

Ralph's Beautiful Friend.

(By John F. Cowan.)

Carrie was standing before the glass when someone knocked at the door. She was very often there, sometimes examining the front view of her face, some times the side view, sometimes pinching her nose out a little, sometimes patting it back. Sometimes she would brush her hair so as to make it stand up fluffy; again she would wet it and smooth it down as closely to her head as possible, to note the effect on her appearance and see in which fashion it looked better.

'You must excuse me, Cousin Ralph,' she said, apologizing for her tardy answer of the door bell.

'Oh, certainly; I don't mind waiting. I suppose, as usual, you were studying effects before the glass.'

Carrie blushed; then turned half-defiantly toward her grown-up cousin, and said, 'I don't care! If I were only a beautiful girl I would give anything in the world.'

'Why you are—' Ralph began to say, but Carrie interrupted him with:

'Oh, I don't mean anything like what you are going to say, but if I were really and truly a beauty, so that everybody would have to own it as soon as they saw me, I wouldn't care for anything else.'

'Wouldn't you indeed, now?' asked Ralph, thoughtfully. 'Then you might like to meet a really beautiful friend of mine, who may be able to give you some suggestions about how to become more beautiful?'

'Indeed, I would, Cousin Ralph,' replied Carrie. 'Take me to see her sometime, won't you?'

'Surely I will. One thing I want you to promise me, though, that, if you think she is beautiful, you will try to be as much like her as possible.'

'I don't need to make any promise; I'm sure I should try anything.'

Carrie's curiosity was on tip-toe until the time came for the visit. She spent hours in her room before the glass, trying on this dress, that dress, or the other one, comparing the effect of wearing her hair this way, that way, or some other way; and posing and primping, until at last she gave up in despair and cried: 'What's the use? If Cousin Ralph's friend is so very beautiful, I'm sure I shall look a fright beside her.' And finally she had to dress in a hurry and go away leaving her room in great disorder.

Her heart beat a little faster as Ralph's ring was answered, and they were ushered into the house in which lived her cousin's beautiful friend of whom she had heard so much. They were taken directly to her sitting-room, and before she came in Carrie had time to glance around and see what a perfectly harmonious room it was. There was nothing rich or gorgeous about it, but everything was in the most exquisite and delicate taste, and as neat and dainty as the finest touches could make it.

Carrie caught a reflection of the gay ribbon she had tied about the ends of her hair, and wished it were a little less gaudy in color. Somehow it seemed out of place. She glanced covertly at her fingernails to be sure they had been carefully attended to, and blushed when she saw they had not, for she felt that there was something out of harmony between a room such as that and soiled fingernails. She thought of her own disordered room, and blushed still more deeply.

'If the owner is anything like her room,' she sighed, 'she must be every bit as beautiful as Ralph has described her.'

Just then she heard a voice, without the door. It was a low, soft, sweet-toned voice, so exquisite and sympathetic in its modulations that it fell upon her ear like some melodious strain of music.

'What a beautiful voice!' she said to herself. 'If the owner of that voice is anything like the voice, I am sure she is everything that Cousin Ralph has pictured her.'

Then the portiere was thrust aside and there stepped into the room—not a young, stately, beautiful lady, as Carrie expected—but a small, plain-featured old lady, with a crown of silvery hair upon her head.

But before Carrie had time to feel disappointment she was greeted by a smile of rare sweetness, which spread over the otherwise plain face and illumined it so beautifully that Carrie felt all her timidity fade away in the genial kindness of that look, and her heart warmed with her as she said, 'What a beautiful smile!'

Then a hand which was neither small, shapely nor white, was outstretched to clasp hers, but Carrie did not notice any of its defects, in her enjoyment of the warmth and strength and sympathy of the magnetic clasp. The hand seemed almost to speak to her and tell the love of its owner. The fingers, as they gently glided across her palm, touched her caressingly and made her feel that these touches were the expressions of a warm and loving heart; and so, without thinking to notice it the lines of the hand were curves, or to see if it were lily-white, Carrie thought within herself, 'What a beautiful hand she has!'

After the old lady had kissed her young guest, she sat down and drew her out in conversation, with such gracious engaging tact that Carrie forgot everything in the pleasure of talking, dimly conscious that she was being made to appear her best. Ralph's friend was entirely forgetting herself and doing everything in her power to make her guests feel at ease.

'Oh, what beautiful manners she has!' thought Carrie.

So charming was her visit that the time sped all too soon, and it seemed but a brief moment when her cousin Ralph arose and said to their hostess that they must bid her good evening. And after Carrie had left the room there seemed to linger about her the delicious aroma of some rare and fragrant flower.

'Well,' asked Cousin Ralph, when they had gone some distance in subdued silence, 'were you disappointed?'

'I think she is perfectly lovely!' exclaimed Carrie. 'If I could only be like her!'

'Well, I am sure you will grow up to be so some day, if you try,' answered Ralph. 'But isn't it strange that one who is so plain and old-fashioned, and the brightness of whose eyes and the beauty of whose complexion have been so dimmed by age, should be thought beautiful by every one who meets her? Where does her beauty lie?'

'Oh, it's her voice, her smile, her touch, her grace in everything,' said Carrie. 'She must spend a great deal of time cultivating her voice, manners and expression.'

'Not a bit of it,' replied Ralph. 'The secret of her beauty is that she never thinks of such a thing as trying to be beautiful outwardly. She cultivates her beautiful soul, and that shines out through her plain face and attire, and casts a glamor over everything about her. And the best thing about such beauty is that you need never be afraid of its fading. It is always growing brighter and more winsome.'—'Presbyterian Banner.'

The Giving Alphabet.

All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. (I. Chron. xxix., 14.)

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, said the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. (Mal. iii., 10.)

Charge them that are rich in this world, . . . that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate. (I. Tim. vi., 17, 18.)

Do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. (Gal. vi., 10.)

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity. (II. Cor. ix., 7.)

Freely ye have received, freely give. (Matt. x., 8.)

God loveth a cheerful giver. (II. Cor. ix., 7.)

Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. (Prov. iii., 9, 10.)

If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. (II. Cor. viii., 12.)

Jesus said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. (Acts xx., 35.)

Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same he shall receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. (Eph. vi., 8.)

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and dust doth corrupt, ven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. (Matt. vi., 19, 20.)

My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. (I. John iii., 18.)

Now, concerning the collection for the saints, . . . upon the first day of the week let everyone of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him. (I. Cor. xvi., 1, 2.)

Of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee. (Gen. xxviii., 22.)

Provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (Luke xii., 33, 34.)

Quench not the Spirit. (I. Thess. v., 19.)

Render unto God the things that are God's. (Matt. xxii., 21.)

See that ye abound in this grace also. (II. Cor. viii., 2.)

The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. (Hag. ii., 8.)

Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required. (Luke xii., 48.)

Vow, and pay unto the Lord your God. (Psa. lxxvii., 11.)

Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? (I. John iii., 17.)

'Xcept your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. v., 20.)

Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. (II. Cor., viii., 9.)

Zion that bringest good tidings. (Isa. xl., 9.) —'Michigan Advocate.'