

## THE UGLY GIRL AND THE PRETTY SISTER

BY JANE WHITAKER

There was no comparison made for three years. Beth was the first baby, and first babies, no matter how snubbed are their noses, or how homely their mouths, or how ordinary their eyes, are always "most beautiful."

And the little ugly girl might have gone through life claiming first place in the hearts of her parents if the "beautiful baby" had not entered the home three years after Beth was born.

The "beautiful baby" was a darling. She had great big brown eyes, soft, sleepy; liquid. Her mouth was a little rosebud, her cheeks had the tint of a peach that is ivory and pink, her golden hair just naturally crinkled about her forehead. Nature had loved the "beautiful baby" and been lavish in her gifts.

Mother named her Azalea, because she was as daintily fragile as the flower of that name. Father worshipped her. Sometimes both mother and father felt a little guilty as they encountered the steady, inquiring look of Beth's small gray eyes, but a little gurgling laugh from the swan-down throat of Azalea drowned their remorse.

There is small use blaming a child that is idolized for being spoiled. Azalea could not have been otherwise. Even strangers adored her, told her how wonderfully pretty she was, flattered her childish vanity.

One day she sat looking at Beth, a sardonic little smile on her lips.

Beth endured the stare stoically for a while, then she asked: "What are you looking at?"

Azalea gurgled. "I'm looking at you—so pretty you are," and a ripple of soft, musical laughter taunted Beth.

The girls grew up through their childhood into maidenhood. There was nothing in common between them save that neither was content to remain in the home nest, but each wanted to try her wings out in the industrial world.

Beth came to Chicago first. She secured a position in a department store at the meager salary paid to clerks. She lived. That was all. If she had not been able to exist on the money she earned, she would have had to starve, for Beth was very homely.

Less than a year later, Azalea came

to the city, too. She did not live with Beth in the Home for Girls, for she wanted to be independent.

The story of Azalea is an old one. Like the flower, they need such tender care. But we all envy azaleas—pink, delicate, fragile. We all want to have them for our very own, to greet us in the evening and to gladden our eyes in the morning.

The man who coveted this Azalea had no room for her in his garden. He knew he had no soil in which to plant her. That he must hide her away and see her only surreptitiously—and he knew that azaleas couldn't possibly live that way. That was the pity of it—he knew.

Does it matter what he promised? The story is always the same, varied only by the sincerity a man may affect. Warm clothing for her delicate body, luxuries for her flower soul, admiration for her exquisite face. What does it matter what price is offered if the Azalea is sold.

Of course, the Azalea withered. It had to be taken out only in the night, when the air is poisoned with the weight of prowling vice. It had to be displayed in places where only rank weeds grow.

Oh, yes, it withered. And the man who owned it did just as you and I do when the azaleas we possess wither—he threw it away.