do with it?"

"Bury it "

"Bury it? Where? How?"

"We'll dig a grave in a place from which you can see the town in which she was born, and bury it there "

So they took the suitcase and rode to a spot on the Palisades above the Hudson River from which Hastings can be seen There they dug the grave and silently buried the cast

On the way back Bill spoke "They say that Hell is a noisy place, full of cries and lamentations It isn't It's a quiet and lonely place I know I've been there " Vidia reached for his hand and rode on

Margaret grieved too, but denied feeling guilty "Guilt is a Freudian concept," she explained, "and I don't believe in Freud The days after Peggy died were the darkest days of my life, but I never felt guilty at all "

Nevertheless, she ran from one seance to another hoping for a message from Peggy In her autobiography she describes a seance

The room was dark and someone was holding each of (my) hands Just before the lights went on, a woman at my left squeezed my hand and whispered, You have had a terrible sorrow

So has everyone, I replied

Yours is for a child, a little girl She just passed before me and said, "Mother, stop grieving You mustn't grieve any more "

The lights went on I turned toward the woman to question her further, but she had disappeared

The terrible loneliness remained For two years at least after her death It was impossible for me to sit across from a child in a train or a streetcar Tears would flood my eyes and I would move swiftly away

* * *

She went to a Rosicrucian meeting where she was handed a letter signed with a cabalistic symbol. It read "We are helping with your boys largely through the influence and help of your dear little girl who is in such close touch with them. Through her closeness we can accurately sense their needs and so help better. It will be a good summer for all those at the Round Table. We are on the Rising Tide."

There was a second similar letter, and a third written in a large, childish hand. "Dear mother, We can be together a lot at Aunt Nan's so you'll know. Stuart and Grant will help each other. It will be a beautiful summer for all of this. Good night, dear mother. Love and kisses Peggy."

Margaret wrote across the last "Said to be Peggy's message to M S," and put it carefully away.

Every year for the rest of her life she crossed out the page in her diary dated May 31 with a long diagonal line, writing at its head "Peggy's birthday." She also crossed out the page dated November 6, writing at the top "Peggy's Anniversary," referring to the pious Catholic belief that this was the anniversary of Peggy's entrance into Heaven. On both these days, she canceled all engagements, secluded herself, and mourned.

After Peggy's death, Margaret became a driven woman. She drove hard in one direction and toward one goal, that of birth control, saying that this was the weapon she would have liked to put in Peggy's hands.

Undoubtedly she was driven by another reason as well. She had been warned because of her latent tuberculosis never to become pregnant again. Because Bill, too, was afraid for her, she could trust him to see to it that she did not, with her other lovers she could not be so sure. She needed to find a birth-control method better than the diaphragm, one that was as foolproof as possible, both for herself and for other women. And she would do everything in her power to see that it was found.