IN THE WORLD THAT WAS 'FLOWERLAND'

By FANNIE HURST

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(WNU Service.)

FROM the time Ruth Adlon was fifteen, and had "quit school," as the saying goes among the Ruth Adlons, she had been an "instructor" in a dance hall known as "Flowerland." It was one of those resorts where, for an entrance fee, you may purchase a strip of tickets; six for twenty-five cents. Each one of these entitles you to a partner for one dance number. There were about fifteen girls and six or seven men employed in the same capacity as Ruth. They were professional partners.

Ruth Adlon's fervor for the dance was something that seemed to surpass her own vitality. She was tireless. Fragile, to what seemed a breaking point, nervous, slender, and of a wax-like pallor, her feet, even on those rare occasions when she sat on the sidelines, when a partner had not claimed her with his ticket, teetered. The rhythm of the jazz music seemed to run through her veins, and to keep her constantly excited. She was one of the best (if not the best) dancers at Flowerland.

The system there was on a commission basis. Your income consisted of a percentage on the number of tickets you collected during an evening. Ruth earned more than any girl on the staff. She had her regular customers, and while among them were many who excited her risibility, her aversion or even her repulsion, in the main Ruth enjoyed her work. She could truthfully say of herself that she never tired dancing.

One of the youths employed in a similar capacity at Flowerland was in love with Ruth. His name was Christian Cowen. Ruth used to tease him about this name of his, it seemed so incongruous, considering the environment. And so it was. As a matter of fact, Christian was the son of a Methodist minister in a small Southern town. He had drifted eastward, chiefly to escape his father's insistence that he follow in the ministerial footsteps. He too was a frail fellow, distinctly of a social class above that of his colleagues, yet strangely at home in the gay, relaxed, whirling world that was Flowerland.

It was extraordinary that such an environment could have turned out a girl as unworldly as Ruth Adlon. Her partners were just so many customers to her. At the close of her work-a-day, or rather her work-a-night, she forgot them as promptly as a salesman forgets the string of people to whom he had sold coffee over the counter during an afternoon. In fact, it might be said of Ruth Adlon, that she was a girl's girl. She enjoyed the gossip among them. She liked to walk home with one for a companion. It was seldom that she consented to an outside engagement with one of the partners she met in Flowerland. Not that she had any scruples about the life of the dance hall, but Ruth was not interested. In the midst of one of the most exciting artificial and even menacing environments in the world, Ruth danced along in a way that was almost naive.

That is why her affair with Christian Cowen, when it came, was one that from the very first started in to be of more serious moment than is usually the case in such an environment.

They fell in love and immediately their solemn young eyes fastened upon the goal of marriage. Ruth entertained no illusions about the ambitions or the potentialities of Christian. To her he was merely a darling boy who needed her. And Ruth needed him. On the initial equipment of loving one another deeply, and about one hundred and seventy-five dollars between them, they were married, and continued their joint work at Flowerland until four months before Ruth was going to have her child.

In the sixteen months of their marriage, these two little dancing people, so curiously dependent upon one another in the vast amusement world in which they whirled, had feathered their tiny nest of an up-town flat and settled down to a happiness that was drenching and all-sufficient, except for one fly in a smooth ointment.

Christian, who loved his dancing wife with all the tenacious capacity of the frail, was branded in his make-up with a broad streak of jealousy. Because she was so delectable to him, it was inconceivable that she could be anything else to the hundreds who were fortunate to hold her in the dance. This tormenting quality within himself he managed to keep latent until there developed in the little home certain complications of most serious portent.

When their baby girl was four months old, a stroke of invisible lightning, as it were, smote the happy little household.

Whether during the dance, or in some twisted motion of which he had not been conscious, Christian after suffering some weeks of pain in silence, went to a physician who X-rayed his hurting spine and found a fracture.

Overnight, as it were, if not only because necessary, but imperative, for Ruth to take upon her slender shoulders the entire responsibilities of the household.

For eight months, Christian Cowen lay flat on his back in a rigid plaster cast on a hospital cot. For eight months, Rut Cowen twinkled on her toes, to meet the expenses of that driven little household, and strangely enough, thrived doing it. And so did her baby. It was impossible to employ the services of a nurse in the household, and so, to her despair at first, she was obliged to entrust the child to a nursing home for infants. But the little girl even as her mother seemed to bloom and blossom under what might normally be considered an adverse condition, and as Ruth beheld this take place, her heart on that score at least was light within her.

It was a strenuous, nerve-racking life, darting like a frenzied messenger of sweetness, between the dance hall, the nursing home and the hospital where Christian lay strapped to his cot.

His recovery was tedious, slow and torturous. And yet, Ruth who hovered so lovingly over him, did not know the most tortuous aspect of it.

Lying there day after day, week after week, month after month, the pressure of the secret jealousy came to be almost unbearable to Christian. Evenings, when the ward lights were low and the patients about him had dropped off to their troubled sleep, he was forced to lie there, visioning Ruth in the arms of others. It was impossible to imagine that the men who held her did not thrill to her nearness as he did. It was impossible to fight down the frenzy, knowing that even as he lay there, she was desirable to others. It made of him, as the months wore on, a fretful, nervous, irascible patient, sharp with his nurses, critical, even cruel, in his remarks to Ruth.

There came a time, however, when Christian, on crutches, was able to leave the hospital; was even able, of on evening, to hobble down, when assisted by Ruth, and sit on the sidelines in the dance hall and watch the scene.

It was his idea that this might ease the secret torture.

On the contrary, it only seemed to inflame it. The sight of her, tireless, enthusiastic, playful, even with the burden of her responsibilities full upon her, actually seeming to delight in the act of the dance, was even more than he could bear.

Poor Christian, in his sense of defeat and in his love for this girl; and in his fear and torment for her, he was all warped inside, and of that Ruth knew nothing. She only saw her maimed, nervous husband through the eyes of her desire to serve him and to ameliorate, if possible, the dreariness of the semi-invalidism that seemed to stretch wearily ahead.

By now, the hurting jealousy of Christian's began to take on a certain menace. He plainly detected that in Ruth's dancing there was a joy-of-life.

There was one Spanish fellow in particular, who used to spend his entire strip of tickets in dances with Ruth, toward whom she seemed to lift a face as dewy as a flower. Sitting on the sidelines with his crutches beside him, slow smoldering hates began to burn in the maimed husband of Ruth.

The two things that Christian loved best in life, that small, dancing mother and the small child she had begot, were in peril. And somehow, to the feverish brain of the troubled young husband, the Spanish fellow who came to the dance hall once or twice a week began to be the symbol of that peril.

One evening, there occurred in that dance hall what seemed a miracle, although medically, and in the colder annals of science, it is known as "trauma."

In the midst of what was the routine performance of Ruth dancing around the floor in the arms of the young Spaniard, Christian, unable to bear any longer what seemed to him the amorous clasp of these two, jerked himself to his feet, and forgetful of his spine, rushed without his crutches out to the center of the floor, hurling them apart.

In the confusion and the unpleasant notoriety of the moment, one outstanding fact was revealed to Ruth. Christian was standing erect and strong on his two feet. Christian was able to walk off that dance floor without the aid of crutches.

That was the beginning; the beginning of a great many things in their little household. Also it revealed to Ruth the pitiful, tortured mental life that had been her husband's throughout the months. More than that, it revealed to her the power of his mind over the matter of his body.

Christian, who walks as normally as anyone now, has a paying position with a commercial house; Ruth is now able to carry on a life she loves even over and above the life of dancing.

She is mistress of a little home and of the day-by-day destiny of two growing children.

Scissors Old Implements

It was formerly believed that scissors were invented in Venice in the Sixteenth century, but records show that implements similar to our modern scissors were in use very much earlier than this period. In the remains of Pompeii shears were found made of iron and steel, as well as bronze. Scissors also were in use in various oriental countries from a very early period. It is stated that those manufactured in Europe were copied from the Persian. The oriental scissors were very much ornamented and frequently in the form of a bird, the blade forming the beak.

Costly Tongue Wagging

The undesirable immigrant who made disparaging remarks about the admirable government was not let off with the penalty of mere deportation, wrote Henry W. Lawrence in "The Not-Quite Puritans." It would be more nearly accurate to say that he was first punished on the spot, and then his remains were deported. Thus, in 1631, the General court at Boston ordered "that Philip Ratliffe shall be whipped, have his ears cut off, fined 40 pounds, and banished out of the limits of this jurisdiction, for uttering malicious and scandalous speeches against the government."

Fat Men Not Criminals

Fat men may not be regarded with approval by modern doctors, but one consolation is theirs—prison authorities, at any rate in Japan, look upon them with considerable respect and esteem. A medical officer at one Japanese jail has just received a diploma from the Imperial university for a thesis on the proposition that fat men are rarely criminals and the most crime is committed by the lean and slender sort.—Manchester Guardian.

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Prying Into the Future by Means of Tea Leaves

A few of the ancient superstitions that have drifted down to present days are quite amusing. Some of them work in well when one is planning an evening's jollification, as, for instance, the telling of fortunes by means of tea leaves. Tea grounds, floating in the cup were supposed to indicate company, soft ones representing a woman and hard ones a man. When small, the guest was expected to be a large person; long grounds foretold a tall visitor. If the grounds were thrown under the table the guest was expected to remain over night, or longer, but if left in the cup, the call would be of short duration. Grounds remaining in a cup after the tea had been taken imparted still further knowledge. The cup was turned about several times and placed bottom up on the saucer, when the turning process was continued for a few times before setting the cup upright and studying the grounds. An open pathway through the grounds indicated a journey, its length depending on the length of the path. When the cup was turned sideways, if any tea ran out tears were anticipated on the journey. A ring of grounds, with a small dot in the center, represented a wish, and the owner of the cup was advised to think of what was most deeply desired, as it would certainly be granted.—American Agriculturist.

Training Librarians

The first school in the world established solely for the professional training of librarians was started at Columbia college, New York city, in 1887, by Melvil Dewey, then librarian of the college. Dewey's plan for such a school had been presented to the American Library association as early as 1883, but was opposed by some of the leading librarians. Opposition gradually gave way, however, as the value of formal professional training for library workers was demonstrated, and other schools were established in various parts of the country beginning with the Pratt Institute of Library Science in 1890.

North Dakota Settlement

It is believed that a party of Frenchmen led by Pierre de la Verendrye were the first Europeans to set foot on the territory now comprising the state of North Dakota. This party crossed from the Assiniboine river in Canada to the Missouri river in 1738 and were searching for a "river to the west." In 1742 two sons of Verendrye passed over the same region on the same mission, but after months of wandering southwest of the Missouri they were forced to return. In 1780 a French trader settled at Pembina in what is now North Dakota.

In the Same Boat

"Do you know what the hanging committee have done?" said the first artist. "They've ruined my picture by putting it next to the worst daub in the exhibition."

"I've got the same complaint," said the second artist. "I looked in yesterday, and I found they've hung my picture beside an absolutely frightful thing. Don't know what the place is coming to."

"How do you do, you fellows?" said artist number three, joining them. "I see they've hung your pictures side by side this year."

Imposing State Capitol

The Nebraska state capitol at Lincoln is a notable innovation in American state edifices. It is a broad, low main building 400 feet square, constructed around four courts. In the center rises an impressive square tower 400 feet high. The facade, with its setback, suggests that of the Pitti palace at Florence (1430); while the tower indicates modern German influence, recalling at the same time the turreted structure over the crossing in the older cathedral at Salamanca, Spain. Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue was the architect.

Hunger Now Good Form

Every school child used to be asked these two questions: Do you live to eat? Or do you eat to live? When he replied that he ate to live, his teacher was gratified by his intelligent discrimination.

Now the fashion has changed—appetite is stylish, and hunger is in good form, according to the etiquette tipsters of the Woman's Home Companion. They assert that society is now unanimous in ruling that nowadays no one wishes to eat merely to live. It is recognized frankly "that eating has a part in mental happiness, efficiency and good health."

No Oil in Car

The wife of a Longmeadow man recently learned to operate their rather antique automobile. The man himself, to make his garage more clean, now that his wife would use it, placed an oildrip pan under the car. For two weeks he was gone on a business trip, of such a flying natufe that he used the train, leaving the care of the car to his wife.

Last evening he returned home, went to the garage and noted the pan had been removed from in under the car. Upon going in the house, he asked friend wife, How come? Said the little woman (she feels pretty small now, anyway), "Oh, I guess the children moved it. Anyway, there isn't any oil in the car. I looked a couple of days ago, and thought when you came home you could put some in."—Springfield Union.

Glad She Was Fooled

After overhearing a remark by his father that the age of a tree may be estimated by the number of rings about its trunk, a small boy threw a scare at his mother's party. The boy looked confidently into the face of one of the guests, who was on the further side of forty and was fondling her necklace, and remarked, "Lady, I can tell how old you are." Amid frantic attempts at hushing he managed to get out:

"You are twenty-two. I counted the number of rings on your necklace." The lady hugged the boy and the mother sighed her deep relief.

Noted Educator

William H. McGuffey, author of McGuffey's school reader, was born in Washington county, Pa., in 1800, and graduated at Washington college, Pa., in 1825. He was professor, first, of ancient languages and later of moral philosophy in Miami university in 1830-1839, president of Ohio university in 1839-1843 and professor of moral philosophy in the University of Virginia from 1845 until his death, in 1873. He compiled the so-called "Eclectic Series" of readers and other school books, of which immense numbers were sold.

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