

THE WESTERN HOME MONTHLY

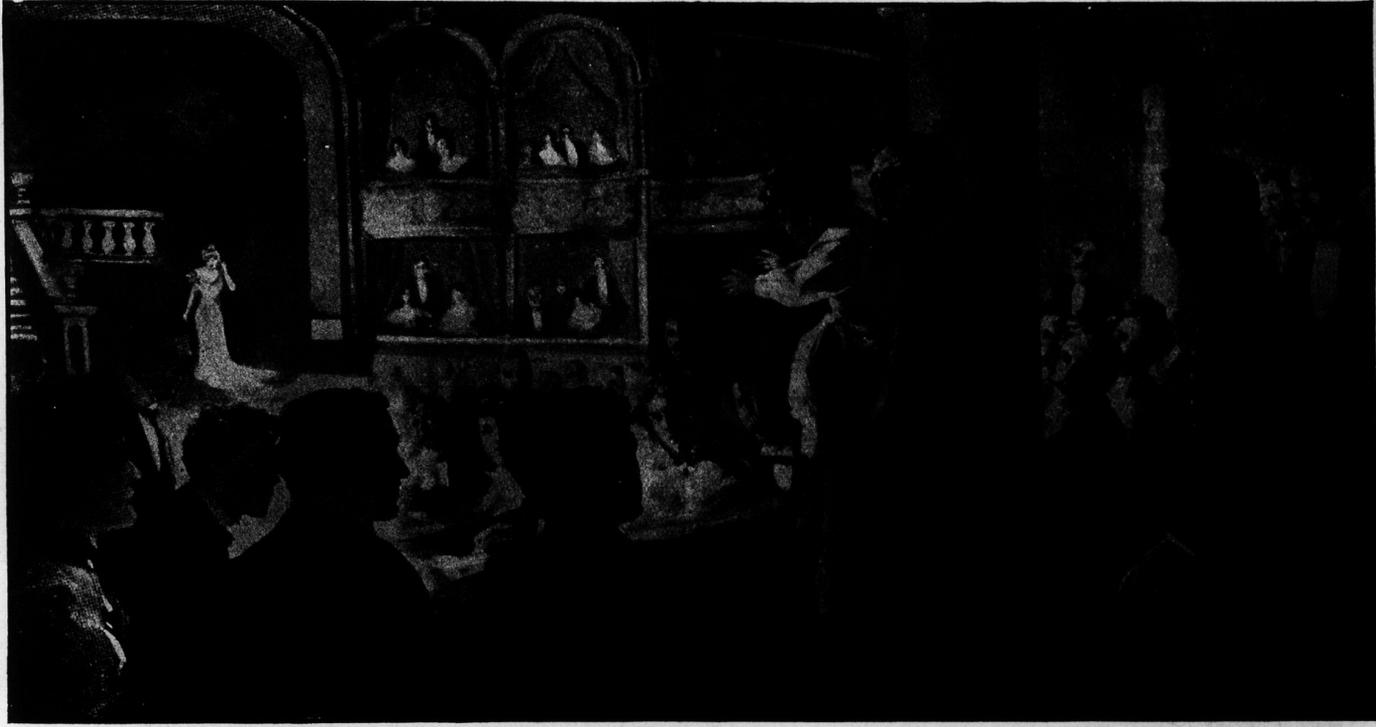
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The Better Part — The Story of a Mother's Struggle between her art and her home—in which the baby cast the deciding vote.

By Edwin L. Sabin.



"Mama! There's Mama!" Vivian frantically stretched out his two chubby arms, his eyes aghast and his tones rapt with joy.

EVER since coming home after his day at the office, Mr. Newsome had been conscious that in his wife's demeanor was a subdued excitement, a covert nervous exaltation, which in due course would be explained. So he waited. And now he knew. With her first spoken intimation the truth had burst upon him. It was the call of the foot lights, insistent, overpowering, too strong, and outweighing him. She was going; what people had prophesied was imminent, at last. His heart leaped, then grew numb.

She paused, expectantly, anxiously. Across the center table, cozy and magazine laden, aglow with its shaded electric bulb, he looked upon her, his paper limp in his lap.

"Don't you think that's pretty good?" she queried.

"Very likely; I'm not posted in such matters," he faltered. His paper slipped to the floor. "What did you decide?" he asked.

"—but what do you think about it?" she urged.

"I do not think," he said, helplessly. "I've been afraid this would happen—

I've been warned, so I suppose I ought not to be surprised."

"But I love it so, Harry," she pleaded; and impetuously arising, she went and knelt beside him and laid her head against his arm. "You can't understand; of course you can't dear. But to me it's life, life to stand before a crowd and carry it with me; make people laugh, make them cry, make them applaud, make them feel just as I will them to feel. You can't understand, Harry, unless you have done it. Then you would. I love you, I love Vivian, I love my home—our home, but I love the stage and my art. It is not that I want to give up these other things, that I'm tired of them, or anything like that. Only, you see, I never finished with the stage. I stopped right in the middle of my career, because I loved you. And somehow I always thought that maybe I might go back—that perhaps you'd let me, just for a little while, you know, if the opening came. And here it is. Why, I was so surprised when I met Mr. Thorne on the street down town—"

she continued eagerly. "Think! I hadn't seen him for ten whole years; since he was manager of the first company I went out with! I didn't know that he had taken up vaudeville, and he didn't know that I lived here, but he knew I was married though. You'd

like him, Harry. He's a gentleman—really he is. He didn't urge me, dear; but the Artiste circuit needs somebody who can do just what I can do, and vaudeville's all right, nowadays. Lots of the very best actresses have left the legitimate and gone over into vaudeville. And he offered me a hundred a week! Only for the rest of the season, Harry, and a hundred a week. Think what we can do with the money, dear! And you'll be so proud of me, for I intend to be a 'ton-ner.' It's my opportunity. You won't be selfish about it, will you? Remember I never finished. I dropped everything for you. Just let me go, for a little time, Harry—for the rest of this season, say—and then I'll be satisfied. Truly I will, dear. I'll feel as though I had finished. You can come and see me often. I'm going to start here; and from here we go to Minneapolis—that isn't far. You can have business in Minneapolis, can't you? The Artiste takes in only the big cities. I wouldn't appear at small stands," she added with a touch of professional scorn.

"You seem to have it all fixed," he commented, absently stroking her thick, golden-brown hair.

"It's my opportunity," she argued.

"But about Vivian," he reminded.

"Harriett takes splendid care of him. She's a nurse among a thousand. She

takes most of the care of him now. We got her so that I might be free, didn't we? Besides, I sha'n't be gone forever. The season closes the middle of April."

"And myself."

"Yes, dear. But you can get along, can't you? We'll see each other as often as we can." Her hand crept into his disengaged one. "And when April comes, then I will have finished; and my! what a lot of money we'll have, too, and how glad we'll be together again. Mary will stay with you; and you'll live just as well as if I were here. She's such a good girl, and such an excellent cook, and knows your tastes. Oh, I've thought of everything. And I so want to show what I can do once more, Harry. Just to show what I can do; then I'll never, never leave you again—never."

"You told Mr. Thorne?" he inquired.

"Well—I signed the contract. I was afraid you wouldn't approve, so I signed it provisionally; but Mr. Thorne had to know, at once—although he was very polite about it."

Her husband's hand fell from her head. She slowly arose, and returned to her chair.

"When do you start in?" he asked.

"I'd join the company here, next week," she answered. "Are you very hurt, or angry, Harry? Do you blame

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