

Fact and Fancy for Women.

BY ELLA HIGGINSON.

LAURELS OR LOVE.

"O, tell me, sweet, where the laurels grow,
O, tell me, sweet—for I long to go!"
"They grow on the mountain's height," she said,
With tremulous lips and drooping head;
"But the thorns are deep, and the way is steep—
It were better to be content, love-led."
But I kissed her sweet, and I left her there—
O, I kissed her lips and her golden hair!
"I will pluck the laurels," I said, "my sweet,
And bring them to lay at my true love's feet!"
So I breathed a prayer, and I left her there,
And I climbed the mountain, strong and fleet.
O, the years fled by like a happy song,
And I plucked my laurels, lusty and strong;
And, at last, I brought them to crown my sweet—
But there was only a grave at my restless feet.
And O, I would give all the laurels that live,
If my heart could again feel her heart beat.

Mr. George Parsons Lathrop has put in a plea for more "audacity in female novelists." The word audacity, surely, can not be the one he meant to use; and Mrs. H. C. Cooper takes him to task for its use, and, also, for his opinions upon the subject. Mr. Lathrop says: "Maiden innocence is not to be kept in ignorance; woman has a right to know all that is going on concerning her; the right to know gives the right to talk and to write." While one must shrink a little from the word audacity, a reasoning mind can not fail to understand his real meaning, which is, unfortunately, clouded by a harsher word than he should have used. Mrs. Cooper's protest against his argument is unreasonable. She says: "When Mr. Lathrop tells us that women are to 'lessen beastiality and crime' by learning, talking and writing about them, he forgets that their influence for purity is owing, in large measure, to their ignorance of the impure. The very presence of an innocent girl holds crime in check. * * Many a husband, father or brother is stirred to nobler impulses by the daily life of one such trusting, and, if you please, ignorant, woman." The day has gone by for believing it is best to keep young girls in ignorance of the great sins and crimes of life. Indeed, she is not to be kept in ignorance, even if desirable; and I ask you if it is not better and safer that she should be taught by women's pens—pens inspired by pure minds and dipped in pure language—than to be compelled to learn the secrets and solve the mysteries of life under the guidance of coarse and impure minds? To argue that a knowledge of life and a correct understanding of the different things that make up both the dark and the light side of life rob her of her purity, and power and influence over evil is imbecile reasoning. The mothers who look with calm, clear eyes on all phases of life are the good mothers, the true mothers, the strong mothers—the mothers who wield the greatest power for good, who send men to defend their country, and who rear daughters to be virtuous women and loyal wives. Are these mothers, then, robbed of their innocence because they are not ignorant of what constitutes sin? Are they impure because they have seen impurity? Because they have outgrown their childish ignorance have they no influence for good? I heard once, long ago, of a woman—a mother, too, by the way—who was so falsely modest that she ran into a house to escape seeing something on the street that caused her

to blush—yes, ran pell-mell into a house and peeped through the blinds. She was not an innocent woman—she was only an ignorant one; she saw something that she had never seen before, and she had the liveliest kind of curiosity about it, and she was determined to see all there was of it; but, O, dear me! she didn't want any one to know that she saw it. Will that woman send men to fight for their country? Will she be able to throw light into the darkness for her daughters with a pure mind, pure language and pure eyes? I have said it twenty times and I hope to say it an hundred more: That the woman who thinks with a pure mind, who speaks with pure lips and who writes with a pure pen can not fail to purify and elevate any subject she touches; and that with such an armor and such a strength she will have more influence over men and over women to put down evil than she had when as a young girl she knelt beside her snow-white bed and felt the need of no other prayer than—

"Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name—"

I have the highest admiration for Tolstoi; yet I can not help feeling that there is something chronically wrong with a man who does not see any good in love of the sexes—who, in fact, believes love to be only a fleeting and unholy passion, which should never be an accompaniment of marriage. The one who dies without having loved strongly, passionately, purely, dies without having known what it is to live—dies without having tasted the sweetest and best thing in life. Love is to life what a ray of sunlight is to the vast midnight; what a stem of white flowers is to a charred and twisted stump; what a bird's glad song is to a lonely prisoner in stone walls; what a child's soft lips are to a sin-vexed soul. Love makes a dull day bright and a plain face beautiful; it sets a smile on lips, and a flush on cheeks, and a radiant light in eyes; it puts roses in your pathway, and pure thoughts in your mind, and a song in your heart. Pure passion is the soul of love, and no love is perfect without it; it is that which makes love deathless, immortal. But the mind which associates animal passion with true love is gross as the one that sees no pure loveliness—no inspiration of reverent thought—in the nude human figure; the two go hand in hand. Unselfish, noble love of the sexes is stronger than all the powers behind the thrones; and I believe that it has purified more lives, and elevated more morals, and saved more souls than any other power on earth.

As often and often a mother feels the baby's restless head pressing her breast a long time after the baby is dead, so, when one is sitting alone in the twilight, thinking of other and happier days, one will involuntarily put out a quick, glad hand to the one that was never slow to answer, but now there is no tender, responsive clasp, and, turning, with a strong, keen throb of painful remembrance, one sees in the ghostly semi-darkness only the empty chair, lonely and motionless, where once a beloved form rested and a warm heart beat. And many and many a time, while the long hours of the night are beating themselves away, one will leap from dreams of remembered kisses and stretch out empty arms in passionate longing—and, Oh, I am almost sure that at such times our dead ones are with us once more. If they could only—only—speak!