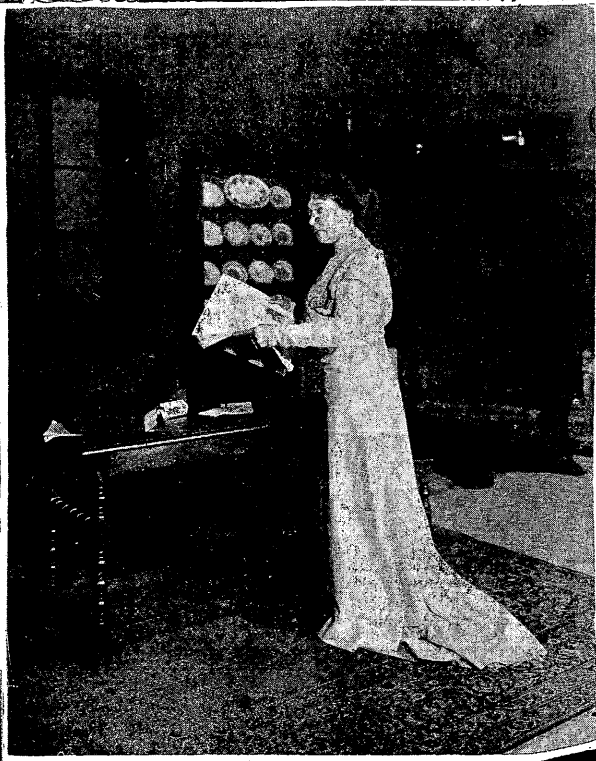


INJUSTICE of the ENGLISH DIVORCE LAW

Scenes from
Florence
Robertson's
new play
"The House of
Bondage"



Miss Florence Robertson.



other evidences of culture, they bought and sold their wives.

Until very recent years, many countries gave the husband paramount rights in regard to divorce. It is only for a comparatively short time that in France a husband could not act as he pleased in this attitude toward women. In some parts of Germany, however, the laws have been for years exceedingly liberal; in other sections severe. The old Prussian attitude toward women. In some German colonies, allows divorce by mutual consent. And so it runs, down to the Hindus and the Chinese, who still show in their laws little regard for wives.

Nowhere is there such a diversity in divorce laws as in the United States, where no two commonwealths have exactly the same statutes in this respect. In it and also in this connection, that in no other nation among civilized powers is divorce so prevalent, statistics proving that in twenty years more than 328,000 absolute divorces were granted in this country. Still, those who criticize us most must admit that our laws are better than laws which give to the man what the woman cannot obtain.

Florence Robertson is to present "The House of Bondage" this week that is peculiarly pertinent to the subject in hand. "The House of Bondage" is the work of Seymour Chermak, an American, who, from force of circumstance, has spent most of his life abroad, and who wrote this play as a protest against the discrimination against women that still stains the English statutes.

The cause which Chermak espouses in "The House of Bondage" is the case of many British wives. The central figure is the wife of an English peer, the latter a man of intellect and innate refinement, who recognizes and respects the goodness of his lady, but who has little regard for his own morals. He is in love with another woman and takes scant pains to conceal it from his wife, in fact, readily admitting when put to task, that he has carried on a liaison for years. This man ridicules the virtue of the woman

an who bears his name and by such "gentle tortures" renders her life extremely unhappy. Eventually she, in turn, falls in love with another man, and it is the struggle between the spirit and the flesh that these two undergo that forms the basic motive of the play.

Fate places the life of the peer in the hands of the man who loves and is loved by the wife, and the honorable manner in which the latter meets the situation finally arouses his lordship's long slumbering sympathy and his promise of freedom to her, providing his powerful influence can bring about an amendment of the divorce law which may make such an event possible. As the play is supposed to transpire at the present time, the right-minded auditor will hope and assume that he is successful in his endeavor, for the woman, guided to the limit, declares that unless he does so, she will take the law into her own hands, and live openly with the man she loves.

The lesson that "The House of Bondage" teaches is not confined to the divorce question. It teaches, according to those familiar with its lines, the absurdity of laws which offer relief for the infliction of mere physical pain, while the imposition of mental cruelty must be suffered without redress. It is a message worth thought and consideration; a direct appeal to the Golden Rule, they declare.

Grooming.

Anciently man thought more highly of his horse than of his women-kind. But woman, as it changed, was crafty. "Why does he esteem his horse beyond his wife?" she asked herself, and resolutely faced the task of finding out. Her first answer was: "The horse will carry a heavier load." Her next: "The horse doesn't talk back at him." But neither of these, somehow, impressed her as being correct. "Just lately," she declared at length, "he's in the grooming. Well, it's just he will groom my mane, and see!" It was a lucky guess, and from that time forward woman's position rose, relatively, until in our day the horse has scarcely a look-in, even at the horse show.—Tu.

lice and Episcopalianism is it thoroughly respected as morally mandatory.

Divorce is a theme which, from the very inception of the Mosaic law has engendered radical and embittered differences among lawmakers. Even today it is approached from such varying points of view by legislators that nearly any one of the male persuasion can obtain an absolute divorce if he care to change his residence to suit the facts under which he thinks himself aggrieved. The Biblical command contained in the precept of Matthew that "Whom God has joined together, let no man put asunder," is not recognized in the law of any land and only among the Roman Catho-

lics and Episcopalianism is it thoroughly respected as morally mandatory. Women of this country have an equal opportunity with their husbands in the laws of divorce despite the varied causes of the states, but in England it is different. There a wife must go to court with evidence of her husband's infidelity and obtain an absolute decree, with all the privileges of remarriage or liberty that it entails; but not so with the wife. She must not only prove infidelity, but either physical cruelty or desertion in addition. Her husband may be ever so lax as to his marriage vows, but unless he displays the brute and deliberately beats her, or is the cad and leaves her without support, she has no redress in law. She must meet him over the moon in the morning or the consummate in the evening; accept, perhaps his verbal

taunts, insults and defiance and, while he may go to court if she errs, she in return is powerless. This injustice has been the source of spasmodic violent agitation in the British Parliament for years, but not yet has a majority been secured for its remedy, a fact which justifies the American conviction that we at least, as a nation, are a little more gallant than our cousins across the Atlantic pond, in our attitude toward the fairer sex.

There is probably a general belief throughout the civilized globe that there should be a uniform law governing the marital relations, but most disagree so widely in regard to its just scope that there is little hope that, even in this country, a constitutional amendment could be passed that would bring about such a result. The differences of mankind on this subject date back to that Mosaic law, which, translated, reads as follows:

"When a man has taken a wife . . . and it comes to pass that he finds no favor in his eyes because he has seen in her some uncleanness, then let him write her a bill of divorcement and give it in her hands and send her out of his house."

In pre-Christian times the precise import of this language was sharply contested, some giving it a general meaning and holding that a man might divorce his wife for the most trivial cause. Others held that such a phrase could mean only one thing. Thus, in the first instance, the early Romans divorced their wives for such cause as "frequenting the streets with strangers," "frequenting the theatre without the husband's consent," or "counterfeiting the husband's keys." Among the other most forward nations of ancient times, the Greeks had little regard for woman's rights, despite their vaunted progress. When they were most progressive in the arts, literature and