

THE METAMORPHOSIS OF CAROL

Christopher, Chris for short, looked eagerly out as the speeding train passed familiar places. It was not the fresh beauty of early summer in its multitudinous greens that chiefly held his eager attention...

"Yes," Chris said to himself, and smiled, "there is Martin's old, tumble-down barn, not a whit changed."

He thought of that summer day when he took Carol Linton to drive. He remembered the least detail. It began to rain and Martin's old barn that day proved a haven to her and a heaven to him.

From that day each had understood. And although Chris had not told her she was the very nicest girl in the world, and he wanted her to promise to wait for him...

Then he had left for England to live with his uncle, and go to classic Oxford, expecting to spend his long vacations on this side. Instead, either mother or sister came to him, or his uncle took him on the continent...

He wondered—his thoughts swift as the flying train—if Carol had changed much. She had been such a pretty, timid little thing. "Just the kind," he thought, "that needs a man to take care of her, and that a man loves to care for."

As he came nearer and nearer to her, he began to recognize that Carol's personality, after the lapse of five years, was over-velled defined to him. At first they had written frequently—not love letters, rather boy-and-girl epistles. Carol had gone to boarding-school, and he had plunged into athletics.

Then, in spite of his protest, Carol also had entered college. It was to her graduation that Chris, cutting short his post-graduate travel, was now speeding. And it was with some dismay that now in the clear recognition of familiar objects he recognized that she was largely impersonal.

"Why, Chris Van Neal, aren't you going to speak to me—Carol?" Chris turned, and looked at the speaker in surprise. Then with glowing face, "This is awfully good of you, Carol!" and he grasped her proffered hand.

"Was this the girl he left, this slim, athletic girl with commanding voice, brown hair in a pompadour instead of a long braid hanging down her back—this girl alert, self-possessed? Men think time's touch on woman should be gentle."

Carol laughed. "It would be queer if I hadn't changed somewhat in five years. Why, Chris, do you realize I am twenty-two now?"

"Very old," he smiled back at her, as he walked to where her pony and cart stood waiting. "You are to come home to dinner with me," she said. "Mother sent you a special invitation. No, let me drive; I'm used to Nancy Brown."

after her. Self-confidence she had in plenty, and self-confidence is a sharp weapon to carry in the battle with the world; it is a necessary weapon. The dinner talk, and the talk in the drawing-room was desultory—incidents of college life, numerous and revealing, chat about friends, but never an indication that these two stood in relation other than the mother supposed. The good-bye at the door was friendly only. He was to go and come when he pleased.

Alone in his hotel, he felt as if in a dream. Carol Linton was a mystery. She had discussed with him, in almost the same breath, ethics and golf; she had met him with an air of comradeship; she was poised in manner. In England, the few young ladies he had met had carried out his idea of the diffident young woman—his type—of whom the former Carol had been the model. But the frank, easy manner of this young woman, to whom he had been secretly engaged for five years, to whom he had not been able to say one word of love after his long absence, and who did not look up to him appealingly—all this put him entirely adrift.

Going to his trunk he took out a small packet of her letters, the earliest: "My dear Chris,—

"How lonesome I feel without you, so far away. I just sat down and cried the other night. There was a fierce thunderstorm, and it made me think of you."

"Mother is thinking of sending me to boarding school. I dread it. Think of my leaving mother for a whole year."

"I know you will be pleased that I won the prize for the best sewing at the sewing class."

"Ever, your little 'CAROL.'"

Then he turned to a later packet: "Dear Chris,—

"Just time to dash a line to you before I'm off to play in a tennis tournament in which I'm trying for a prize; wish me success. Am studying hard for exams, especially in math. Glad you are coming home. Com. comes on the 20th. Be sure to be here."

"Yours, 'CAROL.'"

Chris contemplated the two letters,—the girlish handwriting of the former with its girlish interests, and the dashing script of the latter with its college interests. Fool! why had he not been prepared for the change. The evolution had been as gradual as a bud opens into a flower, but in his English atmosphere and his own crowding interests he had failed to take it seriously. On the promise given by a child he had expected to come back and claim the woman. The other Carol, a timid little creature, he had carried tenderly in his heart. Would he continue to love her in her new character? Would she be the kind of wife he wanted, content with the homely duties of the home-keeper?

If the first day was a surprise and a puzzle to Chris, the days that followed were a revelation. In many things he found her a leader—she who had been wont to follow. It was "Carol, come see how this looks"; and "Carol, I want my brother to meet you. He so wants a game of tennis with you, since he heard you won the cup." Even her father and mother had fallen into the habit of waiting to get her advice. Not that she seemed to seek leadership, but her abounding spirit of good fellowship and heartiness made her sought for.

Her escort during part of the commencement festivities, with only opportunity for snatches of conversation, they came no nearer an understanding. Strong in the independent spirit that had come to her from her college training, Carol would not show toward him a warmth of feeling she was not sure he felt for her.

With mingled feelings of regret and pride, Chris saw her receive her degree. The roll of parchment seemed like a huge rock between them, which he could never roll away. Her trained power and what it represented of knowledge and resources told him plainly that he was not a necessity in her life. Yet, when Carol went back to her seat, with diploma in hand, in that supreme moment she flashed on him a look recognizing his presence. He had won from the girl in cap and gown as winsome a smile as ever she gave him in the old days.

As time went on, Chris could trace more and more the elements of character he had once known. His own training had made him fair minded—granted time to adjust himself, so far from starting Carol's womanly qualities, had developed them.

He reflected that a man's college training really changes him little except to strengthen him intellectually, give him resources, makes him more manly. But in the world, you can not surely tell a college-bred man from many men who have achieved success without that training. He remembered Mrs. Linton's greeting—"You are the same old Chris who used to play with Carol."

But he saw that college education changes a girl's whole being, that out in the world, it is an easy task to pick out the college-bred woman. Assured speech, self-possession, tolerance,—these mark the college-bred woman. The four college years, which had stamped him with an air of maturity only, had done wonders for Carol. At every point she met with him as a companion, and he found himself admiring her. That he no longer seemed necessary to her happiness was the only drawback.

Meanwhile, Carol, disappointed and failing to realize the change in herself, was at a loss to understand Chris. Her environment had not changed her loyalty to him. Her hero when a child, he was still her hero. He it was who had inspired her college course. In spite of his protest, she had grown to realize that by higher training for herself she would become a better companion for him. And now this strange reticence on his part hurt her.

After the excitement of commencement, Carol fell into the home groove of an only daughter, tender and loving to her mother, companionable to her father, satisfied to fill the home niche. Young people gathered around her, and Chris saw with alarm that young men sought her company. Competition invigorates in all things. Chris came out of his dreaming.

vidiness of fall, but to-day her warm breath lingered like the perfume of rose leaves when the life of the lower had gone. Carol did not answer, a shadow crept over her face.

"Carol," Chris asked again, "after all your hard work, surely you are not going to lose its results, and stay at home content?"

Carol turned to him—her face once so yielding, now marked with lines of character. With sudden resolutions she spoke in a steady tone: "A boy once said to himself, 'I hear them say I have a weak face. I will make it strong.' And he did, using for tools, high thought, lofty motives, hard study, just as a sculptor takes soft clay, and molds it according to his ideal. When a woman's thoughts became to me, I understood that my nature was too yielding to make a woman with a strong soul, that I lacked independence of action, that I set myself to the task of growing strong, and college life I took for tools. There I would have lofty thought, high motive, hard study, and my body would develop with my mind. When this new idea took possession of me, Chris, with my old-time timidity, I sometimes hinted at it in my letters. You said nothing, and then I—I did not write you much about my inner life, which is a woman's independent possession."

"Chris, you think me a different creature from the average woman. I am different from your ideal. But although I have a college degree, I have no ambitions beyond my relation to my home, where I am needed, and my relation to society, which I must help to betterment. My father's hair is growing white, and he depends on me for companionship; my mother has unselfishly given me up for five years, and now I must help bear her burdens. It is my ambition, it is my highest duty, to stay with them rather than to seek a profession."

Carol's face wore a high look as she thus broke through her barrier of reserve, and poured forth her creed of service. Humiliated that thus he had failed to enter into her life, Chris sat silent, mastering himself.

Then he spoke in a reverent way: "Carol, I did not understand. I thought—the college diploma—that in a woman—the development of the intellectual qualities is inevitably at the expense of the home-loving qualities. I have come to see that for a woman as well as for a man there should come intellectual breadth, a larger soul which makes her own personality richer as it enriches, the personality of the man. More than that she will go to her home, with a trained understanding of the home as the race of civilization."

On the face of Chris was the exalted look of comprehension,—the look of one who had come from dim cloisters into broad light. And in his revealing eyes glowed the strong feeling of the matured, high-souled man for his boyhood love who, developed into a woman, was goddess alike in her threefold power of body, mind, and soul.

And yet, after all, it was nature, kind even in her fierceness, which broke down the final barriers; for the gray sky turned black, and raindrops began to fall. The only shelter in sight was Martin's old, tumble-down barn. Quickly Carol drove to it. He laughed; college training had not taken away Carol's fear of a thunderstorm. As timidly as five years ago she clung to his arm. Again reassuringly he clasped her waist, at the same time telling her how for five years he had been waiting for her, how she had been his guiding star.

"I have been half afraid of you, since I came back, dear. Am I enough to you to make you wish to keep our troth?"

The love carefully hidden during these uncertain, trying weeks glorified her face, as the sun crept through the cracks of the old barn.

"Tenfold more, dear Chris, as I have the power to appreciate more. Knowledge is power, but love is king."

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Where the Shine Came From "Well, grandma," said a little boy, resting his elbow on the old lady's stuffed chair-arm, "what have you been doing here at the window all day by yourself?"

"All I could," answered dear grandma, cheerily; "I have read a little, and prayed a good deal, and then looked at the people. There's one little girl, Arthur, that I have learned to watch for. She has sunny brown hair, her brown eyes have the same sunny look in them; and I wonder every day what makes her look so bright. Ah, here she comes now."

Arthur took his elbows off the stuffed arm and planted them on the window-sill. "That girl with the brown apron?" he cried. "Why, I know that girl, that's Susie Moore, and she has a dreadful hard time, grandma."

"Has she?" said grandma. "Oh, little boy, wouldn't you give anything to know where she gets all that brightness from, then?"

"I'll ask her," said Arthur, promptly, and, to grandma's surprise, he raised the window and called: "Susie, oh, Susie, come up here a minute; grandma wants to see you!"

The brown eyes opened wide in surprise, but the little maid turned at once and came in. "Grandma wants to know, Susie Moore," explained the boy, "what makes you look so bright all the time?"

"Why, I have to," said Susie. "You see, papa's been ill a long while, and mama is tired out with nursing, and baby's cross with the teeth, and if I didn't be bright, who would be?"

"Yes, yes, I see," said dear old grandma, putting her arm around this little streak of sunshine. "That's God's reason for things; they are, because somebody needs them. Shine on, little sun; there couldn't be a better reason for shining than because it is dark at home."

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