

Fact and Fancy for Women.

BY ELLA HIGGINSON.

WHEN THE TIDE GOES OUT.

The waves of the sea are lushing, lushing,
Forever and ever about the pier;
And, Oh, my God! To lie down and end it—
To end it forever and ever, here!

Just to go drifting, drifting, drifting,
On the shining waves when the tide goes out!
To lie down in peace, forgetting the sorrow—
Forgetting the heart-aches, despair and doubt,

Just to lie down in the Bos of Opal;
Know but her kisses, drink but her breath,
Then to drift out to the passionate ocean—
I, passionless—to a glad, sweet death.

Only to drift with the wondering sea gulls,
Rising and falling with every wave,
With never a passion, and never a longing—
Conscienceless—to a sunlit grave.

Then, to sink downward, downward, downward,
Straight as an arrow, soft as a star,
And lay my soul in the breast of a sea shell,
Where the ships sail out o'er the moaning bar.

Did you ever, in a very fever of unrest, stand by a blue sea, and feel that it would be sweet, indeed, to fold your arms and close your eyes and lie down, without one throb, without one regret, in your breast, on the soft, pulsing water, and just drift and drift—never knowing, or feeling, or caring for, anything again? Did you ever think how sweet a thing it would be to rise and fall with every wave as you drifted out, out, out to the ocean? How the sea weeds would tangle round you, and the fishes wonder at you? How the sea gulls would scream at you, and the strong, salt winds lash you, and the white caps break over you? Did you ever grow sick of the world? Of the people who hate you and hurt you—and of the people whom you hate and hurt? Of the lies, the sins, the cares, the burdens too heavy to be borne without dim eyes and moaning lips and stooping shoulders? Then, was it not still sweeter to turn suddenly from all your restless, passionate longings and find a little child's soft arms about you; a mother's trembling, feeble hand leaning upon you for support and comfort in old age, or—still sweeter—perhaps, a strong, firm hand, "more true and tender than ever was hand before," held out to you in peace and comfort? Was it not sweeter than all your mad unrest to turn, with a little, tender song on your lips for some other heart to hear, and take up your burden of life with a new strength and a new courage and a new soul? To come back to your little, quiet home and find the sunshine dancing along your walls, and the birds nestling in your eaves, and ever and ever so many things to be done to lighten other burdens, and cheer other lives, and make gladder other hearts? Aye, dear heart, was it not sweeter to think of bearing it all and living than casting aside your burden, like a coward, for some other shoulder to bear?

Woman was not created to be an ornament to man, nor to be his slave; for a woman to toil out her strength and life is as foolish as it is to idle them away. In the first place, if a man loves his wife tenderly and truly, he will take care of her; so, when she finds that he is putting the love of gain, the greed of wealth, the hoarding up of the almighty dollar above her care and comfort, she may feel assured that he will not be sorely grieved when the grass grows green above her. To be a wife

and a housekeeper is enough for any woman—entirely too much if she be also a mother, because in this case every moment of her time will be occupied with worry and work. As soon as a business man finds himself busy from morning till night he cries out for a clerk. "By jove, now, I must have a clerk!" Then, presently, he must have a book-keeper; then a stenographer, and so on. While, frequently, if you go to his house and pull aside the curtains you will find a pale, faded, patient wife, cooking, sweeping, washing, ironing, scrubbing, cleaning wood work, and caring for two or three children. These are the women who do not know where to draw the line between duty and brutality—for it is brutal for a man to expect his wife to work beyond her strength.

Some half dozen years ago I knew a man who was hard, stern, grasping; who never allowed a dollar to slip through his fingers; whose faithful wife worked early and late that he might not have to spend an unnecessary cent. Many and many a time have I seen her on her knees, cleaning her floor with a brush; I have seen her, too, stand up and put her hands to her back and moan with pain. I have seen her paint her own floors, and paper her own walls, and beat her own carpets, with great, rough hands and red arms bared to the blistering winds. Well, let me tell you how she was rewarded. After years had worn by in toil and care, with never a caress, or a word of appreciation, or a ray of pleasure, this unhappy couple bought a lot in a fine location and builded thereon a beautiful home—one that excited admiration in every breast. It was all finished and elegantly furnished. The lawn was the loveliest in the whole city, with fountains playing upon it from morning till night; the greenhouse was filled with rare flowers—Oh, each time I passed that house I broke a commandment. When it was ready for occupancy the poor, tired, worn-out wife sickened, and on the very night she was to have moved into her new house she gave one long sigh and went home to a land whence there is no returning. In five months her husband had married again, and everything that had been planned with such patient hope and love had to be changed to please the new mistress, while the old one with the broken heart lay with care-lined face and hard, work-worn hands out in Lone Fir cemetery. This was the first picture of its kind that I ever saw, but I have since found admirable copies of it hanging along the walls of life.

On the other hand, we as often find kind, unselfish, hard working men who have light, frivolous, foolish wives, who live a butterfly existence, subsisting on idleness, vanity, selfishness, novels, gaiety and fashionable society—women who contemptuously refuse to soil their hands with housework, and who deem a quiet home-life, love and children unutterable bores and afflictions not to be borne. I have seen men come home after a day's hard work, with weary feet and stooping shoulders and hopeless eyes, to find their wives, reclining and complacent, in airy hammock, novel in hand, with an incompetent girl in the kitchen and an ill cooked meal in the dining room, because, forsooth, they can not afford a reliable "help," and the dainty mistress of the home (who is not, however, a home-keeper) considers it beneath her dignity to do housework. This, by the by, is the kind of woman who asks a merchant to send home a spool of silk, lest some one seeing her carry it should mistake her for a servant or a proletarian.