

FACT AND FANCY FOR WOMEN

BY ELLA HIGGINSON.

LOVE.

Sweet as the golden honeysuckle's heart,
Tremulous as a babe's lips curled apart;
Fair as a sunrise, or a rose ablow,
Or blushes that across a pure cheek flame;
Strong as the sun, warm as a furnace glow;
Pure as a white flow'r nourished in the snow—
Its soul is heav'n, and Love—true Love—its name.

It was at a picnic. It was a good many years ago, I am happy to say, when I was bubbling over with youth and spirits, and fancied that the only possible reason God had put me upon this earth was that I should make others laugh and have a good time generally. I had, in fact, grown quite arrogant upon this subject, and, if people didn't laugh just when I thought they should, I said something so outrageously funny that they had to laugh. You see, like some of us older ones, I was bound to keep my reputation. I was the center of an admiring group of a dozen; yes, it certainly was an admiring group, and yet, so far, I had failed to make them as hilarious as usual, and I was growing desperate. There was no use talking; I must say something—and say it soon, too. My opportunity came.

"Mrs. DeLang," began a young woman, "suggested a while ago—"

"Mrs. DeLang!" interrupted I, as a happy thought struck me. "O, is that the woman with the freckles all over her nose?"

I said it with all the unconscious innocence of a lamb, and, ill-bred, ill-natured and utterly odious as the remark was, I fully expected that they would die of laughter. But, no! I saw instantly that it had fallen flat. A gasp and a shiver passed over all those faces; then some turned ashen, and some scarlet, and every eye sought the ground. In some consternation I turned me about, and please try to imagine my conflicting emotions upon discovering that I was "cheek by jowl" with Mrs. DeLang. We eyed each other silently. The first thing that I became conscious of in that truly awful moment was that the freckles upon the lady's nose seemed to have suddenly grown larger; they were like drops of blood on the floor when you have murdered somebody—I couldn't remove my eyes from them. To make my feelings more lacerated, I realized that staring straight at her nose in that fashion was adding insult to injury. Then I discovered that she was looking meditatively at my nose, and I recalled that its shape was not lovely and that, indeed, it was not altogether guiltless of freckles itself. Next I became aware that the first consternation among my companions had given place to violent and poorly concealed mirth. I never saw so many fans, kerchiefs, parasols and hat-brims called into play before or since, and, catching a side glimpse of them, I waxed exceeding wroth. It was detestably ill-bred of them, I thought, to turn tail in that way and leave me to get out of my "scrape"—yes, I thought "scrape" and I meant "scrape"—the best way I could. I gave them one look of mingled rage and reproach, which almost sent some of them into convulsions. All this while I was aware that Mrs. DeLang was taking stock of my attractions, and each freckle on my own nose multiplied itself into a dozen. Her look made me think of the time a dear friend rubbed ammonia on the back of my bodice to coax out a grease spot—I couldn't get away from it. Wherever I went the ammonia followed—and so it was with her look; it was like a half-good and half-bad man's conscience! Finally it occurred to me that I ought to say something; so I called up a sickly smile, and I said—

"Nice day, Mrs. DeLang!"—and I made three gasps at her name before I could pronounce it.

"A fine day," replied the lady, with the sweetest smile I ever saw on human face; "O, a lovely day, and one which I shall always remember. I have the deepest admiration for refined, considerate and well-bred people; therefore, I can never forget the day that brought me the exquisite pleasure of meeting you," and she put the pronoun in "small caps," too.

So, now, if any woman, young or old, thinks it wise to be funny at the expense of some one's feelings, I wish her God speed and as severe a smothering as I received.

Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (Mrs. Ward) found a hornet's nest which she thought needed investigation; so, womanlike, she investigated. Then she put her pen into that hornet's nest—perhaps a trifle farther than was absolutely necessary or than she at first intended—and, lo! with a fizz, and a whir, and a flutter, out came the hornets—little and big, venomous and gentle, crazy and reasonable, vicious and kind—and they have been out ever since. I have noticed that the big, the venomous, the crazy and the vicious species are in the vast majority, which is to be regretted. I am sorry—to come down to sense—that a noble, true woman like Mrs. Ward

should be called "simple," "ignorant," and "provincial." I think our world would be improved by growing more women like her. She may have been unnecessarily harsh and strong of language, but, perhaps, if she had not put her pen in so far the hornets would not have come out. Whether Mrs. Ward stands firm against their attack, or whether they devour her bodily, the warfare will not be entirely in vain—it must do some good. If there had not been some truth on the tip of Mrs. Ward's pen, the hornets would have paid no attention to the thrust; hornets are usually peaceable until you make them mad, and it is the truth that stings, and hurts, and makes us downright mad. Do not tell us that women have always worn indecent gowns; we know that. But even Eve was persuaded that nudity was not proper or desirable in all times and all places. And while—as I have said before—I think the nude feminine form, white, pure, sacred, the most beautiful thing on earth, I do not believe that women should expose that beauty to the eyes of men who have not one pure or reverent thought—and we all know that there are many such men in all grades of society. To roll the collar or gown slightly away from a soft, lovely throat gives a vision of modest, womanly beauty more ravishing, and in far better taste, than to wear what is known as a low-cut gown. However, I suspect that it was not so much Mrs. Ward's remonstrance as the bitter, vehement language in which that remonstrance was couched which so incensed the hornets. Still, the sting of truth did its share, also. As for the wine drinking, whether the young man who declared that he often danced with young women who were "too far gone" to talk, told the truth or only wished to make a sensation, there is this much about it: No woman should drink so much as one glass of wine when in company with men, whether at dinner, ball, or elsewhere, unless she is so addicted to its use that she knows she will not feel its effects. This is awfully old-fashioned, but it is a safe rule to follow. I have seen the purest women, after drinking one glass of wine, lean back in their chairs in languor and lassitude, with a feverish flush in their cheeks and a hazy shifting of their eyes; and I have noticed a silliness in their laugh that made one turn away in shamed pity of it.

I shudder when I ponder upon the final judgment of the man who, when he hears that a fellow man has gone astray, shrugs his shoulders and sneers, "Fool!" Who, when he hears that another has encountered a terrible temptation, resisted until nature herself gave out, exhausted, and then, at the very last, has yielded to it and plunged headlong into forbidden pleasures, again hisses, "Fool!" Who, when he hears that another is the victim of some terrible passion, burning, unconquerable, stronger than death itself, and before which, one day, he sinks like a beast on the plain, he cries out only, "Fool!" I pity the heart that never aches and the eyes that never grow wet at the tale of another's downfall or ruin, while I think there is something brutal and inhuman about one who can sneer at a long, terrible struggle between the body and the soul. And I have more respect for the man who, having sinned, flees and gives up everything, letting all know his dishonor, than I have for the man who sins and wears a mask through which the eyes of the world can not pierce. Yet this same world calls the latter an "upright man" and the former a "fool." Some of you "upright" ones—be careful how you sneer at the "fool."

Miss Mattie Shaw lately graduated in pharmacy at Lansing, Michigan, at the head of a class of 104 students, of which only four were women. Out of 3,000 pharmacists who have passed their examination in that state, only twenty have had over ninety per cent., as she did. I am specially interested in young women who are making a study of pharmacy. I know that they may make a success of it if they firmly make up their minds to do so, and I should think the proprietor of any drug store would, at least, be willing to give them a fair trial, because if the average masculine drug clerk isn't a failure then there is no such thing as a failure on earth. The truth is, the competent and reliable and desirable drug clerks in the west are as scarce as blue roses. Let us give the women a chance at the prescriptions.

"O, those delicious thimbleberries!" exclaimed a lady at a picnic out in the deep woods the other day. "How I wish I had some!" A gentleman of the party immediately scrambled after them, through briars and over logs, bringing several berries back in triumph. But the lady was wearing very light and delicate gloves, and no sooner did he see her doubtful glance at her hands than he stooped and plucked a smooth, satiny leaf, into whose crinkled heart he poured the berries, and handed them—vividly scarlet against the pale green of the leaf—to her. Now, I call that a delicate and charming attention. He was not a dude, but a good, sensible business man. It was a trifling episode, if you will, but, between you and me, there is not one man in a hundred who would have thought of it.

Some people do not talk much because they are wise; others because they desire to appear wise.