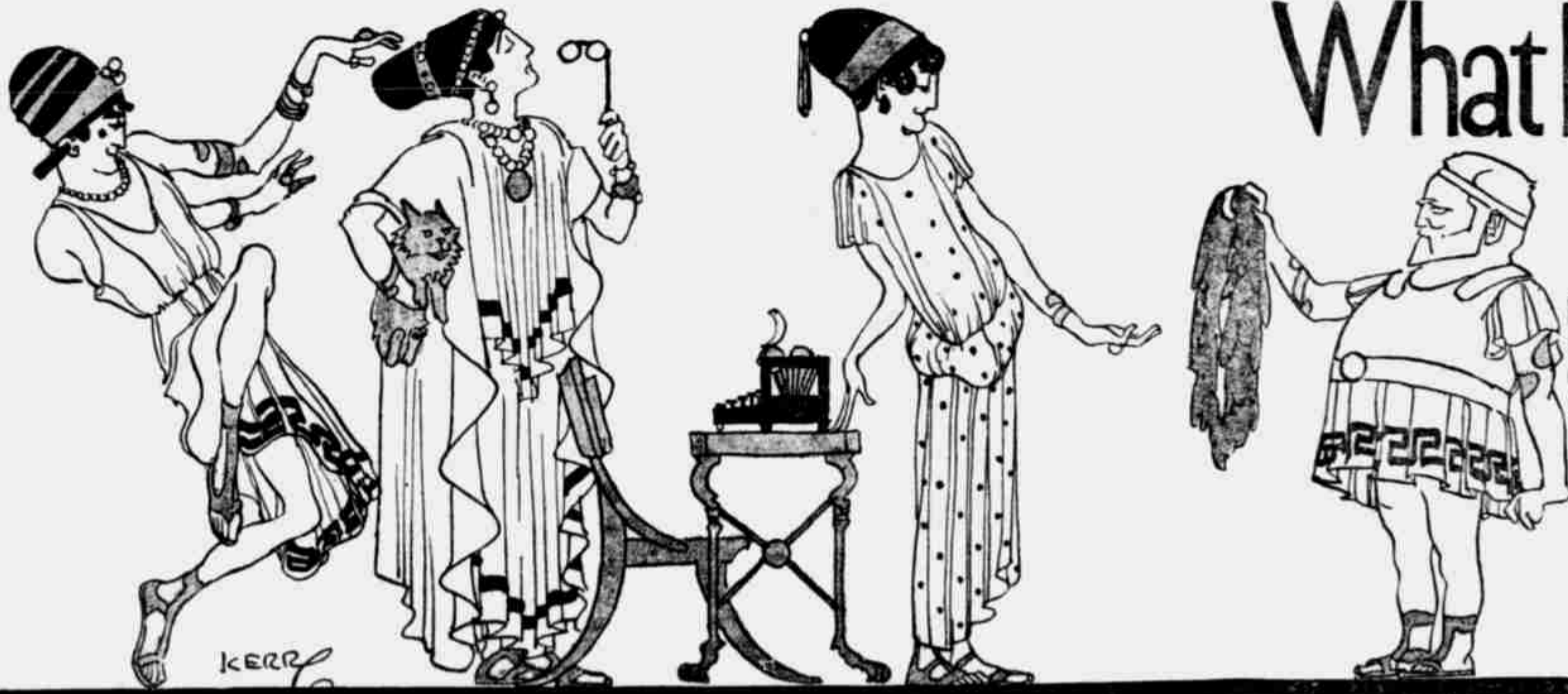


THE OMAHA SUNDAY BEE MAGAZINE PAGE

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What Happened to the "Prize Beauty" Mr. Carnegie Picked

With the Limelight Turned on Her by the Old Steel King, Miss Virginia Lee, "The

Prettiest Girl in the World' Has Had Nothing but Trouble, More Trouble and Still More Trouble

"And here was Mr. Carnegie just like Paris of old, presenting the eternal beauty prize and making trouble."

This Is the Kind of Poetry Miss Lee Has to Read

To Virginia, Queen of Beauty,
O Venus by Carnegie Crowned,
More Fair Than She of Sea Foam Wrought,
I Hail Thee, and I Kiss the Ground,
Which Has Thy Slightest Footprint Caught,

Thine Eyes of Blue, Thy Bonny Face,
Are Graven in the Heart I've Lost;
For, by Thy Form of Matchless Grace,
I Swear I'm Thine at Any Cost!

Reginald Peter Jones, P. O.
General Delivery, New York.

WHEN, many, many years ago, a Grecian gentleman named Paris held a private beauty contest with Venus, Minerva and Juno in the ring and picked out Venus, right away there was trouble. Trouble for Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world whom Venus gave Paris for picking her as the winner, trouble for her husband, trouble for Paris, trouble for Troy that got into a ten years' war on account of it, trouble for everybody.

And ever since every beauty contest hasn't been anything but trouble.

Yet here comes Mr. Andrew Carnegie, who ought to know better. He can't judge Goddesses as Paris did, because either there aren't any nowadays or else they're all in skirts. So the Man Who Made Steel Famous, there being a slump in libraries or peace or trust investigations, and his voice having been irritatingly inactive for at least a day or two, picked a photograph out of his library drawer and turning a bland face to the world said, just casually, sort of:

"Here's the prettiest girl in the world! Her name is Virginia Lee and she lives in Pittsburg!"

Of course, Mr. Carnegie did not realize that this is an abnormally up-to-the-second world; that everything is on the hair trigger; that we have beauty nostrums, tonics, wines, stockings, petticoats, tooth powders, corsets, false hair, shoes, hair brushes and a thousand other things whose manufacturers are all eager to pay good money to stamp them with a name that has unique advertising value.

Therefore, how could he know what would follow when he said just that:

"Here's the prettiest girl in the world, etc."

Now if Miss Virginia Lee had been a different kind of a girl, what Mr. Carnegie had said of her would have been a million dollar advertisement. She could have gone into vaudeville at \$1,000 a performance and we would have had Virginia Lee corsets and Virginia Lee puffs, Virginia Lee cocktails and Virginia Lee face powder, Virginia Lee this, that and everything.

But Miss Lee wasn't that kind of a girl. She didn't have stage ambitions and she never thought of capitalizing herself into beauty advertising. She was simply a modest, retiring business girl, with a horror of notoriety and an earnest desire to do her stenography and typewriting in a clean-cut way, earn her money and save it or spend it quietly as she pleased.

And so instead of getting the advantage of that million dollar ad, here is little Miss Lee pestered half to death, forced to give up her position and her plans for earning a modest living, all her quiet way of life upset and her health seriously affected by the glare of all the world's searchlights so suddenly turned upon her!

If you don't think this is a painful experience for a girl of this kind, just see what Miss Lee had to go up against. The night Mr. Carnegie did the Paris trick, Miss Lee slumbered peacefully as usual. Even when she awoke, unlike Byron, she did not know she was famous. It was rather early in the morning, too, because she had to eat her breakfast and get down to her typewriting machine in the office of the Loughbridge Engineering Company at nine sharp. Her grandmother, looking over the morning paper, suddenly exclaimed:

"Why, Virginia, just look at this! Mr. Carnegie says 'You're the prettiest girl in the world!'"

"My goodness, Grandma! It can't be me; its some other 'Virginia.' Mr. Carnegie never saw me in all his life."

"No, it means you," said Grandma. "Here's our address—830 Jauncey Street—"

"But Mr. Carnegie's never seen me," protested Virginia. "Besides, nobody has ever said before that I was even pretty."

"But Mr. Carnegie's seen your photograph," said Grandma, growing more and more excited. "Your father gave him one down in Hot Springs. He thanked Mr. Carnegie



Gaby Deslys—A New Photograph—Whom Mr. Carnegie's Old Partner Mr. Charles M. Schwab Once Said Was the Prettiest Girl in Europe. Illustrating the Difference in Tastes.

for the opportunities you had enjoyed as a student in the Margaret Morrison Technical School, and gave him your photograph—and Mr. Carnegie wrote across the back of the photograph, 'Bonnie Virginia Lee, a prize for some lucky man,' and he signed it, 'Andrew Carnegie.'"

"Oh, Grandma, even if it is true, why should they put it in the paper?" said Miss Virginia—and with rosy cheeks, but furrowed brow, returned to breakfast.

Grandma reminded her that everything Mr. Carnegie says always gets in ALL the papers. And then she



Miss Virginia Lee, the Little Pittsburg Stenographer Whom Mr. Carnegie Has Made Unhappy by Calling Her the "The Prettiest Girl in the World."

exclaimed after a glance through the window:

"Why, what are all those people doing out in front of our house?"

Just then the bell rang and Grandma admitted one of them—a reporter for one of the Pittsburg evening papers! He was spokesman for the rest of the crowd—all reporters, including two with cameras. They must have photographs of and interviews with the girl Mr. Carnegie said "was the most beautiful in the world."

Being Scotch—and therefore "canny"—Miss Virginia had disappeared. By the back way she reached her car and fled to her employers' office. And there she ran the gauntlet of more reporters, more photographers.

"Go away," she said, "go away! It's all a mistake—or a joke. I don't know Mr. Carnegie. He might think I'm a pretty girl—but, oh, please don't say anything in the newspapers!"

"Click-click," went the cameras in answer.

Once in the office, seated at her machine, she worked furiously, ears deaf, eyes blind to everything else. It was a terrible day—telephone calls from all sorts of people with all sorts of offers, all sorts of schemes to make her fortune. Every minute there was a messenger with a telegram. Her mail was larger than the firm's. She was pursued to her doorstep in the evening. The next day was worse yet. Reporters and photographers had arrived from other cities. It was next to impossible to elude them.

And in the office her personal mail began to pile up enormously. A New York artist wrote, offering her \$5,000 to pose for him.

Photographers offered her large sums for the exclusive right to print and sell her pictures; manufac-

turers of various articles wanted the use of her name and photograph for advertising purposes, offering generous pay; dressmakers wanted the privilege of making fashionable gowns for her, for nothing—except the advertisement. Most pressing of all were the offers to go on the stage—legitimate, vaudeville and moving picture.

And each night when she reached home, humiliated, tired out, nearly desperate, there were more letters containing offers of marriage. Being young and full of lively spirits, Virginia at first was much amused by these. Some contained poetry like that given above.

Some of the letters mentioned, or hinted, marriage in connection with more or less elaborate appeals for a chance to make her beauty return dividends in cash. Here is one of them out of thousands.

My Dear Miss Lee:

Nothing in this world is ever accomplished without co-operation. There is no better co-operation than that of a man and a woman who really know what they want and have the means and intelligence to get it. I am a young man of exceptional brains. You are a girl of exceptional beauty—Mr. Carnegie says, Let us join our fortunes! With my brains and your beauty nothing in the world can stand before us. Of course, we should have to be married. But that would only be to satisfy the conventions and to make our partnership effective. I have long had in mind a career whereby an intelligent man of brains, linked with an intelligent woman of beauty could, within five years, be millionaires and at the top of the social ladder. If Helen of Troy had been properly managed by a man of brains, Troy, instead of falling, would have been the metropolis of its time. If Anthony had only been

a man of brains, instead of one of emotions, he could with Cleopatra have made Egypt the centre of the world for at least one hundred years longer—and so it goes. We have the combination of the beautiful woman and the man without brains, or the man with brains and the ugly woman.

Does this letter arouse your curiosity? Does it set a new thought going in your mind? If so, write to me, letting me know when and where I may see you. Then we can go over the details. Awaiting your answer, and address me General Delivery, Jersey City Post Office, I am,

Sincerely yours,

C. D. Bennett.

Only for a few days did these letters afford poor Miss Virginia any amusement. Before a week had passed by, her employers could read in her harassed look how unfortunate for her the whole episode was. Finally she had to leave them.

"Virginia has not had a happy moment since the interview with Mr. Carnegie, and her picture appeared in print," said her grandmother. "She has suffered greatly; it has been most humiliating to her."

For herself, Miss Lee says: "I thank Mr. Carnegie for his flattering compliment, but I am sure that had he known how embarrassing it would prove to me, he would have kept his opinion to himself."

"I shall not consider any of the proposals made to me by wife-hunters and others. I intend to work for my living if I'm only allowed to."

And Andrew Carnegie, the unlucky Paris, who bestowed this exceedingly bitter Golden Apple on this irretrievably modest and retiring young working girl, he, too, is overwhelmed with inquiries—in fact, compelled to say:

"I certainly regret having been so indiscreet. The matter has gone quite far enough. The least said about it, the best for all concerned."

And there you are, Mr. Charles Schwab, one of Mr. Carnegie's old partners, once said that Gaby Deslys was the prettiest girl in the world. Here's her newest picture together with Miss Lee's just to show how tastes differ. But Miss Lee isn't the kind of girl Gaby is. And so it's all been a very great tragedy to her indeed.

It just shows how very dangerous these beauty contests are anyway.

"Poor Miss Lee! Ancient Troy was besieged ten years because of an original beauty contest. Miss Lee was besieged by 10,000 press agents, managers, etc."

