

He had protested his love so often that he had come to regard it as her surest possession. She could not credit his defection. She had assured herself that he would wait and trust even as she waited and trusted. Yet here was his own letter to attest that he had tired at last and had come to accept a second best in life. And it was a second best, for even now he only spoke of Agnes' goodness; he never said he had grown to care for her.

Then, as if to mock her with the futility of striving to win over fate, Percy Bryce was killed in an automobile accident. The paper which chronicled his death had an item in the Army and Navy news under the heading of orders: "Lieut. Paul Dencla Redding to the U. S. S. *Poughkeepsie*." And the U. S. S. *Poughkeepsie* would sail from San Francisco for duty in the East in a fortnight.

Loring came across the item by chance. She was free. The vague regret that he had been cut off so suddenly, for he had loved life; but their existence had been so separate that even his death could not effect her greatly. People said she looked like one stricken with an uncontrollable sorrow, and they wondered, if, after all, she had loved him. Her aunts came and proffered conventional words of sympathy, but even as they uttered them they were appraising her mourning wondering if Bryce's will would leave everything to his widow. But Loring neither noticed the curious looks nor heeded the common-place utterances. Paul was to sail for Manila in less than two weeks; she might never see him again; even now he was lost to her, for he had voluntarily pledged himself to another woman. Was it too late to break that tie? Was his honor involved? Would a broken engagement hurt his standing in the service? She tortured herself with vain imaginings. He had sent her no word. Perhaps he was ignorant of Percy's death. Suppose he should marry Agnes, not knowing that she was free?

"Why don't you go away, slip off by yourself—or if you want company take Frances?" Miriam said. Loring had not told her of Paul Redding's engagement, and she wondered if a morbid exaggeration of affairs were not producing a sort of remorse.

Loring looked up. "You are right; I'll go. But I don't want Frances; I'm not fit company for a young girl. I'm suffering. I'll go tonight. Tell people anything you like, and I'll write to you. Oh, how glad I am you suggested it! I wanted to go, Miriam, but I didn't dare." She spoke with feverish haste.

Miriam frowned. "I am not quite sure that I understand."

"You need not; I'll explain when I can. Just now I have a good deal to do; thank you for your kindness, and please leave me. You shall know in good time, dear; I promise you that."

And Miriam left her.

Loring did not pause to consider. She would see him once more before he sailed, before he made good his pledge to that other woman. What the outcome of their meeting would be, what he would think of her for rushing across the continent after him, did not bother her then. There would be plenty of time for reflection when the ocean was between them. She had only a few hours to make preparations. Travelling at the fastest speed, she would have less than four days in San Francisco before the squadron sailed.

She called Nanette and gave her orders. The maid an elderly French woman, raised her hands in horror.

"San Francisco! But, madame that is the end of the world." And Loring smiled faintly.

Nanette shrugged her shoulders and wondered if her mistress were quite sane. This hurried trip, so soon after monsieur's death, did not fit in with her idea of the conventions.

Loring concentrated her mind on the thought that she would

(Continued on page 46)

IS SHE ALL RIGHT?

A woman walks along a crowded city street. She is dressed in the "height of fashion." An apparently simple frock of some soft, clinging material drapes itself tenderly about her charming figure. From shoulder to ankle it hangs naturally, yet with each movement it makes every line of limb, every contour of her body is revealed in silhouette. A slit in the skirt reveals an ankle and several inches of shapely limb.

She is a refined, intelligent woman—the wife of a prominent citizen. She is also a good woman in every sense of the word. Moreover, she is dressed in no way different from hundreds of other women who are to be seen on the same street at the same time.

Yet men stare at her, and men smile at her.

Men even turn to look after her.

And when she has passed them by men turn, each to the other, and slowly close an eye.

The lady does not see the smiles. Nor does she see the stares. Intuitively, of course, she is aware of the attention she attracts, but that does not surprise her. She expects attention. In a new gown, moreover, it would be tragedy if she did not attract attention. And so she moves superbly on her way, supremely happy.

Behind her are the men she has passed.

What she thinks they have seen and admired is her lovely face, her youthful figure and the exquisite fit of her new gown. What they have really seen and admired is her dainty ankle, her shapely slender limb, and the swelling lines of thigh, hip and breast that the new gown reveals.

What she thinks they are thinking of her is: "How lovely! How beautifully she is dressed!" What they are really thinking is: "Is she all right? She can't be since she shows so much."

Thus it is that fashion works its harm. The man's opinion of the woman is entirely wrong; the woman's opinion of the man is wrong. It is a mistake that is bad for both.

Thousands of instances of this kind occur in most of our large cities from day to day.

In the last decade we of America have witnessed many changes. Nearly all the things our forefathers fought and suffered for have been roughly thrown aside.

We have seen wealth gain an ascendancy unparalleled in the history of the world. We have seen the dissolution of simplicity, economy and moderation. We have watched the decay of democracy and morality.

We have seen them all one by one supplanted by luxury, snobbery, greed and licentiousness.

And now we are witnessing the effect of it all upon our women.

While the American man has been devoting himself to the pursuit of wealth and power his wife has been devoting herself to preparing for that wealth and power. Regarding culture, refinement and a smart appearance as essential attributes of wealth, she has been determined to possess them.

Needless to say, she now has them.

Unfortunately, it is to be feared, she has acquired more of them than is safe for her to have.

The life mission of the American wife is, or should be, a practical one. As the helpmate of the practical American man, there are certain standards from which she cannot depart without impairing her value to him.

It is not safe for her to be talking in terms of Shakespeare when her husband is thinking in terms of the Stock Exchange. Nor is it safe for her to dress and act like the women of Paris, if circumstances compel him to go on working for success in Kankakee.