



Characters from Dickens: *Murdstone* (Basil Rathbone), the child *David*, (Freddie Bartholomew), his mother, *Mrs. Copperfield* (Elizabeth Allan) and *Peggoty* (Jessie Ralph)

IF you have ever wondered how Hollywood goes about selecting the exact and perfect character for a certain screen rôle, let me tell you of the long and relentless search for just the right little fellow to play *David Copperfield* as a boy. One of the longest and most frantic searches in the history of Hollywood. A hunt that consumed almost a year of time, caused considerable grief, heartaches and disappointments and added innumerable throbs to the already aching head of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

For, when that studio decided to produce Dickens' immortal "David Copperfield," they had no notion of the tremendous task ahead. They thought all in the world they had to do was to proceed as usual. Select a proper cast, a director, and begin.

They were mistaken. For, when it came to casting the picture, they could find no boy to play *David* in his tender years, and the part would be an important one. The rest of the cast, including Lionel Barrymore, Elizabeth Allan, Lewis Stone and Maureen O'Sullivan, were carefully chosen. Frank Lawton was selected to play *David* as a man. The story was completed, and the production date was set, but, as yet, no suitable boy *David* had been located.

In February, 1934, when still no *David* had been glimpsed on the immediate horizon, the search began in earnest. Mothers in Hollywood were invited to bring in to the studio any child whom they thought might qualify. And the qualifications were set forth plainly and at length. But what qualifications!

The boy must be from eight to ten years old, refined in appearance, handsome, unaffected, must have a true English accent, and no professional experience at all. Furthermore, this paragon must have enough personal magnetism to steal each of his one hundred and ninety-five scenes from the rest of the cast and carry the title rôle of the

Copperfield In Quest Of His Youth

It took almost a year of frantic, intensive searching to find the right youngster

By Sara Hamilton

picture on his slim little shoulders.

There, in a nutshell, was *David*.

Practically every child in town was either seen or tested. None was found who answered all the requirements specified. Several were found who had one or two or even three of the qualifications, but were either too large, too small or had a slight East-side accent.

When, in the course of a month or two, it became apparent that in all Hollywood there lived no *David*, the search turned to England.

Director George Cukor and Producer David Selznick, with their cameramen, sailed the sea with the ultimate goal of bringing back a *David* to the restless, waiting studio.

WORD was sent throughout England that a *David Copperfield* was needed in Hollywood, and to gather the youngsters together in merry old London, the home of one Charles Dickens.

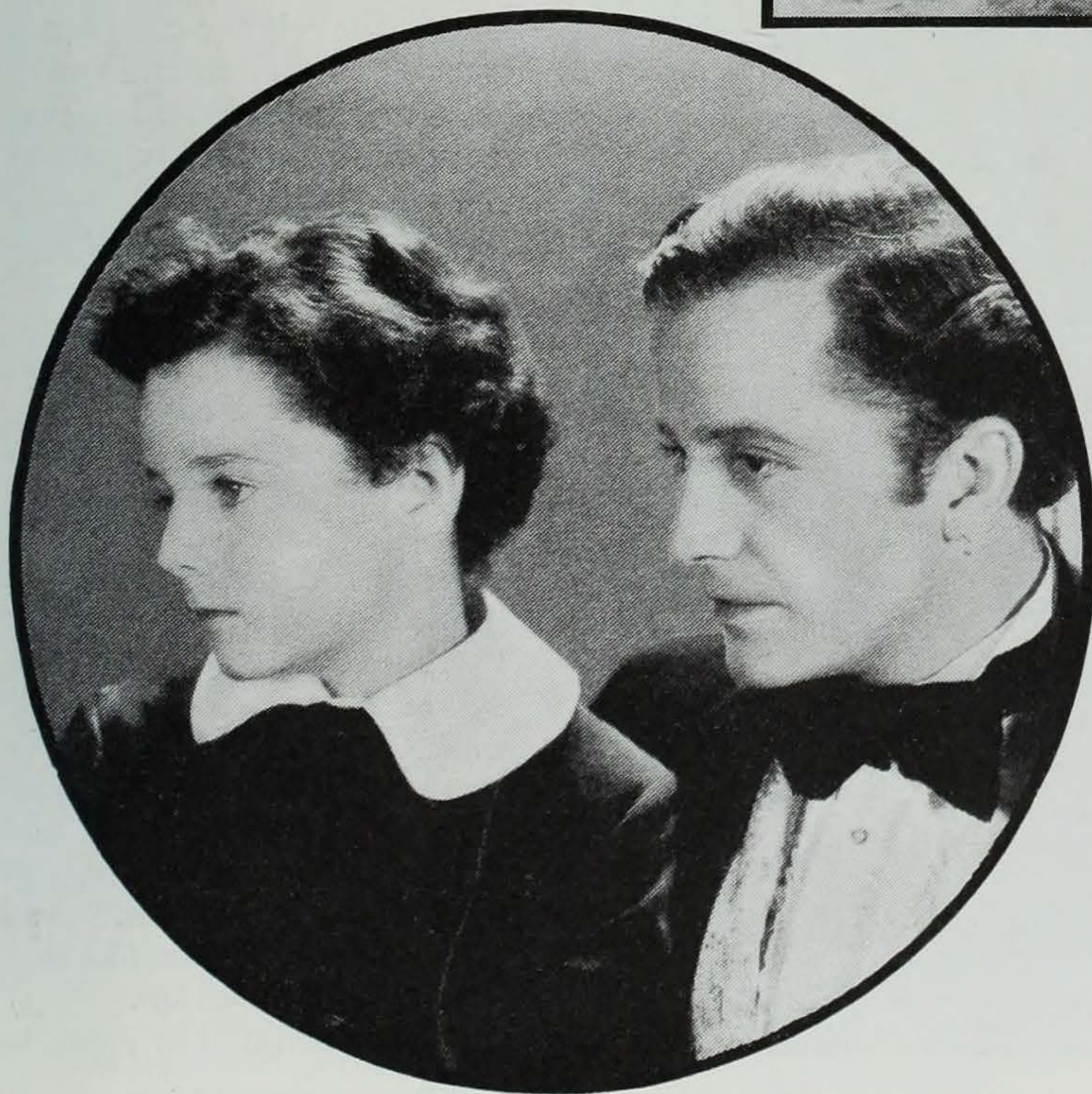
They gathered. From the north, south, east and west of England, they came. The boys were interviewed, tests were made, and the cameramen worked overtime as the dozens of potential *David*s poured in. And poured right out again. For, of all the groups of lads with their chopped-off syllables and broad English "A's," not a one was found who could completely fill the bill.

"Let's try Boston," someone suggested. "Let's try the whole New England States," someone else spoke up. So once again, a crew of men, all at the expense of good old M-G-M, remember, set out on the search, while back in Hollywood producers took to grabbing their thumbs and mumbling aloud to themselves.

In fact, one anxious and worried supervisor dreamed that Wally Beery had been cast for the part and awoke howling with



A scene with *Peggoty* and little *David*. So exacting were qualifications for the boy's rôle, thousands were tested before young Bartholomew was discovered



Freddie Bartholomew (left) shares title rôle honors with the grown-up *Copperfield*, Frank Lawton. What a resemblance!

such unearthly screams it took his wife, three neighbors and two radio cops to quiet him down.

"I can't stand by and see Wally Beery play *David Copperfield*," he kept wailing over and over.

It was now July. Exactly five months had passed since the serious search for a little boy *David* had started.

While through the New England States, the weary little group of searchers went on, day after day, testing this child and that one. Sending back the tests for a nerve-torn studio to view. And the view wasn't too lovely.

By this time, the last member of the tremendous and imposing cast had been signed. Expenses at the studio mounted and mounted.

The tour of the New England States ended, with the seekers no nearer a *David* than they had been before.

The studio then established, at
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Copperfield in Quest of His Youth

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its own expense, a camera crew in every principal point throughout the whole of the United States. Men who waited for a word to dash into a neighboring state, a nearby city or an obscure hamlet and test a *David*.

A writer from the studio, who was planning a trip to Europe, was detoured through Canada by M-G-M to see what he could find in the way of a *Copperfield*. He found nothing.

All this time, remember, would-be *David*s were pouring through the gates of the studio in Hollywood. Testing went merrily on. Well, no, not merrily, for by this time everyone was pretty well convinced that no *David* existed, or ever had existed, and they might as well give up and jump in the ocean. And one or two actually did, so it's hinted. August loomed. Letters by the ton poured into the studio. From every country in the world they came.

And letters, everyone of them, had to be answered or helpful mothers might accept silence for consent and bring on their offspring. And goodness knows, things were bad enough.

When enclosed photographs looked at all promising, scouts were immediately sent to investigate. Not one bet was overlooked. But alas, all these *David*s proved to be false alarms and August, sad as I am to say, was drawing to a close.

"Let's try California again and not leave a single stone unturned," was suggested. Advertisements appeared in every newspaper throughout the state of California. Announcements were made in every theater. Arrangements were made with a local broadcasting station which, every hour of the day beginning at twelve o'clock midnight, sent out calls for a *David*.

"Do you have a *David Copperfield* in your home?" "Do you know of a *David Copperfield*?" The plea rang out over the air again and again. Startled groups of young folk paused in their dancing to listen. Lonely visitors in hotel rooms looked up in amazement at the plea. The ill, in hospital rooms, pondered over the quest.

"*David*." "*David*." "*David*." Up and down the land, the cry rang out. A writer at the studio tells of going home that evening and being met at the door by her father who was more than a little deaf. "Well, them kidnapers have been at it again," he said excitedly. "They've been yelling for the boy on the radio all day. '*David*,' they said his name was." And the writer practically swooned to the floor.

As many as three thousand boys were seen in

the north and south of the state in one day. Talent scouts all over the state sent back to the studio a total of sixty or seventy prospects. But none qualified.

It looked absolutely hopeless and the studio knew it. And they were ready to admit defeat. David Selznick, the producer, was ready to give up as he sat at his desk. Nervously, he whirled about in his chair to speak. And then sat motionless. Frozen. Unable to say a word.

For, in the doorway stood *David*! The little boy. The lad for whom they had searched so long and faithfully for almost a year.

"You've come," the producer said.

"Yes," the lad said simply and that was all.

Without a test of any kind, Mr. Selznick knew that here, indeed, was his *David*.

Little Freddie Bartholomew had traveled seven thousand miles in answer to the plea of a great studio in far off Hollywood. At the time the director and producer had been in England conducting their search, he had been unable to get to them. But so sure was his aunt that Freddie was the one and only *David*, she packed up and, with Freddie in tow, boarded the ship for America for the first time.

THE New York offices of the studio weren't so sure about Freddie as *David*, so at the aunt's expense, the two traveled over the vast and strange land of these United States to Hollywood. And to "*David Copperfield*."

A bit of a lad is Freddie, with the same ethereal sweetness in his face that belonged to the youthful Philippe DeLacy. The "*David Copperfield*" crew, happy and working at last, look after the lad as if he were the long lost brother. As, indeed, he is. Freddie must have his milk at a certain time. Freddie must have his rest. Freddie must be watched every minute, every second, lest he disappear before their eyes and they're right back where they were all those long, hectic months. And above all, Freddie must be protected from American children and their American twang. That precious English accent must be guarded carefully.

The day Freddie announced to his director, "Gee, ain't it a hot-diggedy day," practically threw the studio into a breaking out all over. After all, the search was too long and fraught with too much bitterness to be spoiled now. So, until after "*David*," little English Freddie, is being just one person. And that is *Master Copperfield*.

Could You Love, Honor and Obey These Men?

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hurt no one. And if you tried to dominate him, you might be disappointed in him and in yourself. So if you're one of those women who are determined to have their own way, there's that problem to ponder. Tenderness and thoughtfulness about little things, birthday presents, anniversary gifts, flowers, perfumes, all the things that make married life a continuation of two lovers' dreams, would come from Franchot.

You could depend on that.

So here we have them. The most fascinating men on the screen.

The men who have lived at some time in every girl's heart. Here they are—sweethearts by proxy.

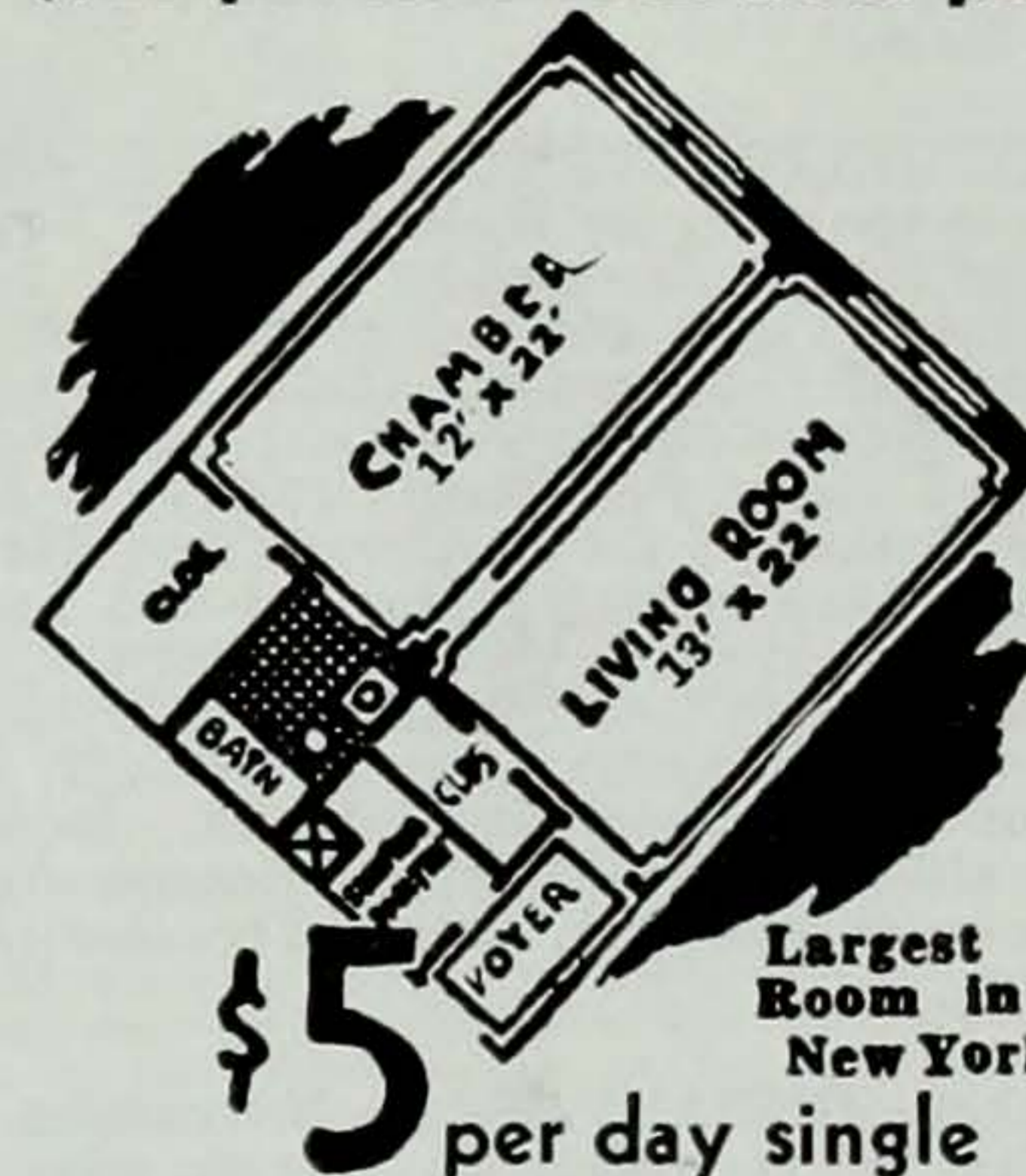
Look them over, girls, make your choice, and then answer to yourself this question:

"Could I love him, honor him and obey him through sickness or health, through poverty or wealth, through success or failure until death do us part?"



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