

Fact and Fancy for Women.

BY ELLA HIGGINSON.

ALONE.

It is a bitter thing to be alone—
 To be alone forever, day and night,
 With eyes that have not slept to watch the light
 Of dawn steal in; to lose the hourly moon
 Of warm sun love, and dread their monotony;
 To feel that loved ones are so near you might
 Reach out and touch them—yet to shrink in fright
 And cry "Oh, God! I am alone—alone!"

How many watchers through the weary night
 Feel dragging moments thrush themselves away!
 How many sleepless eyes watch for the light
 That comes in another awful day!
 How many hearts and trembling, pale lips move
 "Oh, God! it is so hard to live alone!"

There is a question that has been going the rounds for some time, and it has knocked at your door and at my door more than once. We meet it on every corner, too. It peeps at us from the home department of the *Sunday paper*; it glares at us from the columns of the big, sensational daily; it laughs and has a jolly good time, indeed—and even wins a smile from us—as it tumbles in the humorous weekly; and it looks at us icily from the *North American Review*—as much as to say: "O, you may sneer at me, and make light of me, as you will, but now that I have been taken into these sacred precincts, I know I am of some importance!"

You and I, being of the modest ones of the earth, hesitate to admit it when it taps at our door. There are always so many who are so eager to answer, in their own way, all the new questions that come up, and we are quite satisfied that they should.

But—is marriage a failure?

The first—the very first—time the question confronted us, it was as if some one had violently torn aside the curtain that shut in the sanctity of our home, and looked in upon us with rude, curious eyes, was it not?

The next time we felt disgust and a little righteous anger that any one should trifle with a subject so sacred to women. These sensations were followed, in turn, by curiosity, and this by an unquenchable desire to read up both sides of the question. And, by and by, it came to pass that you and I found ourselves wondering why so many people—good people, people with strong, broad, clear minds—wrote on the question, and at the question, and all around the question, yet never gave it its death-blow by a good, vigorous, emphatic *No*.

Is marriage a failure?

You might ask, with equal reason, if love is a failure; if faith in our loved ones is a failure; if life itself is a failure!

Because now and then a man deceives the woman who loves him, or a woman breaks the heart of the man who loves her, was the question, "Is love a failure," ever asked? Is not love, to-day, as it always was, the purest and sweetest thing in life? Or, to be more penitential, because one member of a family sins, does that make the whole family evil?

No. The great mistake is that we all go into marriage with blindness in our eyes; it is a willful blindness, perhaps, but it is a very sweet one.

What lover does not think his sweetheart the one woman in the world? He puts her upon a pedestal of his own making, and holds her a little higher, a little better, a little purer, than all other women.

She is so sweet, so good and so true, and she has such perfect and tender faith in him that he grows to think himself the most faultless man on earth—and faith in ourselves begets faith in us in others.

Therefore, she looks up to him, loves him, and will see no fault in him, whereas his faults are really "thick as dust in vacant chambers." When older women kindly talk to her of the "thorns beneath the roses," of the "two bears," etc., of marriage, she smiles demurely, and says to herself, shrewdly: "O, let her talk—she don't know John. Her husband may need forbearance; he may stay out nights, and wax cross about his dinner, and swear about his buttons—but John—"

And she falls to dreaming of John's high ideas about men's duty to their wives, and all the sweet promises he has made her. So, they both walk into marriage with blinded eyes; and, presently, they pull away the rose petals, and behold! there are the thorns—sharp and ugly, and more cruel because of having been hidden so long.

Say what you will, the long engagement is the wise one. A dozen broken engagements are preferable to one miserable marriage. If the love and faith of either are not strong enough to last two or three years, then—before marriage—is the time to find it out.

Learn thoroughly and carefully your lover's habits and morals; if they are lax before marriage, they will be still more so when the honeymoon has waned—for honeymoons do wane, which is another disagreeable truth you might as well get used to at once. When John tells you that your honeymoon will be quite an extraordinary one and will last forever, don't you put any faith in it, because he doesn't know what he is talking about; but when a good man and a pure woman are wedded together, the honeymoon is welcome to wane, for the gentle trusting tenderness that takes its place is more desirable.

On the other hand, do not expect him to be perfect. Ask of him only that his morals are clean, his honor unblemished, his principles high; and, O, my dear girl, be sure that he is gentle hearted, that he is considerate of the old, and the poor, and the unfortunate, and that he speaks kindly to little children. When I hear a man say he neither drinks, swears, smokes nor chews, I am afraid of him; I am sure he has one fault somewhere which he dare not mention.

And let the lover study his sweetheart. Let him make sure she respects and obeys her parents' wishes; that her mind is not wild on dances and society nonsense. She may be a bit roquetish, she may be full of hearty, joyous fun and girlish pranks, but she must not be a trifler; she must not be fickle or deceitful; she must not be idle or extravagant. At the end of three years you will surely have learned each other's faults. If they are ones that you may overlook, and hope to soften by tenderness and forbearance, get married at once—and you will not find marriage a failure. But don't expect too much, mind you! Don't be exacting, or jealous, or suspicious. Don't complain of little things. And, above and beyond all things, don't let the jeweled dust from the rose petals blind you to the fact that thorns lurk behind them.

The women who demolished saloons and paralyzed not only the saloon keepers but the officers of the law, at Lathrop, Mo., recently, have not been censured, as they deserved to be, by the press generally. One of the leading illustrated papers, in