

# THE COURIER

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## The GRUB and the BUTTERFLY

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THERE is no doubt about it; some of the flowers in the garden of joy wither up and die when a man realizes for the first time that instead of being regarded as a man he is regarded as a husband. This I can make clearer by a little incident.

It occurred as far back as the first dance to which Felicia and I went after our marriage. It was a large dance, and though I am no more light-minded than my neighbours, I confess to a childish joy in a good dance. Indeed, I had often wondered why the husbands I knew, who had blithely footed it in their young days, had now to be drugged and bound ere their wives could carry them off triumphant to a dancing party. Among other reasons why this should be so, I was shortly to learn the principal one.

The dance was an informal one, but fairly large. In the course of a few moments I was presented to a girl in flame-coloured clothes. She had large brown eyes and a smooth, childish brow and a childish mouth. She looked, indeed, like a very beautiful little girl whom a fairy godmother had touched with a wand and made to grow up overnight, and dressed up very wonderfully and sent out to a party. But behind this mask of childishness there flickered and gleamed a demon of mischief. Indeed, a most delectable little girl, altogether, was what I thought.

We danced. She danced as she looked she would, and as she danced she looked into my eyes. Having been dead to the world because of my Felicia, I had forgotten girls did this, and it came to me with a shock of pleasant surprise. She tried on me one after another of her charming, innocent artillery of coquetties. As I say, I had forgotten girls acted this way. It was like waking up after a long sleep.

How sincerely glad I was that they did so I showed artlessly. I felt like a mariner returned from a long sea voyage who sees beautiful women afresh, after months on the salt water. We sat out a dance or two in a convenient corner. "How beautiful," I thought, "is the world. We really should go out oftener." The tide of enjoyment rose high within me.

THEN, because I was as innocent of the world I found myself in as a new-laid egg, and seeing Felicia walking past:

"I should like to have you meet my wife," says I. "I should love to meet Mrs. Jeffers," returned my partner, with every cordiality.

I effected the introduction, and we sailed away. But where those innocent coquetties that had so pleased me a moment before? "Gone with the snows of yesterday," nor could any cajolment of mine bring from her an answering flicker. The little sparkle of awakening interest was replaced by a staid friendliness. I might have been dancing with my sister. It was all very depressing.

I took my partner back to her place and soon had the chagrin of seeing the mischief in her eyes re-awaken at the call of a wobble-kneed, chinless youth with lank drab hair. Gloom settled on me. I danced with some married women I knew, and talked with some old ladies. I danced with Felicia—who wasn't interested in me. She did it, I felt, much as she might give orders about the pressing of my clothes—part of one of her wifely duties, and to show the world at large that we were good friends, though married.

In the carriage home:

"What happened to you?" Felicia asked me. "You

seemed to be having such fun the first part of the evening, and then, all of a sudden, you turned sulky."

"What happened to me, Felicia, was this," I replied with dignity. "I discovered one of Nature's laws which isn't flattering to my vanity. The career of man is exactly opposite to that of the butterfly. Man starts with wings; then he enters into the cocoon of marriage; presently he eats his way out into the world and expects to fly. He finds that instead of being possessed of iridescent wings, he is nothing but a useful grub. It is no doubt good for the world that this should be so, Felicia, but it is depressing for the grub."

"Piffle!" consoled Felicia. Then she said, dreamily: "Did you notice what a heavenly dancer that long-legged man with the red hair was?"

I looked at Felicia. There are things about my wife that I never quite understand. Why should she have expected me to notice the gymnastics of a long-legged youth with red hair? I ignored her remark.

"There are countries, Felicia, where it is the woman who retires into the cocoon and emerges, as I have said, a useful grub. If you lived in one of these, you would have listened with more sympathetic attention."

"I asked him to call," replied Felicia.

It was a series of experiences like this which taught me the difference between a man and a mere husband. We continued to go to dances, and I found myself becoming a frequenter of the smoking room and an attache of elderly ladies. Felicia, instead of sympathizing with me, complained that I didn't seem to have a good time, and that I was on her mind.

"I perform my useful, if humble, function," I told Felicia. "Let me alone. I will cheerfully dance with all the girls who don't find partners. I will sit in the smoking room, doing harm to no one. I will talk to the old ladies. But I refuse to have my feelings trampled on by misses who find more excitement in dancing with any flat-footed, freckle-handed, turkey-necked, unmarried kid than with a decent married man!"

Occasionally a flicker of sunlight diversified my monotonous existence as a husband. Now and then one of the older girls would smile at me impudently, signifying that, husband or no, it was all the same to her. Occasionally a married woman, whose husband no doubt treated her badly, would make me the temporary solace of her disappointed heart.

So I went on with my role of encourager of the aged, and partner to the unsuccessful, until one day—or rather one evening—there drifted into my life

a little girl as young as spring, with the smile of an indecorous angel, and pale gold as to the hair. It was Felicia who introduced me to her, and in my lack-lustre married way I asked her to dance. To my surprise, she lifted her velvety purple eyes to mine and said:

"I should love to."

During our dance she plied the blandishments of youth upon me. When the dance was over, and we stood chatting together, there approached a young man with no more expression in his face than a new-washed slate. I resigned myself to have the monotonous story repeated. When he asked to see her dance card, and asked for the first vacant dance, the seventh, the unbelievable happened.

"I've just given the seventh to Mr. Jeffers," said she.

"Can I have the tenth?" asked the young man.

"I've given him that, too," replied my partner; "that and the supper dance."

That's all I have left."

B EATEN, the young man bowed stiffly and turned his disappointed back. I felt sorry for the fine, upstanding young fellow, who was one of the nicest looking boys I had seen in a long time.

She turned her dove's eyes on me again, pleading, "I hope you don't mind!"

Did I mind? Under them, my heart grew young again. The tender green grass of innocent affection sprang up in the arid places. Bird song again was heard in the trees where no song had been for so long. Spring came again. After all, it was nice to be treated by the young as though one were a person of some value in oneself. Here at last was a nice girl, a girl who liked me for myself, who was willing to dance with me and talk with me, and didn't care a bean that she wouldn't be able, because of my being married, to tie me to her chariot wheels.

What happened next rather piqued me. Of course, it was very kind of Felicia, and very high-minded, and not for the world would I have her feel otherwise than she does. Still, to have your wife start in to cultivate an attractive young thing the way she might cause your favourite dessert to be made for you, has its elements of humiliation.

"I know I'm not dangerous, Felicia!" my heart cried aloud. "I know—and glory in the fact—that no more well-behaved married man than I could be found in the four kingdoms. But oh, Felicia, why rub it in? It's all very well to be a virtuous husband of one's own free will, but to have it taken for granted in this cold-blooded way!"

I N a certain way, too, it is highly unbecoming in a woman to let her husband perceive that she's so darn sure of him. I've seen many a woman married to a man beside whom I am a roaring lion, giving him the gratifying impression that she at least considers him a roistering blade, and needing looking after. That's how a man likes to feel. But for your wife to toss you a nice-looking young lady to amuse yourself with, with the same serenity that she'd toss you a new book—well, it did stick in my crop.

"Oh, Felicia," I thought to myself, reproachfully, "how much more becoming in you a little flicker of jealousy would have been! Then I could have taken you in my arms, Felicia, and embracing you fondly, said, 'There's no one in the world but you for me, my darling!' Then you, with your head resting upon my shoulder, could have looked up and murmured, 'Yes, I know—but—' I should have under-