

Fact and Fancy for Women.

BY ELLA HIGGINSON.

"Love! Love! Love!"
Said the soul one day to the heart;
"Do not soar above—be content to love
Until you and I shall part."
"Ache! Ache! Ache!"
Said the soul next day to the heart;
"Do not ever break—be content to ache
Until you and I shall part."
"Faint! Faint! Faint!"
Said the soul at last to the heart;
"For life is a tie—be content to die,
It is time for us to part."

It is not best for a man to fool around a bright woman, because he is liable to receive some very strong thrusts which he will not be able to parry. A young woman who was earning considerable money as an artist became engaged to be married. Some time afterward her fiancee said to her, while discussing her work—

"You are very talented, my dear, and would become famous in time if—h'm—if a happier fate had not been given you. You must give up all such ideas now that you—er—have me, you know," and he fairly swelled out with pomposity. "I should not want my wife to be famous, you know, nor anything of that sort—I'll attend to all that kind of thing, my dear. You are to devote all your time to your home and to me; in this way you can save more than you can make with your painting, and it will—h'm—be much more satisfactory to me."

The young artist smiled.

"You see," pursued her lover, "I have no patience with married women who paint, or who lecture, or who do anything else to earn money—they always neglect their husbands' personal comfort!"

"What is your income?" asked the young woman sweetly.

"Two thousand a year, my dear, and ample—quite ample for my few luxuries, while women, of course, have no little vices, such as cigars, wines, clubs, etc."

"If I devote every moment to your home, your comfort and you, will you, after paying actual household expenses, give me half your remaining income, to be mine absolutely—to be spent as I may see fit?"

"Why—er—my dear, I never heard anything so preposterous! I couldn't do that, you know. But—h'm—of course, I should be liberal with you—Oh, liberal!"

"Ideas on liberality differ. If I did all that you expect of me I should work harder to earn nothing than you do to earn two thousand—"

"You would earn my respect and love and secure my personal com—"

"Bother your personal comfort—I couldn't live on that! Women like to have money in their own right as well as men, and they usually spend it more wisely. It is a bitter thing to work day in and day out, yet to be made to feel that your work is not worth anything; that you are utterly dependent upon some one else; that you must account for each dollar you spend, as if you were an idiot; that the holder of the purse-strings knows better what you can afford than you know yourself; that he may will everything to you, or nothing to you, as he may see fit, while you—dear heaven! what have you to will to anybody? You work for it, and you earn it—but you never

get it. You are to be a wife, a housekeeper, a homemaker, a mother, a peddler-about of smiles and of small comforts for the rest of the family, an angel, a nonentity, but you are never to be worth anything; you are even"—and here she laughed mischievously—"to leave the 'famous' act for the lord of the house!"

"Let me tell you," said the astonished lover as soon as he could speak, "that you have the most astonishing ideas—"

"And let me tell you"—and she looked him squarely in the eyes—"that when God made you He made a mean, contemptible and despicable thing, indeed; and if I, after having my eyes opened by this conversation, married you, I should be as bad. Therefore, I have thought better of it, and if I ever really fall in love it will be with a man who does not sneer at my art."

And she left him to his reflections.

Once I grew a beautiful flower; it was rare and fragrant, and I loved it, prized it, was proud of it. But, alas! we are so careless of what we love most dearly! You will scarcely believe it—it seems incredible—but by and by I grew so accustomed to the lovely blossoms and the pure fragrance of my flower that I became neglectful of it; I forgot to water it, to give it fresh air and sunshine, to lean over it and drink the exquisite sweets of its breath, to touch its yearning heart with my lips—I still loved it, you understand, only I forgot the little tendernesses upon which its nature, being knit of more delicate, fragile and sensitive fibres than mine, fed and lived—dear heaven! how easily we forget in this world! Well, one day, with a truly noble feeling of compunction, I remembered my flower and hastened to give it air and sunshine and water. But, lo! it was dead—quite dead; there was not a blossom, not a leaf, nor a breath of life about it. So I set it away, and grieved over it a while—a little while—and then I forgot it. One forgets so easily, you know, and there were so many rare and beautiful flowers blooming for me that I knew it was all nonsense to mourn over one little dead thing, even though my neglect had killed it. But after a while I found that the brilliant flowers have thorns; the red, passionate ones are brief of life and restless of soul; the showy ones, vain, selfish and cold; so, then, in very truth, late as it was, I appreciated and grieved for the flower that was dead. And I went with tears and bitter remorse to the dim, dark place where I had left it—and, Oh, I wonder if any one who reads these lines will understand with what sensations of joy, hope and gratitude I found two tiny, tender green leaves struggling, timidly but with deathless faith, through the dry earth. Neglected, uncared for, forgotten, crushed to the earth, bleeding, fainting, it yet was not dead, and was struggling to arise, strengthened by that never failing faith, that deathless love that God gives only to flowers and to single-hearted women. And, Oh, I did care for it then, and it grew to be the purest and most exquisite good of my life.

I have heard in the vaguest kind of way that once in a great while men peep into these two pages which have been considered sacred to women; and if there be the least truth in the rumor, I wish—I do wish—that every man on this beautiful earth might read this little story of my flower that was not dead; for it was written only with the hope that it might catch the eye and the heart of some man who has, somehow, drifted