

Fact and Fancy for Women.

BY ELLA HIGGINSON.

IF YOU ONLY KNEW.

If you only knew, if you only knew,
The good that a tender word will do,
You would speak it, and, like a glad, sweet song,
It would live in some heart the whole day long—
If you only knew, if you only knew.

There are so many who scoff and jeer,
There are so many who sneer and sneer,
So many who hurt and so many who laugh,
Who hold for you bitterest cups to quaff—
You would do a kind deed—if you only knew

If you only knew, if you only knew,
The good that a pure, pure love will do,
You would stoop, with arms as white as the snow,
And lift some soul from the depths below—
If you only knew, dear heart, if you knew.

A writer in *Good Housekeeping* tells the most melancholy and heart-rending "true" story of a young couple who got married on a thousand a year. The young wife "could do something in water colors and wool-work, could talk French, knew all about the kings of Judah, and could sing at the Penny Readings;" but she didn't know how to keep house, so we must confess that she started out at a disadvantage. Two months after marriage the husband brought home a friend to dinner. The house was "like a packing case with square holes; there were hideous castiron railings in front, composition steps; six-penny knocker, painted black, with a goat's head; newly varnished door, cracked and splint in every direction by the sun, like a map of Europe; newly graveled path; yellow marbled paper and narrow passage; drawing room separated from dining room by doors which would neither open nor shut." Now a man might as well lock a wife up in a lunatic asylum as to set her down in such a house, with the expectation that she will be cheerful and happy and ambitious to learn how to keep house and to cook. Why, in the first place, there is no one to keep house for except a man who doesn't care whether she has one bright or beautiful thing about her. He sets her down in a hole and expects her to make a home of it. But in this story all the blame is thrown on the woman. Dinner was three-quarters of an hour late; the turbot was boiled to rags, the leg of mutton was black all over, and when the knife went into it the skin came off; the potatoes were squashy, the cabbage raw.

The husband first "got uncomfortable;" then he "complained of good fish being spoilt, and the waste of food;" then he "burst with anger;" finally he "made use of language he had never been heard to use before." All this in the presence of company, you see. O, he was a noble, well-bred husband, wasn't he? How proud and happy must any woman have been to dwell with him in a packing case! His wife remonstrated and threw the blame on the servants; he told her she "ought to have seen to the cooking herself." She replied with commendable spirit: "Very complimentary to know that when you married me you thought you were marrying a cook." The husband swore; the wife cried and left the room. Then the husband took to dining out, frequenting clubs, gambling, drinking, lost his situation, and died in a hospital. His wife taught music, and, after a wearisome struggle, her child died, and she soon followed. So the story ends. It might be pathetic if told by a woman, but it wasn't—O, dear, no. It was told by a man, so it is only exaggerated and ludicrous.

I have known young couples who have married on considerably less than a thousand a year, and they worked, and saved, and planned, and loved each other; made allowances for each other's mistakes and for all the terrible accidents that befell the first dinners; there were always praises for the scorched puddings and kisses for the blistered fingers; there were always slippers warmed for the bread-winner's weary feet, and two sweet lips at the door. Their home was a cottage, small, indeed, but pretty, with a green yard, vines over the porch, and flowers in every window; there were white lace curtains that swept inward and outward with the cool winds, and there was a bird that sung always, and a cat that purred on the hearth. There was love, inside, and contentment. Heigh-ho! The cottage has grown to a mansion now, and the kisses for the little wife's hands are forgotten; so are the kisses at the door, for the matter of that, and the warm slippers; the puddings are never scorched now by the French cook, but, somehow, they don't taste half so good; where once the husband shaved the pretty lawn, a gardener goes with stately tread. It is all very grand and perfect, but—O, dear! Where are the love and the kisses and the contentment?

Don't let any one frighten you out of marrying on a thousand a year, young sweethearts, because if you both do your parts faithfully you will be much happier in the cottage than you will be in the mansion, by and by, on ten thousand a year. Let me tell you that many a rich woman has stood in her elegant home and seen the working man in the little cottage opposite take his wife into a tender embrace; and she has turned away with aching breast and wet eyes at the vision.

The dandelion should be our national flower. It flames like richest, purest gold on the sloping hillside; across the bee-haunted meadow; in the orchard where the doves hide, grieving, in the long, sweet evenings; about the cool marsh-places, where the frogs murmur with swelling throats; along the banks, where the river flows, singing, through the rushes; in the still, holy places, where our dear dead ones sleep with quiet hands and pulseless breasts—O, I think they must love the dandelions!—they who have come to see through the clear, sad eyes of death what a bitter mockery, a hollow show, a vain, blind strife after empty honors and useless wealth and selfish glory is this thing we call life. We reach with eager hands and covetous hearts for the rich, rare flowers that grow above us—we waste our strength, and break our pride, and wear out life itself striving to climb to them—and all the while we never once see the sweet, modest, simple dandelion that blooms along the wayside; that blooms alike for the rich and the poor, the successful and the unfortunate, the young and hopeful and the old and sad, the woman with orange blossoms on her brow and the one who lays white blooms on her dead. The dandelion is like love divine—it lives in all places and for all people; it is free—free—to all who have enough beauty in their souls to care for it; it gives the gold of its heart to all. And, later, when a bunch—a tiny globe—of tremulous, glistening, silken down floats past us on the soft winds, we know that a dandelion is dead, and that this restless, ethereal thing is its soul, in search of a haven where it may lie until the trumpet of spring calls it forth to live again on earth. It is the emblem of life everlasting—let it be our national flower!