

The Yellow Butterfly

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The only difference was that the soul of the Lady Joyee let itself be seen; and in such a pretty form that could frighten none of us, and yet let us know that she was there all the time, and suggesting, too, in her happy, dancing ways, that not only she was happy, but that everywhere in God's universe it was a good and happy world."

"But sometimes," said Pervenche thoughtfully, "the butterfly meant—" and she hesitated to say her whole thought—"something else."

"I didn't answer her, but patted her hand; and here Asra helped me."

"Let grandad go on with the story," he said. So I went on.

"It took a little while, as I said, to get the dancing properly started. Every one was secretly thinking of the strange butterfly. But by degrees we began to regain our spirits; the fiddles in the gallery began to have their way with us, and soon the hall was a whirl of happy couples, pretty shoulders and bright eyes, with young gallants looking love into them, just as it has been since the beginning of the world."

"But your uncle took little part in the gaiety. He stood aside, for the most part, in the shadow of the great window-bay, with a thoughtful look on his face. I went over to him, and, answering the look in his eyes, pressed his hand furtively. But neither of us said anything till I began gently to rally him upon his melancholy. Then presently, as if he had faced and fought out something in the silence of his brave heart, he suddenly threw off the shadow, and stepping out on the floor at once became, to all appearance, as merry as the rest."

"So the hours went by until near midnight, when in view of the still more ambitious festivities of the morrow, which was, of course, Christmas Day, it was the custom to bring our revels to an end, so that we might all get a good night's rest. So the chimes in the old belfry in the west wing striking the quarter hour to midnight was a signal for us all to get ready for the last dance of the evening, which then, as I believe still, was 'Sir Roger de Coverley.' The company ranged itself in long lines waiting for the music to begin. My brother Henry, for some reason, seemed to hesitate a moment as though he was reluctant to join it, but in another moment he had made up his mind, and the pretty old dance began with its quaint figures, its gallant interchange of partners and weaving of upraised arms and lowering of pretty heads. While it was still going on, the deep tones of the old clock resounded through the house, beginning to strike the hour of midnight."

"Still the dance went on, and as the clock struck the last solemn stroke a sudden startled look came over your grand-uncle's face, and confused him in taking the hand of his oncoming partner. He gazed before him strangely, as though at someone who had suddenly glided between him and his partner, yet to our eyes there seemed no one there. He, however, had seen a bright-faced girl glide into the hall, dressed in brocade satin, with powdered hair, a long eun lying on her neck and a scarlet rose beneath her ear (and it was she who had come between him and his partner) and held out her hand to him with the sweetest of smiles."

Then he was seen to be fainting, and at a sign from your uncle Cuthbert, the music stopped in the middle of a bar, and your uncle and I carried him to a chair, and the young people at a word trooped off to their rooms, quiet and frightened."

"Your uncle Henry is a little unwell," they were told, but he will be alright tomorrow."

"And so he was."

"But—" asked Pervenche, after a while.

"Well, dear children, you have guessed what had happened. Your grand-uncle died next May."

"It was the Lady Joyee that had come to take him away, wasn't it?" asked Pervenche.

"Yes! that was it."

"And the butterfly had meant that too?"

"Yes."

"And did the Lady Joyee always come like that to dance 'Sir Roger de Coverley' on Christmas Eve?"

"Yes, she often did."

"Whenever anyone—" began Pervenche.

"Yes!" I said, "and there is a tradition in the family that is supposed to explain it. She was, as you will have understood, and, as you can see from her portrait, a very merry young woman; and, above everything else in the world, she loved dancing. She could never have enough of it. In her day 'Sir Roger de Coverley' was a new dance. The famous Mr. Addison—I am sure you know him, Pervenche—had made it fashionable through his little magazine, 'The Spectator.' And just as young people nowadays go half mad over a new dance—these tangoes and such like your old grandad doesn't like a bit—so it used to be then with those beautiful dances that seem so old-fashioned nowadays, but then were still new and exciting. And one Christmas Eve, long ago, the Lady Joyee couldn't have enough of 'Sir Roger de Coverley' and would have it over and over again, till the musicians in the gallery were ready to drop. She was only just married then, and everyone loved her for her merry ways and kind heart, and so they humored her, time and time again, till suddenly she gave a little cry and fainted away! She had danced too much for her kind young heart. And so it is that whenever 'Sir Roger de Coverley' is danced in the old hall she still wants to join in, but whoever she chooses for a partner—"

"Yes! I know," said the wise little Pervenche.

And we all sat in silence in the orange-orchard a long while, with the booming of the far-off surf in our ears. Presently Asra broke the silence.

"But it was too bad that our great-uncle Henry wasn't able to finish his story," he said. "Every one must have been very disappointed."—By special permission of the Delineator of New York.

Hearts and Hazards

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Mrs. Abbott, watching the experiment in trepidation and with slight hope of its success, felt a throb of joy when the intelligent animal, springing erect, cocked both ears forward alertly and, wheeling, bounded away toward home. In a few seconds he was swallowed up in the swirling snow.

Her doubt returned, however, in the long, tormenting wait which followed, and more than once she was sorry she had not gone herself. Every conceivable contingency occurred to increase her torment: What if the note became dislodged? Or suppose Nestor shouldn't go to the house at all, but stopped at the barn? Or suppose Steve had gone to bed? The doors were closed, and Nestor couldn't enter the house, and what if he failed to bark?

No doubts of this sort troubled Ben. He had raised Nestor from puppyhood, and he knew the dog like a brother. He knew his remarkable intellect, and had tested it time and again, and he knew, also, that the dog would not fail him now.

His emotions, therefore, differed somewhat from his mother's when both heard the sounds of a furiously approaching vehicle.

And now Steve was here, and Ben, half unconscious, was wrapped in blankets and helped into the buggy, and the homeward drive was begun. And Ben, almost exhausted by the siege of unceasing pain and exposure, felt himself sinking into oblivion as the carriage wheels crunched slowly through the hard snow. He struggled against the feeling in vain, and his last thought, before he lost consciousness, was:

"She and Henkel, indirectly, are responsible for this. If it hadn't been for Henkel . . . and her engagement . . ."

The doctor rose from Ben's bedside and, moving toward the hall, signed to Mrs. Abbott to follow.

"Don't worry about his ankle," he said when the bedroom door was closed behind them. "That will soon knit and

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