

Florence Roberts Overshadowed by Forrest in "The House of Bondage"

A MERICAN women are usually credited with having all the best of it in the matter of rights and privileges in comparison with their English sisters, and those American women who are unhappily married and who see "The House of Bondage" at the Moore this week will find one more good reason for being glad they live in this country. Those who live in Washington or Nevada or South Dakota or any of the states where divorce can be granted because of almost any shade of incompatibility, can look down from a high plane of great opportunity upon the struggling and oppressed English women to whom marriage, even if a wretched one, is almost a sentence for life.

"The House of Bondage," a play by Sydney Obermer, in which Florence Roberts and a very capable company are appearing this season, and in which they were seen last night at the Moore, is a brief against the present English law, which allows a husband to divorce an unfaithful wife, but does not permit a wife to divorce her husband for the same cause unless physical cruelty is added to the bill of complaint.

Like most briefs, it is heavy, except to the technical or the interested mind, but in the present case it centers in a situation so tangled and the play is so well acted that the fact of the audience being enlightened and, if it were English, preached to, is almost obscured.

For the first time in the later years of her career Miss Roberts is "starred" without having a "star" role. There are four equally strong acting parts in this Obermer play, and each carries equal interest. The usual "human triangle" which most dramatists depend upon for a motive in this case is a quadrangle. Here is an outline of the social mess with which the dwellers in "The House of Bondage" are concerned:

* * *

"Sir Vincent Meredith" and his wife, "Lady Joan Meredith," are living at swords' points. "Sir Vincent" is an able lawyer with political ambitions which are fostered and promoted by the "business of Bank" in that peculiarly effective way which is possible to English women of social and political prominence. "Sir Vincent" and the "business of Bank" have been sincerely at odds with each other for years. "Lady Joan Meredith" becomes aware of the relation existing between her husband and the duchess; her life is made wretched, and, like so many scores of other women, she divorces her husband.



Arthur Forrest, with Florence Roberts in "The House of Bondage," at the Moore.