

little chap came in at the end of the melody, just as if you were singing it for him, you know. The audience appreciated it, too. Why, the whole house went wild. I believe they're clapping and stamping yet. And the papers—why the papers will be just full of it to-morrow; columns and columns of notices that we couldn't buy for any money. The story will go all over the country and we'll have 'standing room only' all round the circuit. Everybody will come to hear you."

But still the mother shook her head, and taking up the slumbering child again pressed her lips against the tangled hair.

"Very unfortunate—ought not to have fetched the boy," muttered the manager, with disgruntled manner, aside to the husband.

"Perhaps not," said the father, absently; "perhaps not. Sorry to have made you any trouble. Good-night."

So they left, wife, husband and child, by the stage exit. In the carriage the man spoke.

"It's too bad, dear," he, self-accused, drawing the woman, with the boy asleep against her bosom, toward him. "We interfered, didn't we? But Vivian woke, and called for you, and I brought him along. Next time—"

"Next time will never come; never, never!" she exclaimed, passionately. "Oh, Harry! I've finished, now. Yes, I've finished. Believe me, dear. Somehow, the stage—the stage isn't what it used to be—or else I'm not what I used to be. You did rattle me—you and Vivian! But it was because—listen, Harry—I was homesick from the moment I stepped into the carriage! I've outgrown my art, dear; for instead of thinking of my career when I was singing I was thinking of just you and Vivian, and home."

"But the contract with Mr. Thorne?" he queried, with a trace of banter, but with an undercurrent of great joy.

"I find," she responded, demurely, "that I don't like vaudeville. I'm going to stick to my original contract, in the legitimate, with you, with you and Vivian; a stock company, dear—stocked with love."

"Mamma," murmured Vivian, in his slumber.

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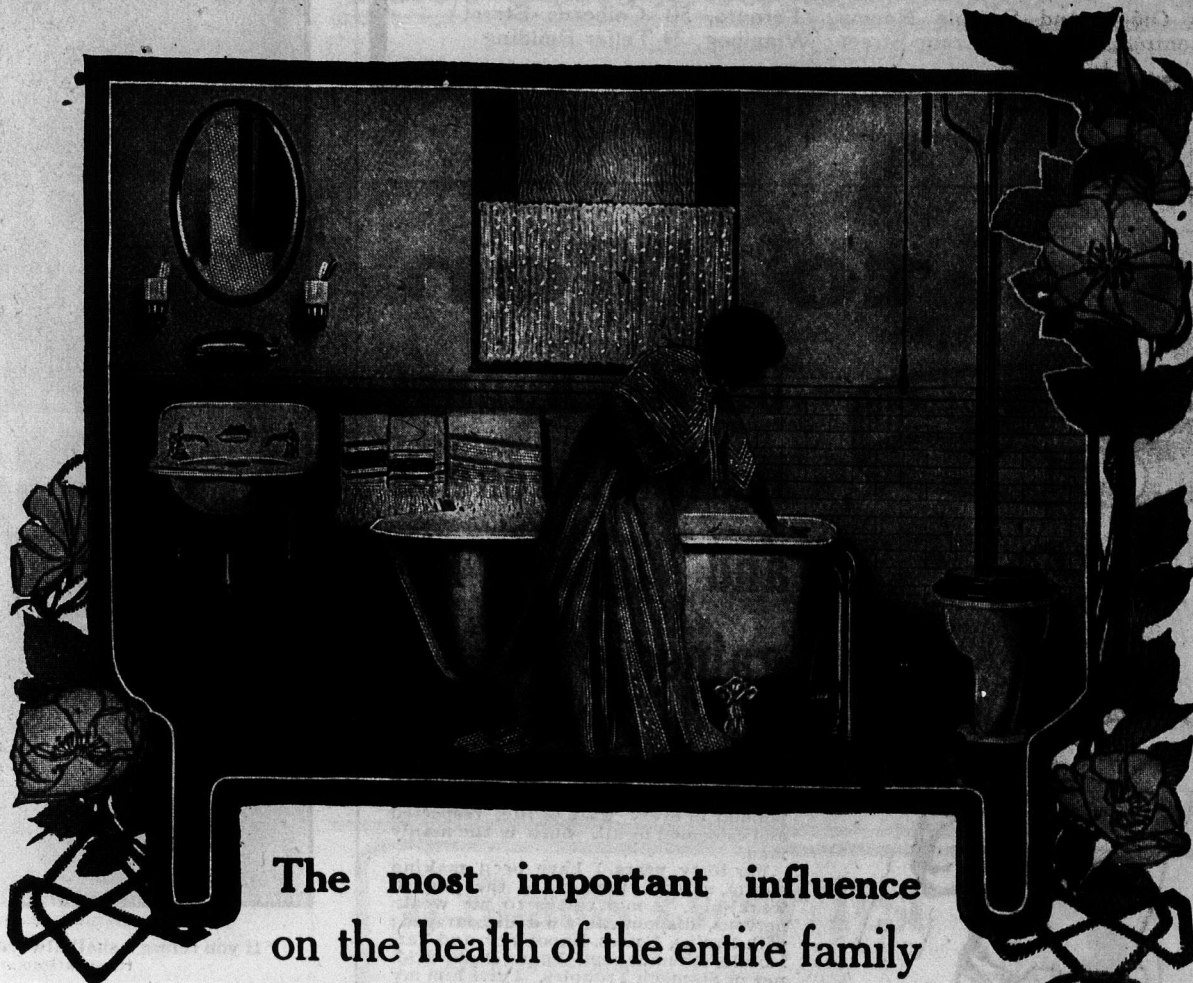


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