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Jan. 8

Sister That Wasn't a Wall Flower

By JANE OSBORN

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A YOUNG man and a young woman in evening dress stood in the shadows of the veranda of the brightly lighted country club.

"You've got to promise before you go in," said the young man rather sharply. "I'm certainly not going to let you carry on the way you did at the Bensons' last week."

"Well, I couldn't help it," protested the girl. "If the men are so foolish as to want to dance with me—why, it isn't my fault. I should think you'd be proud of having a sister that wasn't a wall flower—"

"Well, I wasn't proud of the way you carried on—eight or nine men hanging around you all evening and a dozen girls sitting out every dance. So I'm telling you right now that unless you promise you won't dance at all so long as there are other girls sitting it out—promise you'll make the men dance with the wall flowers—promise you'll show more concern for the shy young fellows that can't dance very well and don't know the other girls, I'll take you right home."

"Oh, all right," said the girl, and with an indignant little toss of the head she went into the light that shone from the club house. Her brother followed.

Bob and Nancy Crane were comparatively newcomers in the neighborhood. This was the first time that they had attended one of the country club dances. Nancy was both very pretty and unusually fascinating—moreover she danced divinely. But through dance after dance that night she sat at one end of the rooms.

If the rejected young man ventured to sit down beside her she would keep the conversation general, sharing him with the girl or girls beside her. Sometimes she would suggest to a young man whom she had refused that he had better dance with one of the other girls not dancing, and it was only when she had contrived to find partners for all the wall flowers that she felt free to dance herself.

A tall, slender young man in faultless tuxedo seemed to have taken root among the wall flowers. Mr. Hill—Fred Hill—was his name. He had been brave enough to dance twice with enormous Sally Jones. Sally was a nice girl and rather jolly, but Sally weighed two hundred pounds and was not easy to dance with. Then Fred Hill had worried through a dance with a girl who said she had never danced but once before. Later he contrived to sit and talk through a dance with a girl who stammered—but said she didn't want to dance as she found conversation so much more worth while.

Once when Nancy had somehow contrived to provide the last wall flower with a partner Fred Hill wandered over to her, and, hardly looking at her, said in a tone of forced cheerfulness: "May I have this dance—I haven't been presented but that doesn't matter at this club." Then he looked at Nancy and realized how very pretty she really was.

"Funny little girl," Fred said to her after they had danced for a few minutes. "Sitting all alone with the wall flowers when you're the prettiest girl in the room—and the best dancer I ever met."

When this dance was over Fred asked Nancy to go out on the veranda with him, and Nancy accepted. After all, she thought, he wasn't particularly popular. He had been dancing with the wall flowers—didn't seem to know any of the popular girls. Bob had told her to be good to the shy men. After that she insisted on going back to the place of the wall flowers and at her bidding Fred danced with the girl who weighed two hundred and later talked with the girl who stammered. After that she felt that they both deserved a respite and they rambled down a path toward the golf course.

"Funny little girl," Fred was saying as he kissed her hand. "I feel as if I had known you always. I'm not going to let you forget me. I'm going to come and see you tomorrow—and the next day and the next day and every day after that.

"I'll tell you something funny," continued Fred. "My sister Alice and I have belonged to this club forever. I've been coming to dances all summer and there are always a number of very popular girls of the sort the men are always swarming around. Well, I've always been one of the swarmers, I never cared a rap for a girl who wasn't hotly pursued by at least a dozen other men. Well, my sister Alice told me that it was disgraceful—the way all the men hung round the few popular girls and a lot of really nice little girls had to sit out their dances. Alice made me promise tonight that I'd devote myself to the girl who didn't have so much attention. Well, I thought they were all hopeless. But Alice was right."

"Alice was very kind to make you dance with us," said Nancy simply.

Fred was holding Nancy's little hand in his and bent and kissed it almost solemnly. "Blessed little wall flower," he said—"I love you."

The next day began an intensive sort of courtship and a week later Fred and Nancy were engaged.

"I told Fred the quiet little girls who weren't so very popular were really more worth while," Alice boasted. "And now he knows I was right."

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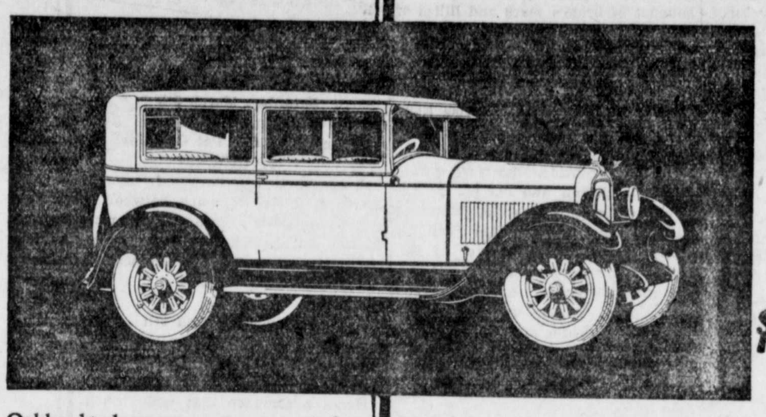

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